

## Resting in the Arms of Jesus

We sat in the car in stunned silence during what seemed like the longest ride home ever. The doctor's words kept echoing in my head, "I'm very sorry to tell you, your baby's heart has stopped beating." Was this really happening? Did I do something that caused this? How would we tell our mothers their first grandchild had died?

Two months earlier my eyes stared at the two lines on the pregnancy test. It was hard to believe I was finally pregnant, and I hoped I'd make a good mom. We shared the news with family, friends and the congregation. Everyone was thrilled and we received many notes of congratulations. At my first prenatal visit, they said everything looked great and we could see the heart fluttering quickly on the ultrasound. Then a few weeks later the tiredness and nausea I was feeling faded away. I wondered if something could be wrong. The time came for my second prenatal visit, and I prayed everything was ok. They did an ultrasound and the technician was very quiet. He said the doctor would come to talk to my husband and me. We knew what he was going to say, and tears formed in my eyes as I wondered why this had happened to us.

The next day seemed like an eternity. Tears welled up in my eyes all day as I thought of the things I would miss in raising a child. I mourned never getting to hold my child and not being able to offer comfort as death drew near. I wondered if God didn't think we would make good parents. I questioned why we didn't deserve a child when many people have children they don't want. Then I thought more about that word: "deserve." I realized these questions were the wrong questions and wouldn't give the right answers. My answer, my truth, would come from only one place: Christ. Apart from Christ all we *deserve* is death and hell, but in Christ we have life and salvation. I remembered God's promises to us—promises He can't, and won't, break.

I remembered how God gives us the strength we need to endure (Php 4:13), will never leave us nor forsake us (Deut 31:6), gives us sufficient grace (2 Cor 12:9); and works all things for good (Rom 8:28). I don't understand how this could work for good, but also trust in God's promise that He has a reason for taking our child. Though we mourn the death of our little one, we have nothing to fear because the light of His Gospel drives away the darkness of sin, death and fear. We know that God's Word is powerful and entered the "ears" of our child to give salvation and peace. We can rest in the confidence of the resurrection, knowing our child now rests in the loving arms of Jesus.

The messages of comfort we received after our sad news outnumbered the messages of congratulations we received two months earlier. We were overwhelmed by how so many others mourned along with us, reaching out with Christ's love through their generosity. Our friends pointed us to Christ and His promises through their words and merciful works. Through this, they reminded us how God blesses us in this life with faith and contentment in all things through trust in His promises, even in the midst of sufferings. God has blessed us with so many people in the Body of Christ who offered us comfort, and now through our sufferings we can comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-5).

Heidi D. Sias  
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## REFORMATION

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"I have to get back in shape." Have you felt like that? Or maybe you said it like this, "I have to lose a little weight." Every once in a while our jobs, our recreational activities, our kids or grandkids, or even the mirror remind us that we are not in the shape we used to be. A huge industry has developed in the United States centered on reshaping our bodies. Perhaps you could say we need a reformation. That, after all, is what reformation means- to shape again, to return to a previous shape or form. The reformation of the body is one thing but the reformation of the life is something else entirely. Paul states it plainly, "While bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

We call October 31 Reformation Day. We remember it because on that day Luther posted his 95 Theses, an act that began a reformation of the Church. It is good for us to remember the time of the Reformation because we remember it not as an act of man, but as an act of God. We may make some progress on bodily reformation, but only God and reform a life. He does that by the power of His Word. All true reformations happen by this power and only by this power. God will use different men to speak the Word, but it is the Word that does the work. Let's examine a couple of reformations.

Following the Babylonian captivity some of the people of Israel returned to the promised land and began to rebuild. They soon fell into sin, particularly the sin of mixing with the people of the land and adopting their beliefs. Around 458 BC a true man of God by the name of Ezra was sent to lead a reformation, to shape their faith again around the Word of God. "*For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*" (Ezra 7:10) Ezra gathered the people of Jerusalem in the town square and read the Word of God to them for hours. (Nehemiah 8:1-3) The people listened and were reformed.

