



Jesus Alive Today

Empowered by the Spirit to experience and express the Living Jesus so many come to know Him

Newsletter of Renewal In Missouri (RIM), March 2005, Issue #59



India Ablaze!

The great harvest in India continues! For the seventh year in a row, United Evangelical Mission India (UEMI) held a short-term mission to India the first two weeks of November, 2004. UEMI is not only a sponsored mission of RIM, but also a partner with LCMS World Missions, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), and a member of the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies. Our group of 30 this year included three MD's and two nurses, so we were able for the first time to add medical clinics in many villages to our

Along with the medical "camps," as the Indians like to call them, we were blessed with three days of planning and visioning the future with the leadership of the IELC. We can see the possibility of indeed reaching another 25 million Indians by 2017, as reported recently in the LCMS *Harvest* publication. We held a conference for Indian women with about 400 in attendance, for Indian business people with 500 present, and for youth with 640 present.

Then on to the villages where we observed the work of the *Community Transformation Centers*. The "CTC's" are basically church-planting ventures modeled on the method of Jesus. Twelve lay evangelists are mentored by a seasoned pastor to go to villages where there are no Christians and to visit at least 1,000 homes



India medical camp

itinerary. Over 1,000 people were cared for in this land of beautiful people and many needs. In one place we came to the end of the day and told the people that we couldn't see any more patients, around 100 of them stormed the gates and broke through, standing in front of us insisting that we not leave until they all were seen. We did so.

the first year, to establish prayer cells, and then begin collecting these cells into congregations. The most recent CTC had begun in March, 2004, and in the following six months the 12 had planted 27 new churches averaging about 50 regular worshippers each. In the last 16 years, UEMI has presented the Gospel in over 3,000,000 homes, planted 490 churches, established eight orphanages with over 500 children, tutored thousands to lit-

eracy, and begun dozens of income generating projects to enable the new churches to be entirely self supporting by the end of their third year.

We invite anyone over the age of 14 to join us Nov. 1-11 in our next mission trip. Contact Rev. Don Miles: secondmile@aol.com. Some of the 2004 team offer the following testimonies concerning their experiences:

India Testimonies

I didn't know what to expect. I was going on this mission trip blind, unsure of what I was going to do when I got there. I knew why I was going. The Holy Spirit had touched me to assist the medical team and do anything else they needed help with. I was ablaze with the desire to go and help where I could, I signed up for most everything on the list, the Women's Conference, the Medical Clinic, the Orphanage Visits and the Talitha Cumi Women's Shelter.

We went to the CTC School (Christian Transformation Centers) and saw what God was doing there. It was unbelievable! What a concept! They are training village people converted to Christianity and sending them back into their village to plant churches within their own villages. Our group attended the school and saw 22 students in training. They were very enthusiastic about their new Christianity, so much so they wanted to share it with everyone. When we were there, they gave testimony on why they converted. There were some very sad and some near tragic stories which brought tears to my eyes.

(continued on page 4)

Holy Spirit, help us overflow with **vibrant faith, bold witness, dynamic worship** and **fervent prayer** !



From The Editor

Delbert Rossin

Welcome to this 59th edition of the RIM Newsletter, now renamed *Jesus Alive Today*. See the next page for a progress report on our **forward** plans. Please share this issue with your friends. If you would like to be part of our e-mail *Prayer Partners*, please mark the form on p. 7. I encourage you to obtain the new *Renewal Resources* in the next column . . . they have richly blessed my walk with Jesus.

We want to feature testimonies of God's grace and power in people's lives today. Do you have such a story of your own or that of a relative or friend? Please send it to us so that it might be an encouragement to others. RIM's message is about a living Christ who is so alive in people that others will come to know Him as Savior and Lord also.

We are so thankful to our Lord that contributions to RIM's ministry rebounded at the end of 2004, and we had one of our best years. (Starting in 2005, 6% of RIM's income will go to UEMI missions in India and 6% will go to ARM, Art Vincent's worldwide mission efforts.) Thank you for your gifts and prayers!

I encourage you to **Be Courageous** in 2005 (Rom. 8:28). This year we are stepping into the "unknown." Can we trust God? Look at that Scripture again and see that he is working **ALL THINGS** for good (for us); yes, even the "bad" things. In Romans 8:32 Paul says that God will give us "*all things in Christ.*" Face each day in 2005 confidently waiting for God to keep these promises.

