

NEW LIFE NEWS

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LCMS NEWS
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LCMS Releases New Web Site Design

The new site, launched Dec. 18, consolidates more than 20 individual departmental web sites, including LCMS World Mission, LCMS World Relief, the President's Office, Higher Education, Black Ministry, and District and Congregational Services.

Third 'Igniting' event looks at worship attendance There is no single formula for increasing worship attendance in Synod congregations, but lots of ideas and a range of approaches to share.

That is one way to sum up the Nov. 14-15 "One Mission Ablaze: Igniting Congregations" event at Kings of Kings Lutheran Church here that gathered representatives of 23 Synod congregations among those reporting the highest increases in average worship attendance from 1997 to 2001.

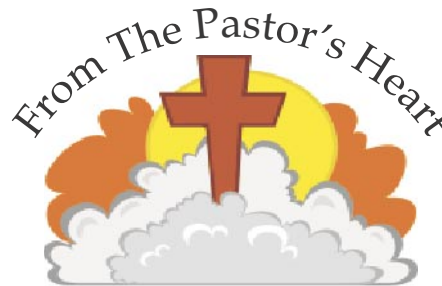
World Mission, partners plan Ablaze! event

If every Lutheran church body is already doing outreach, then what's so special about the Ablaze! movement?, wondered Dr. David Tswaedi, bishop of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. Ablaze! is LCMS World Mission's initiative to reach 100 million people with the Gospel by 2017.

COP: Seminarians' wives need to be members of LCMS congregations Should wives of seminary students necessarily be Missouri Synod Lutherans? Yes, says the Synod's Council of Presidents (COP).

Inside this issue:

From the Pastor's Heart:
 "Lift High The Cross in 2004!" 1-2
 "Forgiveness" (Chinese) 3
 "Dr., Can You Fix My Spouse?" 4
 "Celebrating Christmas" 5-6
 Calendar 7



Lift High The Cross in 2004!

In 2004 God intends for us to live in the victory of the cross. The Israelites, fulfilling their God given mission to enter and conquer the Promised Land, approached and then miraculously crossed the Jordan on dry ground. At Gilgal they established their beachhead for entering Canaan. Before them was Jericho, and many other blessings, but the route to fulfilling God's highest purpose for their lives would also take them through major battles. This is characteristic of the Christian life: The greater the advancement for God's Kingdom, the greater the battle we must wage against the devil, the world, and against our old sinful nature. The Christian who presses on, right into God's highest will, will secure the best. But before we enter battle, we must learn some foundational lessons of how to wait on God!

Gilgal was important as a base of operations for Joshua: At Gilgal the 12 stones, taken from the middle of the Jordan, were set up to remind the Israelites of God's awesome power. At Gilgal all Israel was consecrated as God's holy covenant people through circumcision. At Gilgal "... the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal [which sounds like the Hebrew word for "roll"] to this day. (Joshua 5:9 ESV) At Gilgal the Israelites celebrated Passover and first began to eat "some of the produce of the land." At Gilgal Joshua had his command and communications center. To Gilgal Joshua and the Israelites repeatedly returned after victories and even during military operations. If the Israelites were to be victorious, the vital life giving channels between Gilgal and the successfully expanding front lines had to be clear.

We as Christians must also have our "Gilgal": We enter the Promised Land of forgiveness and eternal life by God's miracle of faith through hearing God's Word. The Bible gives us stones of remembrance, crying out to us God's reality of grace: The manger... The cross... Jesus' empty tomb! By Baptism Jesus makes us His holy covenant people, the Passover Lamb's blood saves us, our reproach is rolled away, our old "self-centered"

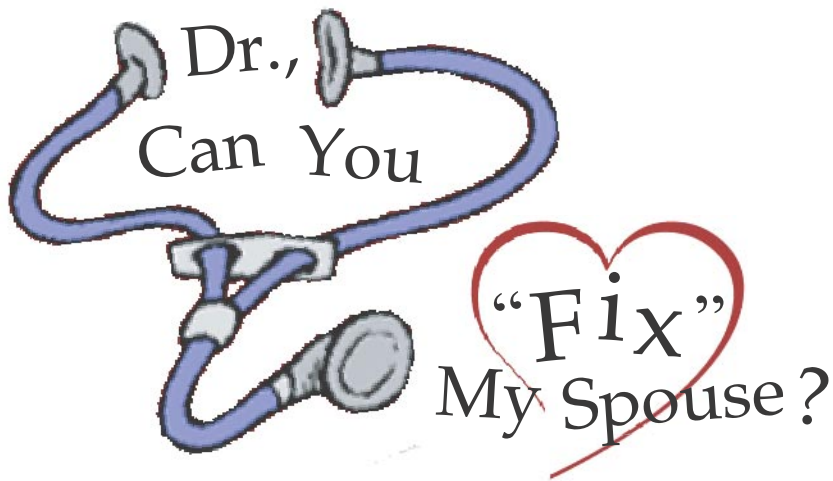
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selves die with Christ, He gives us resurrection life as "Christ-centered" people, He equips and empowers us by His Spirit, and we begin to taste the fruit of the Promised Land. Regardless of whether returning from victories in Christ or possibly a defeat, through His Word and Sacraments we receive His vital supplies and communication. Let nothing block these life giving channels, and return often to "Gilgal," then He will use New Life to do great things for Him in 2004!

