

# NEW LIFE NEWS

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## LCMS NEWS

**LFL affirms marriage as man-woman union** Marriage is “a God-given institution between a man and a woman.” Homosexual unions “are based on a lie rather than the Word of God... and cannot constitute a marriage,” says a statement adopted Feb. 21 by the national Lutherans For Life Board of Directors.

Making frequent reference to Scriptural passages, the board traces marriage back to Adam and Eve.

“He who bore the image of God needed someone who also bore the image of God in order to have a God-like relationship,” the statement says. “So God made woman.”

**World’s Lutherans number nearly 66 million** Membership among Lutheran churches in the last two years increased by 570,000, bringing the number of Lutherans worldwide to nearly 66 million by the end of 2003.

Regular statistics provided by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) indicate an average .9 percent growth from the 65,387,677 Lutherans registered in 2001 to the 65,957,685 recorded by the end of last year.

**Laborers adapts program to make it more useful** In the face of fewer projects and fewer available workers, Laborers For Christ (LFC) is offering additional services to make its program more useful and “relevant” to today’s changing congregations.

- [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) -

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## From The Pastor’s Heart The Glory of the Empty Tomb!

What is it that Mexico’s and Egypt’s pyramids, India’s Taj Mahal, London’s Westminster Abbey, Emperor Qin Shi Huang’s Mausoleum with its terra cotta warriors all have in common? They are some of the most famous and impressive structures on earth, and they all are themselves tombs or contain tombs. But one tomb’s importance outshines all of these; however, we cannot even pinpoint its exact location. It belonged to the wealthy Jewish leader, Joseph of Arimathea, who had become a disciple of Jesus. Located outside of Jerusalem, this unused sepulcher had been carved into the rock. Jesus’ body was placed into the tomb on Friday, but on Sunday it was gloriously empty – and for this reason we celebrate this month’s coming Sunday of Sundays, Easter!

An elementary teacher was teaching her class about Easter and celebrating new life. Giving each student a plastic egg, she told them to find something demonstrating real life to place inside. The children quickly went out and brought in their discoveries. One had a new shoot from a pine tree, a girl brought in a flower, another brought in a caterpillar. But one student opened his egg for his teacher, and there was absolutely nothing in it! The teacher initially became angry, but then the young man explained: “But the tomb was empty!”

All other tombs, even those with the most exquisite architecture and literally tons of granite and marble, are only silent witnesses to death’s inescapable power over people. When the pyramids were originally opened dead Pharaohs were found; but on that first Easter morning, Mary and the other women found an empty tomb! Jesus had once and for all people triumphed over death! In this case, “empty” is incredibly positive beyond all, empty is everything! The women were asked by the angels: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” Luke 24:5-6 (ESV)

Jesus’ resurrection is the very heart of the Gospel. Martin Luther wrote:

“He who would preach the Gospel must go directly to the resurrection of Christ. He who does not preach the resurrection is no apostle, for this is the chief part of our faith” (W 12,268).

My friend, may God open your heart, just as He opened His Son’s tomb 2000 years ago, to welcome in your Loving Savior. The Resurrection Lord wants to



come in and rescue you and give you new spiritual life. For those who are already Christians, may the Lord empty your hearts from all other concerns save Him alone, and cause you to desire even more to seek and save the lost sheep, and to exert remarkable effort to share our Resurrection Lord's amazing grace!

God bless our Easter! Because He arose, so will all who believe in Him!