May the Holy Spirit empower you to witness the love of Christ to others in word and deeds!



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Renewal Resources

Order the book from your Christian bookstore

How NOW Shall We Live? by Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey

The newest – and certainly the most important – of Charles Colson's books. The essence of this book is that the Christian faith is not just a theory, not just a system, not just a framework. It is an all-consuming way of life, robustly applicable to every minute of every day of the rest of your life. The authors show that the great spiritual battle today is a cosmic struggle between competing world views. This powerful book is what the Christian church needs to hear in the new millennium. (576 pages, Tyndale, 1999)

"Especially For Pastors" by Paul Anderson

A monthly newsletter filled with practical and inspirational wisdom that will encourage today's pastors. (\$10 for e-mail or \$20 for hard copy) Order from Lutheran Renewal, 2701 Rice St., Roseville, MN 55113 (651-490-1517) or <ilrc@aol.com>

"Lutheran Renewal Newsletter" This monthly publication comes from our sister renewal ministry and always brings the reader inspiring and informative reading. Order from the same address as the listing immediately above.

"The Healing Line" Edited by Francis MacNutt, this bi-monthly newsletter always brings up to date teaching and resources on the Christian healing ministry. (A \$20 contribution is suggested for new subscriptions.) Order from: Christian Healing Ministries, Inc. P.O. Box 9520, Jacksonville, FL 32208 (904-765-3332). To subscribe on-line: www.christianhealingmin.org

To order the following, please use the blank on page 7.

"Breaking Strongholds"

Paul Anderson identifies key strongholds of bondage in our lives and how we can break free through the power of the Spirit. (\$2.00)

"Healing A Father Wound"

A message bringing emotional and spiritual healing to those who carry wounds from the past. By Paul Anderson. (\$2.00)

"What About Baptism?"

Larry Christenson's 17 page booklet discusses Infant Baptism, immersion Baptism, Rebaptism and Baptism with the Holy Spirit. (\$2.50)

"Lutheran Charismatic Catechism"

Dr. Ted Jungkuntz answers renewal questions from both Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. (\$2.50 each; 5 or more, \$2.00)

"Pray For The Power Of The Spirit"

Del Rossin's tract is a Biblical study on releasing the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Revised and expanded 2005. (6 for \$1.00 or 100 for \$15.00)

"The Gift Of Tongues"

24 page booklet by Larry Christenson is a Biblical study of this spiritual gift. (\$2.50)

Power For Warfare

100 page book by Rev. Phil Gehlhar will help Christians use the Word of God to do the work of God in defeating God's enemies. (\$7.95)

Prayer Power

How prayer works for ourselves and others. 8.5 x 11, 88 pages. By Phil Gehlhar. (\$6.95)

Healing from Cancer and Diseases

Devotional studies by Phil Gehlhar on Psalm 130 to release God's healing power. (\$9.95)

"Fanning The Flame"

"What does Baptism in the Holy Spirit have to do with the Sacrament of Baptism?" Many references to early Church Fathers describing manifestations of spiritual gifts. (\$3.00)

Booklets by Paul Anderson (\$2.00 ea.)

- *"What About Healing?"*
- *"What About Demons?"*
- *"What About Holiness?"*
- *"What About Repentance?"*
- *"What About Heaven and Hell?"*
- *"Guidelines for Prayer Ministry"*

Special: all six for \$10.00

Be All Thy Graces Now Outpoured

Former LCMS pastor Rod Lensch tells his story and appeals to the church to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. (209 pp.) (**was \$12, now \$9.00**)

Confirmation and the Charismata

117 page book by Dr. Jungkuntz explores moving beyond a mere ritual to what the Holy Spirit would do in our lives. (\$14.50)

Resources to use for further study. Contents are the author's view, not necessarily that of RIM.