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Chip<><

“Forgiveness”





So you fell in love with each other, got engaged, planned the most perfect wedding, said, "I do," and enjoyed a romantic honeymoon with the one you love. But a year later you're asking yourself, "Where's the romance now? Is the honeymoon over?"

Do you feel like you've traded in romance for the everyday conflict or bickering, and a spouse who doesn't seem to care about what you need or want?

Many of us turn to books on relationship healing, or quizzes on love, expectations or relationship satisfaction. Some investigate the Top 10's of marriage mistakes and romance failures, or maybe even inquire what's in the stars from a "psychic". My guess it that the majority of couples have their eyes and ears glued to the television as Dr. Phil McGraw amazes the audience with his profound knowledge on how to build a perfect relationship on The Oprah Show. But does absorbing all the information you can find about how to fix your marriage automatically make your relationship a comfortable place once again? Not really.

When you find yourself in an argument with your spouse, it's usually about something he or she did or did not do, or even said that has caused the conflict. And it's usually a problem that has been discussed many times before. But the problem is not the other person, but rather the relationship. Communication breaks down; fingers start pointing and the partnership that once used the word "we" has now turned into two individuals using the word "ME." At this point, you are more interested in defending yourself than working together. However, it's the "we" that controls the mood, and once you can reestablish yourselves as allies, the better you'll be able to weather the storms that attempt to destroy your marriage.

The "we" didn't just appear when you vowed your love to each other on your wedding day. Instead, it needs to be built and constructed like a house, with a solid foundation, strong materials and a balance designed. The "we" is built on four pillars. Each pillar must be gradually built, and all four must stay balanced. The four pillars of the We are:

- Intellectual (good communication)
- Emotional (a safe place to control the mood)
- Physical (familiarity and respect)
- Spiritual (commitment and trust)

Each pillar deserves an equal amount of material and work to make it strong and secure, because they all work together to form a powerful WE. Remember to go to your heart, where Jesus lives, and ask yourself what's really important to you: your hurt feelings or your relationship? Ask God to help you be more like Jesus and love selflessly and forgive. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others," Philippians 2:3-4.

If you would like the FREE booklet, "Renew the Romance in Your Marriage," please call the phone number or write to the address below!
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Celebrating Christmas

By Dorcas Wong

‘Twas five nights before Christmas But, hey, we celebrate the Lord’s birth every single day of our lives, so why not do something special a little bit early.

Something new: dinner first. Full tables, and the youngsters generously served the food. Though many were in danger of going into a food coma, we rallied ourselves and headed upstairs to be refreshed by the night’s entertainment and teachings.

Our lovely MC, George, missing his lovely wife, Tomeka, who was unable to attend like so many of our brethren struck down by the cold bug, led us in a chorus of Christmas carols. It just doesn’t feel like Christmas until you’ve sung a round of “Jingle Bells.”

Following the sing-a-long, we had fabulous, talent-filled performances featuring appearances by:

Jason and Noreen – The singing sibling duet, with Jason on the electric guitar (Who else was surprised when he walked out on stage with the cherry red guitar?) and Noreen on the classic piano.

Aaron – Playing a nostalgic piano rendition of the Super Mario Bros. theme song.

David – Reciting a technical interpretation of “‘Twas the Night before Christmas.” Quite interesting, and many BIG words.

Kevin – who played a sweet version of “Jingle Bells” on his violin.



On to the Main Event: Battles and Babies, the message for the night, brought to you by Pastor Chip with translations by Yan Oi. The pastor brought up many examples of wars and battle (example: Waterloo) that seemed to define the times, yet reminded us of the babies that were also born during these times, whose quiet births would not be deemed significant until years later (example: Lincoln, Mendelssohn). And the ultimate example: the Age of Augustus and the Roman Empire which controlled a big chunk of the world, while “our little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.”

(Continued from page 5)

The gist is this even during death and violence and politics and war, what is really important, what has always been important, is the birth of Jesus Christ.

*“He did not use a silvery box
or paper green or red.
God laid his gift to us
Within a manger bed.”*

And one last thing, I definitely enjoyed this year’s take on the Nativity put on by our youth fellowship. Round of applause please for our ‘hallelujah’-ing angel, the shepherd of ‘PU’, Joseph and his ‘What now’s, ‘Who Me?’ Mary, ‘I Luuuuv You’ Jesus, and the only inanimate manger that speaks ‘What a bed.’

Good job, people, and hope to see you again this year.



H A P P Y N E W Y E A R !