Pastor Chip<><

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## Made Alive Through Christ

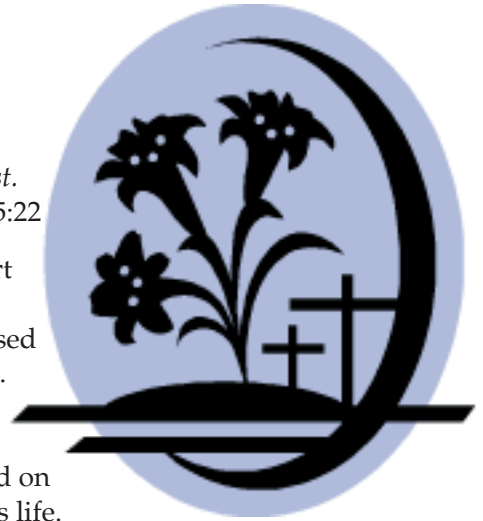
*As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:22

Paul is speaking here only about Christians. He wants to teach and comfort them about being made alive in Christ. Although non-Christians will also rise from the dead, it will not be a comfort or a joy to them because they will be raised to judgment, not to life. This is not a comforting or happy message to the world. Godless people don't want to hear about this. This is the way I felt when I wanted to be a holy monk and tried to be pious. I would rather have heard about all the devils in hell than about judgment day. The hair on my head stood on end when I thought about it. The whole world hates to think about leaving this life.

They don't want to die, and they are terrified when we speak of death and the after life. Aside from that, all of us are stuck in the muck of our own holiness and think that by our life and works we can pacify God's judgment and earn a place in heaven. All we accomplish by this is that we become even worse and grow more hostile towards the judgment day.

I won't say anything about the large group of people who look for all their pleasure and comfort here in this life, despise God's Word, and won't give a penny for God and his kingdom. It's no surprise if such people are aggravated by hearing about the resurrection. But to us, this message is pure comfort and joy because we hear that our greatest treasure is already in heaven. Only a small part remains on earth, which Christ will resurrect and draw to himself, as easily as a person awakening from sleep.



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# Family of the Month: the Wongs

by Elsa Wong



There are four members in my family: my husband, Henry, our two sons, Richard and Raymond, and myself. Henry and I immigrated to America more than 30 years ago. We met each other in college and settled in San Francisco after we were married. Henry works at a computer company that supplies computers to hospitals and government agencies. His job is to do the final testing of computers before shipping. Henry is a diligent worker. He is also an easy-going person and he cares for everyone in our family.

My personality is totally opposite from my husband. I am very meticulous and strong-minded. I work as an accountant for an insurance broker.

During my 30 plus years of working, I witnessed the ups and downs of many businesses. I personally experienced the arrogant behavior of a successful businessman and also witnessed the helplessness of a failure. That caused me to deeply understand that nothing in this world is forever. Sometimes I wondered what are the ultimate things we are seeking for. Praise the Lord! Two years ago I finally realized that only God's love can fill the emptiness in my heart. There was a real peace within me after I was baptized and became a Christian. I also thank God for leading my husband to New Life to learn His Words through the work of Holy Spirit.

Richard works at the same place as my husband. He graduated with a computer engineering degree. Now he is an IT manager in the company. Richard is a very active person. Besides working, he loves outdoor activities. Richard has many hobbies; he likes computers, auto repairs and outdoor sports. He also coaches at his former grammar school four days a week. He always says that there is a great sense of satisfaction in witnessing the growth of a student.

Raymond majored in marketing and is working at Fry's Electronics now. He is a buyer for the company and he has to deal with vendors often; therefore, he is very sharp in numbers. Raymond is a very intelligent person; he does not have the confusion of this generation's youngsters. He realizes the goals that he has in life. He believes that life is full of opportunities – if you go forward with a purpose, success is within reach.

Our family lives an ordinary life, which is a blessing. Now my two sons are occupied with the earthly desires. They both graduated from Catholic school. They have heard of salvation when they were young, and they still pray in their daily lives. I pray that the Holy Spirit may soon work in their hearts, so that they will also be baptized and become the children of God's Kingdom.

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## Come Celebrate EASTER With Us!