RIM Moves Forward

In our previous edition we mentioned that we believe the Lord has led us to be more proactive and on the offensive with a kingdom-harvest emphasis. RIM's message is: *"The living Christ, alive in people's words and deeds that cause others to say, 'truly He is the Son of God!'"*

Here is a progress report on the following:

1. Pastors and wives prayer/fellowship gatherings

There is a tremendous (often unmet) need of ministering to them today. Bev and I currently are part of one that meets bi-monthly. It is a precious time where sanctification is not just a doctrine but a living reality in a "safe" place for pastors and wives to worship, pray, eat, and bless one another – a real "oasis in the desert!" Is anyone else helping pastors and wives to pray for one another for healing, laying on of hands, etc.? Our plan is to raise up new groups in 2005 and to keep expanding beyond that date.

We have pastors who are planning to start new groups in the following areas:

- Eastern Michigan
- Toledo, Ohio
- El Paso, Texas
- Charleston, South Carolina
- Walden, New York
- Albany, NY
- Seattle, Washington
- Western Chicago suburbs
- Milwaukee area

If you are a pastor and would like information on one of the above groups or would like to start a group in your area, please contact RIM.

2. New church starts

Actually we're looking at a new model of "church" (*outside the box*) with no buildings, boards, committees, etc. – just people relating together in worship, the Word and sacraments, care, and especially outreach to the community so that new people come to know Christ. We have been doing this in central Wisconsin for six years, and it has been some of the most fulfilling ministry I have ever known. It is *"doing the stuff" without* all the pressure of parish life as we have known it. It is an ideal way for "retired" pastors to continue to serve the Lord in the "main thing." (Lay people, could also do it.) Our plan is to identify three new sites and leaders by early 2005, and then continue to add more.

So far, there are tentative plans to plant new churches in these areas:

- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Detroit, Michigan
- Akron, Ohio
- Western Pennsylvania
- Charleston, South Carolina
- Columbus, Ohio

3. Foreign missions

RIM will work through *United Evangelical Mission International* (UEMI), led by indigenous missionary John Peter Kirubakaran in India and Don Miles here in the States. See the article on the first page of this edition as well as the powerful testimonies from last November's mission trip to India..

A Testimony

At the age of two our adopted son, Jeremy, was diagnosed with verbal dyspraxia and at this point in time had not spoken a word. The future of his ability to speak was bleak, but we were willing to do whatever we could to help him. The word that the Lord gave to us was, *"From the lips of infants and children, I have ordained praise."* Four years later, Jeremy speaks well enough to be understood most of the time. During this time we have prayed for him and with him and talked to him about Jesus, especially that he loves us and takes care of us.

We are confident that the Lord had healed Jeremy of this problem, but now as he has entered kindergarten, we were concerned about a whole new set of problems. Jeremy was unable to do a number of developmental things that are necessary to learn to read. We were advised to see a neurologist to find out if there is some dysfunction in one of the lobes of his brain.

On this particular day, he was to receive an EEG and we had prepared him for what they were going to do. I told him that it would not hurt and that I would be there to hold his hand so he could lie still for an hour, which I was convinced this active six year old could not do. When we arrived they informed me that I could not go in with him. He was hesitant at first, so I assured him that I would be praying for him. Earlier that day I had asked our prayer team to be praying at that particular time.

He went in and an hour later came out with a smile on his face. The technician told me that he had fallen asleep. I was overjoyed that the Lord had intervened and allowed him to be at rest during this time.

When we arrived home, I said to Jeremy, *"I am sorry that I told you I would go in with you. I didn't know they would not let me."* He looked up at me and said, *"That's all right, Mommy, Jesus came and held my hand. I was talking to him when the lady told me to be quiet. So Jesus told me to go to sleep."* Emotional tears flowed from my face as I thanked our Heavenly Father for sending Jesus to Jeremy. He had answered our prayers beyond what we had asked. Praise be to him who is so full of grace and mercy that he cares about the needs of his children!

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(India Ablaze Testimonies . . . cont. from p. 1)

All these stories ended joyfully with a new life through Jesus.

When we got there, we visited a newly planted church. They were all seated on rugs and the Pastor was standing and reading the Bible in their language. They were all very attentive, even the young children sat very patiently listening. They were in the middle of a small village on a dirt pathway. When we approached the group, their very white smiles appeared like stars in the night. It made all of us smile too. The reception was very warm and genuine. They sang songs of praise, and as we Americans sat there watching all this take place, you could see in the not too far distance the other villagers coming in closer as their curiosity got the better of them. Something tells me they might be joining the group the next time. You could tell they were hungry to learn about God's Word, and it was melting my heart too as the Pastor read. At that moment I felt Jesus' presence among the people. He was planting seeds and growing within everyone there.

