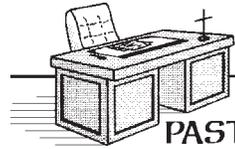


Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church

Crossnotes



2003



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

"The people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them" (Luke 4:40).

The many healing miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels may lead us to wonder: "Why doesn't God work that way today?"

Scripture tells us that Jesus' miracles had a specific purpose, to prove he was the Messiah, the divine Son of God. "The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me . . . even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father" (John 10:25, 38). Matthew 8:16-17 reports: "Many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah [53:4]: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.'"

Numerous Old Testament passages similarly prophesied that when the Messiah came he would perform great healing miracles, and this was the number one sign that the people of his day were looking for in anyone claiming to be the promised Messiah. So, that was the primary purpose of Jesus' healing miracles, as Peter explains in Acts 2:22: "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him."

But, the question remains, "Why doesn't God work that way today?" Actually, he does. As a physician once said to me, "Any doctor can tell you of

dozens of cases where the healing was unexpected and unexplained. We call it spontaneous remission. Another word would be a miracle."

Indeed, *Reader's Digest* reported that in a survey by the American Academy of Family Physicians, 99% of doctors said they thought religious beliefs could contribute to healing, and 63% said they believed God had intervened to improve their own medical conditions. The article also noted: "A survey of 5,286 Californians found that church members have lower death rates than non-members—regardless of risk factors such as smoking, drinking, obesity and inactivity. Those with a religious commitment had fewer symptoms or had better health outcomes in seven out of eight cancer studies, four out of five blood-pressure studies, four out of six heart-disease studies and four out of five general health studies" ("Faith is Powerful Medicine," *Reader's Digest*, October 1999).

However, Jesus also affirms that the sick "need a doctor" (Luke 5:31), and it seems that Luke, who was himself a doctor, traveled with the Apostle Paul as his personal physician (Colossians 4:14). Even when healing comes through what seem to be human efforts, it is actually God who is granting the skill, wisdom and ability to the medical personnel, and it is he who gives their efforts healing power, as Psalm 103:3 says: "He forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases." Therefore, faithful Christians who truly believe in and trust God's healing power nevertheless do not shun doctors and medical help but receive them with thanksgiving as gracious gifts of God.

We often jump to the conclusion that sickness and other afflictions we suffer are a punishment from God. Psalm 103:10 sets us straight: "He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities." For all who

trust in Christ, sickness and other afflictions are never a punishment from God. God simply doesn't work that way. Even the Apostle Paul apparently had some serious, persistent illness (Galatians 4:13), which he calls "a thorn in my flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7), and surely he was not being punished by God! Rather than a punishment, even sickness and other afflictions are somehow part of God's plan to work together all things—even what seem to be bad things—for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

Even if sickness should end in physical death, Jesus promises: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet will they live" (John 11:25). Ultimately, your sick body will be raised up, restored to life, reunited with your soul, and completely healed forever of all diseases, as Paul says in Philippians 3:21: "He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Even if you don't beat your sickness in this life, Jesus will beat it for you in eternal life. For, in heaven, "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Jesus' healing miracles give you hope. Hope that he is the Messiah, the divine Son of God, your Savior. Hope that in him your sins are all forgiven. Hope that God is never punishing you when you suffer sickness or other afflictions. Hope that God still shows his healing power. Hope that he is working all things together for your good. Hope that, through faith in Christ, even though you die, yet you will live forever.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Pastor Kevin Vogts



Family Fun Carnival Success!

Our first Family Fun Carnival on September 14 was an *extraordinary* success! It is estimated that at least 300, perhaps more, members of the community enjoyed this fantastic event. There was never a slow moment with a constant flow of people, even during the brief shower. Many expressed their thanks, with comments such as "This is just the kind of thing Dakota Dunes needs." Several persons expressed surprise that our congregation could host such a major event, and particularly that it was not a fund-raiser but a gift to the community.

From 4:00pm-7:00pm activities on the lawn of the church included a children's inflatable "bouncer," an inflatable baseball pitching game, snow cones, and carnival games under a "big top" tent. Most people also came inside the church for crafts and food, including a fun cake walk. We even had "Sonny the Clown" entertaining the crowds and there was a long line of eager children as he made balloon sculptures.



The west lawn of the church was transformed into the carnival grounds.

"Sonny the Clown" entertained the crowds and delighted the children with balloon sculptures.



The "bouncer" near the street announced the carnival and attracted large crowds.

Crossnotes

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A neighborhood Mom helps her son with crafts.