A similar reformation occurred at the time of Martin Luther. The Church had lost its way. It was proclaiming a gospel of the Law. Of course, that makes no sense then or now. How can sinful man, by his own behavior, reshape himself to be without sin? So God used Luther to reform, to reshape the Church according to the Word of God. Through the persistence of Luther the true Gospel was preached and taught. Once again the faithful could hear the Word of salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus, not by their own works. Reformation did not happen without sacrifice on Luther's part. He suffered ridicule and persecution. But that is not the center of the story. The center is that God's Word is always actively reforming lives.

As it did at the time of Ezra and the in the day of Luther God's Word is still at work in your life. As a result of our sin we are not in the shape God intended for us. But His Word, spoken over you in your baptism, is working daily contrition and repentance so that the old man is drowned and a new man, in the shape of a holy child of God, rises to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Now that's Reformation.

Terry Forke, District President

**October**

31 Reformation

**November**

1 All Saints' Day

6 Official Visit—Hardin

15-17 Council of Presidents-Raleigh, NC

20 Official Visit—Miles City

24-25 Thanksgiving—Office Closed

27 Advent begins

**December**

4 Official Visit—Messiah, Missoula  
Ordination and Installation:  
Mark Christensen, First Lutheran,  
Missoula, 5:00 p.m.

18 Official Visit—Glendive

25 Christmas

**January**

10-12 Quad Circuit, Belgrade



**Daylight Saving Time  
Ends NOV. 6th**

**Minot Flood Relief Information**

The flooding in North Dakota this year was devastating. In Minot alone, 2, 000 homes were flooded. All of them need to be gutted of all water damaged materials before they can be rebuilt. Can you help rebuild? Lodging, showers, and food are all provided. Fuel is covered by a generous grant from Thrivent. For information on upcoming trips please email Pastor James Maxwell at [revjamesmaxwell@gmail.com](mailto:revjamesmaxwell@gmail.com)

Rev. Paul Shupe Installation Sept. 25, 2011  
Bridger/Belfry



L-R: Robert Lane, David Preus, Al Ebel, Ryan Wendt, Paul Shupe, Terry Forke, Doug Thompson, Richard Thompson, Ken Zoeller

On June 2, First Lutheran Classical School, a small start up school in Missoula, held its end of the year event called *Celebrate America*. The school children, who are kindergarteners and first graders, celebrated through recitations and songs sung from memory, great events and facts about our country's early history. It was an awesome display and the following was written by Art Pencek, School Board Chairman, as he reflected on the amazing program put on by the children and their teacher, Mrs. Connie Lee.

**A Fleck of Gold**

As I sit here tonight and contemplate the events of last week and not just that, but the things that have happened over the last four years in the starting of our school, I am overwhelmed by it all. The world is still in turmoil. There is still terrorism across the nations. Economies are collapsing. There are wars and rumors of wars. Many bear the scars of past conflicts. Terrible things are happening to children and families. Disaster after disaster strikes throughout the countries. Scandals erupt daily. Christianity is besieged on all sides. The litany of evil is endless.

And yet I know of one little girl who just a year ago did not know Jesus, and now she knows Him as her Lord and Savior and Friend; one whose promises are always kept. And I know of one little boy who has a fire in his soul. But just as wild fire is a terribly destructive force, fire in its proper place, when properly bounded and guided, provides power and warmth and light.

So while it seems the black clouds of storm are about to engulf us and that endless night is approaching, through the mercies of Almighty God, a glimmer of dawn peeks through on the horizon, and we are drawn to that light. Just as a prospector is about to give up after digging through a mountain of dirt, exhausted, his grub stake gone, he suddenly discovers a fleck of gold in that last pan of gravel, and his passions are rekindled and his strength returns, because he knows that fleck came from the mother lode.

What happened at Celebrate America was a fleck from the mother lode. No, not just a fleck, but a solid gold nugget.

Just think about what happened. 100 people, of all different backgrounds and faiths, came to see what has been going on in our

school. They came to celebrate our students, they came to celebrate their children, they came to celebrate America, but what was really celebrated were the grace and mercy and love of Jesus Christ. The same thing happens with the preschool and school Christmas programs and VBS. They bring in hundreds of folks. The educational ministries of our congregations are truly an outreach to our communities and a blessing to them.

All the evils continue around us, but the world has changed; in our little corner of the world, in the congregations of the Montana District, in the lives of families, in the hearts of children, the world has changed. Isn't it wonderful that God has given us this school ministry; put us here in this time and in this place to do this thing we call Lutheran Education? Is it just a fleck of gold in a mountain of dirt? Maybe, but it makes all the difference in the world.