Easter Sunday

April 11th

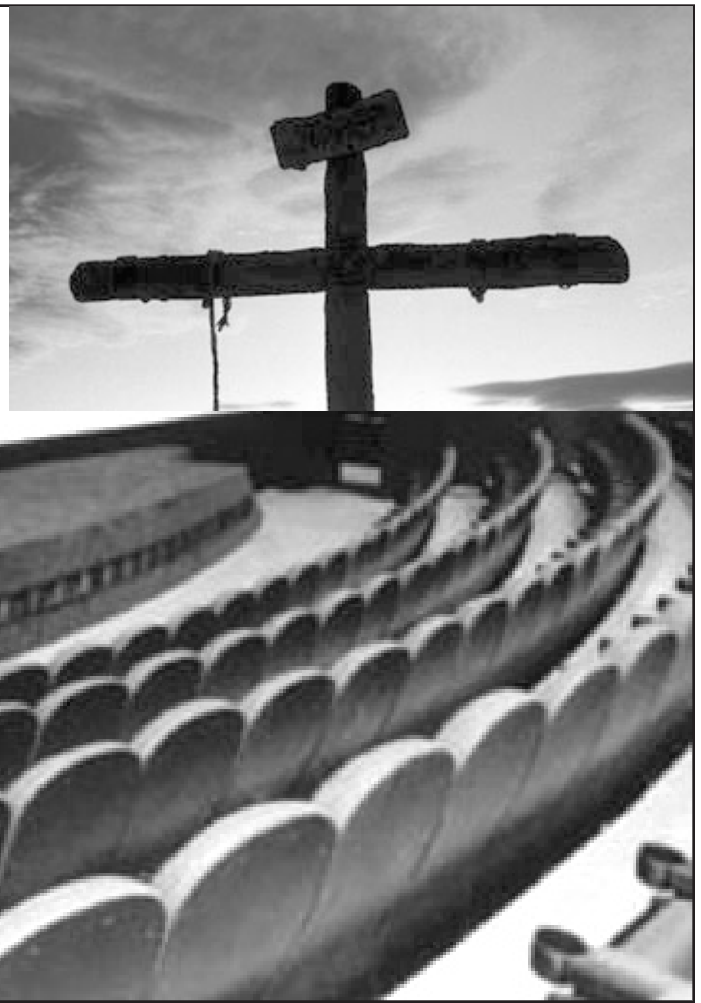
10am English & Cantonese Combined

Worship & Luncheon

..and don't forget to bring a friend!

## The Passion of the Christ

by Justin Lum



You'd have to be living under a seriously isolated rock if you have not heard of *The Passion of the Christ*, as some have hyped the film more than the Second Coming. It has dominated the box office, grossing hundreds of millions of dollars within the last five weeks. The movie, itself, is very good. Think of it as an intense look at the last 12 hours of Jesus' life. 12 hours that show Jesus being betrayed, insulted, beaten and crucified... and you thought you were having a bad day.

Watching Jesus being, literally, tortured to death leaves me with somewhat conflicting feelings. On the one hand, I know everything was fake because it was, after all, just a movie. But on the other, bigger, more important hand, I also know that the movie was telling a true story – a story that pitted Jesus in the most heinous of physically and mentally draining beatings.

In my mind, I was telling the men beating Jesus to stop and telling Caiphus that he was a nut. But really, they aren't the ones to blame. If I want to see who is to blame for Jesus' excruciating pain and suffering, all I need is a mirror because each sinful thought I have cruelly twists the crown of thorns further down upon Jesus' head and each sinful action I do is another flesh-ripping lash across his back. I'm the one that should be scourged and crucified. But I'm not. Instead, I have the gift of eternal life. Jesus died so that I can live. He didn't have to do it. But he did.

Some have seen *The Passion of the Christ* and have made a controversy out of it. Is there too much gore and violence in the film? Is it anti-Semitic? Why was that baby so ugly? So on and so forth... But it's not about any of that. It's ALL about JESUS. And it's ALL about the PASSION OF CHRIST. (Duh.)