Delicious free food included hundreds of hot dogs and a fun cake walk.

Many of the foodstuffs, prizes, etc. were donated by members or local business and there were also several cash donations, from both members and non-members, so the net cost was surprisingly low for such a major, first-class event.

Thank you to everyone who worked so very hard making this event such a big success, including planning, preparation, setup, working at the carnival, and cleanup and tearing down. Special thanks to the carnival committee, Janet Martin, Terese Vogts, Paul Kaardahl, and Pastor Vogts.

“Back to the Future” with Familiar “New” Service

At the suggestion of the elders, we will begin rotating the worship order used in our services more frequently. One service we will use regularly may seem very familiar to many members, a slightly updated version of the service affectionately known as “Page 15,” from *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941.

This is actually one of four main services planned for inclusion in the new Lutheran hymnal due to be released by the LCMS in 2007. The two most widely used services in *Lutheran Worship* (pages 158ff and 178ff), also found in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, will be Setting One and Setting Two in the new hymnal. The alternative new service introduced in *Hymnal Supplement 98* will be Setting Four. The slight revision of “Page 15” that we will be using will be Setting Three.

One could say the LCMS is going “back to the future” with this service, since the music is exactly as found in *The Lutheran Hymnal* and even the traditional language (thee’s and thou’s) has been retained in the congregation’s sung portions, and only slightly updated elsewhere. It is also reported that the words and music for many of the hymns in the new hymnal will be closer to *The Lutheran Hymnal*, reversing some ill-advised changes made when *Lutheran Worship* was issued in 1982.

Over the coming months we will introduce the other orders which will be included in the new hymnal, including page 178ff from *Lutheran Worship* and the alternative new service from *Hymnal Supplement 98*. We will rotate all these worship orders, with occasional other formats, to provide for rich variety in our worship.

“I will sing a new song unto you, O God” (Psalm 144:9).



Missionaries of the Month

Each month we remember in prayer in our worship specific missionaries sponsored around the world by our congregation, through our Synod and related organizations. You are encouraged to remember them also in your personal and family prayers.

October 5
Robert and Betty Holste
Thailand

The Holstes are serving in their fourth year in Thailand. Praise God for their continued service and dedication and that God will bless them, and all missionaries, with good health and strength, and comfort in times of loneliness and homesickness.

October 12
Rev. Claude and Rhoda Hougé
Ghana

Rev. Hougé trains pastors at the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary in Accra. The Hougés have also learned sign language and are training deaf church leaders. Pray for even more native pastors and for success of evangelism among deaf people, who are often marginalized in developing countries.

October 19
Joy Stuhr
Panama

Joy is a new volunteer missionary teaching ESL or English as a second language classes, which gives many opportunities for witness. Pray that she may adjust to this work and the new culture.

October 28
Rev. Francis Poillet
France

Pastor Poillet is beginning a new Lutheran mission congregation in Paris, in conjunction with The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of France and Belgium, which is a partner church with the LCMS. Although France has a strong Christian history, like so many countries it is now considered “post-Christian,” since so few people actually attend church or have a personal relationship with Christ. Pray that the hearts of the French people will be open to the Gospel.



Sermon Themes for October

October 5
“Friend or Foe?”
Mark 8:33

October 12
“Live in Peace”
James 3:16-4:6

October 19
“Turn Your Plans into Prayers”
James 4:13-16

October 26
“The Gift of God”
Ephesians 2:8-10



Individual Cup Trays Donated

Thanks to Jason and Kathi Bietz for donating a set of individual cup communion trays to Holy Cross. Options and scheduling for their use will be considered by the Board of Elders and Voter's Assembly.



A series of articles on archaeology and the Bible.

The New Testament indicates in several places that Jesus was "nailed" to the cross. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:14 that Jesus has taken away our guilt by "nailing it to the cross." "Doubting Thomas" tells the other disciples: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (John 20:25). And in the first recorded Christian sermon, Peter proclaims: "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Acts 2:23).

Although the Greek words used vary, and could perhaps indicate some other method of attachment to the cross,



Community Thanksgiving Eve Service

Bring Your Family and Guests to Celebrate Thanksgiving
Wednesday, November 26, 7:00pm

Led by Pastor Kevin Vogts
at Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Dakota Dunes Boulevard & Bison Trail

All Invited — Everyone Welcome!

O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good.

these verses seem to indicate that Jesus' crucifixion included nailing him to the cross by "his hands and feet" (Luke 24:39-40). Nevertheless, it had long been contended that hanging a human body by nails driven through the hands and feet would be impossible. The weight, it was argued, would be too great, in particular causing the nails to tear through the hands or wrists, the fabric of which would be too weak to bear such a load.