May the Lord continue to bless and expand the educational ministries of our District and our Church throughout the world!



FIRST LUTHERAN  
CLASSICAL  
SCHOOL

**New Crib Safety Requirements for Church Nurseries and Childcare Centers**

Does your church have cribs in your nursery? Do you operate a child care center that has cribs? If you answered “yes” to either question, there are new federal regulations that apply to you. These new regulations not only mandate new safety standards in the manufacture and sale of cribs; they also impose requirements on most child care centers. The regulations become effective in two stages: Beginning on **June 28, 2011**, all cribs sold must meet new regulations. These include:

Traditional drop-side cribs cannot be made **or sold**. This includes disposing of noncompliant cribs after June 28, 2011, either through selling them or giving them away. Wood slats must be made of stronger wood to prevent breakage. Crib hardware must have anti-loosening devices to keep it from coming loose. Mattress supports must be more durable. Safety testing must be more rigorous.

All child care facilities, family child care homes, and places of public accommodation...must prepare to replace their current cribs with new, compliant cribs **before December 28, 2012** and should not resell, donate or give away a crib that does not meet the new crib standards. They should dispose of older, noncompliant cribs in a manner that the cribs should not be resold through online auction sites or donated to local thrift stores. For a complete copy of this article from the Church Law & Tax report, please contact the District Office.

*Church Law & Tax Report, September/October 2011*



On Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, Peace Lutheran Church in Great Falls had an old fashioned Mission Festival. The Festival was to call attention to missions, especially within the Montana District and encourage financial support for them. Pastor Park Timber, associate pastor at Circle of Life Lutheran Church in Lame Deer, is shown below with the Sunday School class.



**Montana District Convention**

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Convention of the Montana District LCMS will be held **June 11-14, 2012** at the Holiday Inn in Billings. The theme for this convention is “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mark16:15) Delegates will spend time reading through and discussing the Gospel of Mark.

Congregations should now be actively preparing for the convention by electing lay delegates to the convention, electing Circuit Counselors at the Circuit Forums, nominating candidates to serve in offices of the District, (e.g. President, Vice-presidents, Secretary, Board of Directors, etc.), and writing overtures on topics of concern to be considered at the convention. See your Pastor if you have questions about how to take part.

The District Convention is a time of learning from God’s Word, discussing important topics and conveying our thoughts to the rest of the Synod. It is also a time of worship, of getting to know our brothers and sisters in Christ from across the District, and of having fun. Maybe this is the year you could represent your congregation at the convention. Together the people of the Montana District LCMS proclaim the Gospel to each other and to the whole creation.



Can you say “Born, born, born, born, born, and born again?” On Sept. 17, five generations gathered at Concordia, Williston, for the new birth in Holy Baptism of Cohen James Boykin. There to witness the event were (l to r) Lynn Haverlock (grandmother), Kirstin Boykin (mother), Cohen Boykin, Janice Weltz (great-grandmother), and Anna Wiegum (great-great grandmother). Anna, who celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in August, rejoices at the birth and the new birth of her great-great grandson, Cohen.



Seventeen ladies and Rev. Steven Schlund of Peace Lutheran and Christ for the Deaf Lutheran Churches in Great Falls attended the Fall Retreat in Fort Peck September 16-17 at the Fort Peck Hotel. Rev. Schlund led a Bible study over the two-day session titled Great Women of the Bible.



## Lutheran Malaria Initiative

Congregations of the Montana District are encouraged to participate in the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, (LMI), during 2012. Malaria is a deadly disease but it is preventable. The (LMI) is a simple program of distributing bed nets and educating the recipients in their use. Your congregation can easily participate. One bed net costs \$10. There are many ways you can raise money for this effort. Every Montana District Pastor received (LMI) information at the recent Pastor's conference. If you would like more information please call the District office. Below you will find a letter addressing members of the LCMS written by Rev. Matthew Harrison, President of the LCMS and Rev. John Nunes, President of Lutheran World Relief.

Dear Friends,

Imagine directly helping save the life of an African child threatened by malaria—a shattering and fatal disease that is both treatable *and* preventable.