The suggestion was made that perhaps crucifixion victims were attached with ropes, either in place of or, in Jesus' case, in addition to nails. This idea was widely accepted, and many more recent pictures of the crucifixion, or portrayals in movies, have shown Christ both nailed and lashed to the cross with ropes. This is not a heresy or false doctrine, and is an acceptable alternative to the traditional interpretation.

However, a stunning discovery in 1968 removed the questions and doubts about how crucifixion victims could be nailed to the cross. Though it is still possible that ropes were used in addition to nails, this new archaeological

discovery makes such suggestions unnecessary.

Crucifixion was very widely practiced in the Roman Empire and throughout the ancient near east. Originally invented by the Persians, it was employed extensively by the Romans as a means of brutally enforcing their rule over subject peoples, such as the Jews, and to keep their own large slave population under control. It is reported that following the slave revolt led by Spartacus in 71 B.C. over 6,000 slaves were crucified in one day along the Appian Way outside Rome, which is pictured at the end of the movie starring Kirk Douglas.

Although there are existing from ancient times many references to and some images of crucifixions, and no doubt tens of thousands or more were crucified by the Romans, it always seemed odd that no remains identifiable as being of a crucifixion victim had ever been found. Perhaps this was because they were often criminals of some sort and not given a respectable burial, which is more likely to survive for archaeological investigation. Or, it could be that the

evidence was misinterpreted, or overlooked in otherwise unremarkable bones. Or, it was simply a fluke, due to the relatively small number of crucifixions compared to the entire ancient population.

But, in the summer of 1968, archaeologist V. Tzaferis discovered four Jewish tombs near Jerusalem which included a small stone casket or "bone box." It was a common ancient practice to bury the bones only in such a box, called an ossuary, after allowing the flesh to decompose. This bone box dated from about the time of Christ, between 7 A.D. and 66 A.D., and was incised with the name Jehohanan. It contained the bones of a man between 24 and 28 years old. What made this find unique is that Jehohanan had been crucified. His bones survived because following his crucifixion he had been given a loving burial, reminiscent of our Lord.

A deep scratch on the right radius bone showed clearly that a nail had indeed penetrated, not through the palm of the hand, but between the two bones of his lower forearm just above the wrist. This would better support the weight of the body than the palm, and could be the "hand" spoken of with respect to Jesus' crucifixion.

But, the most stunning aspect of the find was an iron spike, seven inches long, still driven through the heel bone. It is thought that normally the Roman Soldiers on crucifixion detail were required to extract and return all these valuable spikes and the other equipment they checked out from the quartermaster to carry out the day's gruesome task. In this case, however, they hit a snag-or, more specifically, a knot. For, the end of the spike was bent like a fishhook. Apparently, after being driven through Jehohanan's heels it had struck a knot in the cross (slivers still clinging to the spike showed the cross was olive wood), and bent directly backward so badly that it could not be extracted after the deed was done, and then returned to the quartermaster. The Roman soldiers perhaps had their salary docked to pay for this loss of valuable Imperial equipment. One can imagine

them arguing with the quartermaster that it wasn't their fault.

Further examination of Jehohanan's remains finally answered the question of how just a few nails could support the weight of the entire body without tearing through the flesh. A plaque of acacia wood still remained that the nail had first been driven through. This served to distribute the pressure. Today we call it a "washer," and we use this same method when putting a nail or screw through thin or weak material. It was rather dumb of us to not think of this, or perhaps we assumed that the ancient people were the ones too dumb to conceive of such a solution. But, the Romans were better engineers than we are, and they knew how to use a washer! Other aspects of



Discovered in 1968, this amazing artifact from about the time of Christ preserves an actual crucifixion spike in the heel bones of a crucifixion victim named Jehohanan. The seven inch iron nail could not be removed because it hit a knot in the cross and bent into a hook.

Jehohanan's death also support the Gospel's accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, including the fact that his legs had been broken to hasten his death, a fate which Jesus escaped because he was already dead but which befell those crucified with him (John 19:31-33).

The account of Jesus' death is the most complete record we have of the ancient practice of crucifixion, and it agrees perfectly with the archaeological record found in Jehohanan's remains. Of course, Christ's death upon the cross has a significance far greater than history or archaeology. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things . . . by making peace

through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).



Good News from Japan

by Michael and Yoko Piescer

As many of you are probably aware, less than 1 percent of the entire population of Japan claims to be Christian. Within this context, every single baptism is an occasion for great joy and celebration. So you can imagine our excitement this past year as two of our students were received into God's kingdom through Holy Baptism.