Then numbers are staggering: according to the World Health Organization, nearly a million people die of malaria each year and every 45 seconds a child dies. In the African communities where Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) work, extreme poverty creates conditions that allow malaria to take hold and spread with deadly consequence. Unless we do more, malaria will continue to claim innocent lives and prevent young children from reaching their dreams.

As Lutherans, we have a historic opportunity to make a difference, to turn the tide on malaria deaths. The work of this initiative flows from the very core of our confessional identity as the church, to extend *diakonic* love and mercy as broad as the need of our neighbor. Indeed, we confess that love, care and concern for those who suffer from malaria are actions motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when faith (*fides qua creditur*) apprehends the righteousness of Christ and his merits unto eternal life. The Gospel produces love—love which seeks and serves the neighbor.

In July 2010, the overwhelming majority of delegates attending the 64th Regular Convention of the LCMS—97%—voted to express this love of neighbor. They voted to join the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, an unprecedented and

exciting partnership between the LCMS and LWR to mobilize Lutherans in the United States to join the fight against malaria.

Both LWR and the LCMS have a long history of sharing Christ's mercy and working to reduce poverty in rural communities around the world. Through the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, we can leverage the reach and power of the Lutheran network to make a significant impact on malaria through education, prevention, and treatment of this preventable disease.

Our goal is bold and straightforward: **to end malaria deaths in Africa by 2015**. By the grace of God, it's also achievable. By uniting our efforts to end malaria deaths, imagine the faithful example we will set and the hope that will be created for children in Africa and those children in our very midst.

We hope that you will prayerfully consider this call—the call to share Christ's mercy with those who daily suffer and die from malaria. Together we can restore health and inspire hope.

In Christ,

Rev. John A. Nunes      Rev. Matthew C. Harrison  
*President, LWR*              *President, LCMS*



Rev. Gerald Paul was installed at Trinity, Great Falls on Oct. 9. Pictured with him is his son, Matthias, daughter Emma, and wife, Heidi. Older daughter, Angelika is away at school. Below is the crew from Trinity that helped the family move in.



### Is the Sustainable Lutheran School Initiative Valuable?

I am Art Pencek, Chairman of the School Board of First Lutheran Classical School (FLCS) in Missoula. We are a small start-up school and are participating in the Sustainable Lutheran School Initiative. Recently I was asked if, from my perspective as a board chair, I felt that SLSI has been a positive experience for me and my school.

There are aspects of SLSI that are dedicated to board governance, pastoral leadership, and teachers, but a major emphasis of the initiative is the development and coaching of school administrators. FLCS does not have an administrator so that responsibility falls to me. Consequently, my perspective as a board chair is not only one of assuring the proper relationship between governance and administration, and following the growth of the administrator from the coaching, but of actually experiencing both since I am being coached as an

administrator as well.

Let me first say that when it comes to school administration or governance, I am greener than bluegrass in a Kentucky June. But I am a product of a K-12 Lutheran education and am passionate about school ministry. Although I have no previous experience as a board chair or administrator, I have learned many things through phone calls with Bob Fowls and many challenging afternoons and evenings in the excellent webinars put on by Dick Wenigar and Bob Fowls.

Dick and Bob are fond of saying that they do 5% of the work and we get to do the other 95%. But through their careers as teachers and administrators, they have done 100% of the work. They share that experience with us through the initiative and it has been of immeasurable value. Without SLSI, I just don't know how else school boards and school staffs come to know the insights and skills that are shared about governance, leadership, crucial conversations, admissions strategies, marketing strate-

gies, retention strategies, and many other strategies that contribute to growing, vibrant, sustainable schools. Through SLSI every school can learn these strategies, and there is nothing like knowing that you are not out there on your own. We know that we have resources and a partner in ministry who cares about our success.

Yes, SLSI has come to be the very air we breathe in our fledgling ministry and we praise God for it! Whether you are a new school, board member, or administrator, or whether you are established and successful in your school ministry, SLSI and its excellent staff can take you to the next level and help make your good school into a great school.

If you wish to know more about the Sustainable Lutheran School Initiative which is sponsored by the Northwest District, feel free to contact Art Pencek of FLCS in Missoula at [apen338@gmail.com](mailto:apen338@gmail.com) or call at 406-207-1223.