The first student, Okada-san, is actually an alumna of our school, Holy Hope Lutheran School, who graduated about six years ago. In a recent conversation we had about the events leading up to her Baptism, she told me that while she was a junior high school student at Holy Hope, she saw our weekly chapel services and Bible classes as something to be endured rather than an opportunity to experience life-changing truths. As a high school student, however, she began to notice that her attitude toward Christianity was changing. She actually started to enjoy singing the hymns and became intrigued with the teachings of the Bible as they were expounded in chapel messages and taught in the Bible classes. So by the time she graduated, she had a strong interest in Christianity, although she still wasn't ready to take the next step of actually being baptized.

After four years of university and a year of working in a coffee shop, Okada-san got a job in the accounting section at the headquarters of the Japan Lutheran Church in Tokyo. It was during her orientation there that one of the pastors asked if she had been baptized yet. When she replied in the negative, the

pastor asked her why not. It was at that time that she began to ask herself, 'Why haven't I been baptized yet?' With this question in the background, Okada-san began attending a local Lutheran congregation and studying the Bible with the pastor on a weekly basis. As a result, Okada-san was baptized into the Christian faith this past winter. What an exciting time for her and for the commu-



Michael and Yoko Piescer serve as LCMS missionaries in Japan.

nity of believers here in Japan! I really believe that her example demonstrates that even though we don't see very many students are baptized while they are students at Holy Hope, many seeds are planted, which blossom into faith later in life.

The second student who was baptized this past year is Nishida-san, one of our seniors. I knew that Nishida-san had been attending Sunday morning services and youth group at his congregation since junior high school, and that he professed faith in Jesus. But I also knew that he hadn't been baptized yet. Being somewhat puzzled about this, I pulled him aside one day last year and asked him why he hadn't been baptized yet. In good Japanese fashion, he indirectly let me know that his parents hadn't given him permission yet. Even in the United States, this can be an issue, but even more so in Japan. In fact, some families will actually disown children who are baptized. Realizing the sensitive nature of the situation, I quickly let

Nishida-san know that I understood and left the conversation at that.

You can imagine our surprise and joy this past spring, when Nishida-san came up to me one day and asked if I would attend his Baptism service. His parents had finally given him permission to be baptized. So, on a spring morning, we attended the service at Nishida-san's congregation and watched him be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What makes Nishida-san's Baptism especially exciting is that he is planning to study at Tokyo Christian University next year and would like to eventually get involved in mission work within the Muslim world.

Healthy Moms, Healthy Kids

by Rev. Jerry Rux,
Associate Director, LCMS World Relief

It was a brisk winter morning in Vorontsovka, Kyrgyzstan. The snow crunched under our feet as Dr. Olga Kttolyavchento and I followed a local man whose home we planned to visit. Olga is a pediatrician and the administrator of "Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies," a program supported by LCMS World Relief and funded by a grant from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Today Olga was to do a checkup for the man's baby granddaughter.

Following the collapse of the communist system, much of the infrastructure of medical care and special needs-hospitals, clinics and institutions, for example-was abandoned. In the absence of such services, the local Lutheran congregation works to respond to many medical and special needs in the name of the Lord Jesus. "Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies" is a project with just such a purpose; it provides training for new and expectant mothers in the proper nurture of their babies, beginning with prenatal care.

Mother and baby were both doing well. Olga took the opportunity to encourage the young mother and to suggest some changes to promote even better health.



Dr. Olga Kttolyavchento, a pediatrician and member of the Lutheran congregation in Vorontsovka, Kyrgyzstan, in the former Soviet Union, checks a baby as part of the "Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies" program of LCMS World Relief.

Olga is enthusiastic about the project's important work. "This project," she says, "teaches the young mothers and mothers-to-be in the villages of Kyrgyzstan how to take care of themselves and their babies."

Once a member of the Communist Party, Olga was one of the first to be confirmed in the young Lutheran congregation here, and she is grateful for the faith community to which she belongs. "I love our church and the folks who are there. I am so glad that I am a doctor, because I can teach people how to care for themselves and their families, and at the same time teach them about God's great love for them. I can treat the physical and spiritual parts of people."



Walking with Jesus Thru the Pages of Matthew

The Adult Bible Class meets during this Sunday School hour from 10:30-11:15am. Our new study is "Walking with Jesus Thru the Pages of Matthew," a reading a discussion of about a chapter per week. A great way to help you "walk" with Jesus in your own life throughout the week.