What an awesome experience to be a part of that very moving, humbling, spiritual time. These people gave up a day's pay from work to attend. Do you think many Americans would do that? The harvest is ripe in India!

- Michelle Wagner

- One of the reasons I enjoy being a part of the India Missions group is the experience of seeing God at work, and it never fails to impact my own relationship with God. Watching the team minister and grow, being a part of a mixed and disparate group, always helps to stretch my own limits and concepts of ministry. But probably the greatest blessing comes with seeing how God moves in the native pastors and the laity in India. Other cultures often challenge my concepts of what life should consist. To see ministry occur with so few resources and to see how God changes lives with much less than we have makes me question what I assume are necessities for doing God's work. I was deeply touched by the commitment of the CTC participants to reaching the unchurched – going into villages and places where they might easily be met by hostility, and going with very little in their “wallets.” It's as if they are challenging God to meet their needs, and yet, I wonder if they even think of it as a challenge to God – probably more like a child's faith that God will do what He has promised.

The ministries of Talitha Cumi and the orphanages also were wonderful examples of what God will do when given a chance - using whatever resources are available. The discipline of the children, their obvious joy, the

apparent good education and training, all indicate a very well run organization.

I have to thank pastor Don and Judy Miles for their commitment to UEMI and supporting and encouraging John Peter. I can honestly say I know of no other ministry that is as spiritually healthy as this one is.

- Bill Rasch

- The most exciting thing for me was to participate in a small way or just to observe the five churches that were only about six months old. Only one had a building – a stick walled and thatched roof place in between two plaster buildings. The other churches were meeting out under a tarp or tent in the open air. The vibrancy of the worship, the depth of devotion, and the peace and joy of the people's countenance were so refreshing compared to the rest of the Hindu culture – lifeless, shallow, and somber. Jesus has truly made a difference for those people.

The other great joy was to be “hands on” with the people we were wanting to reach. The personal contact and extra time with the children at the orphanage and the sick and needy at the medical clinics gave me a chance to touch and be touched with the love of God incarnate. It was not about verbal communication but a physical connection to let the love and life of Jesus imparted to me be imparted through me.

- Paul Koehn



India prayer ministry

Editor's Note:

Your contribution to RIM's ministry automatically supports this India mission work, (RIM sends 6% of its income to UEMI.)

Pentecost – Then and Now

I want to be in on the move of God in the world today . . . how about you?



Pentecost Sunday! What a glorious day for a Christian! Recently, I felt I was receiving a fresh “revelation” of the Spirit’s work and ministry. I especially enjoyed rereading Acts 2 and some new and exciting things “jumped” out at me. When the Holy Spirit came on that day, there were certain manifestations that marked the beginning of His ministry in the church age and these “signs” still come today and will continue to come in the future. Let me share my thoughts with you:

- The first supernatural “sign” was **FOR THE EAR** – *“A sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind”* (Acts 2:2). They heard something remarkable! Something new. Something special. Not for the eye, but for the ear. I was struck again about the importance of hearing God’s Word. It’s His Word that precedes the coming of the Spirit in my life, too. *“So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”* (Rom.10:17). It’s the Word that brings the

RIM Needs Your Help!

RIM’s ministry is dependent on the generous offerings of our readers. Please use the form on page 7 as you pray about how the Lord would have you contribute. God bless you and thank you for your ongoing prayers!

conviction and truth needed to cause us to respond to the Spirit. Notice that this “sound” was of great force, but without any physical power. They could hear it, but couldn’t feel it. The Holy Spirit is unique! Sovereign! Goes where He wills. Touches whom He wills. I asked myself: *“Can I “hear” Him? Do I desire His presence anew? Am I moving where He is moving?”* Are **you** responding to His power?”

- The second supernatural “sign” was **FOR THE TONGUE**– *“And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* Before we can speak **FOR** the Lord as the Spirit would lead, we need our lips to be cleansed. Not our words only but our thoughts, intentions of our hearts, etc. need a cleansing fire. After this cleansing comes: *“Here am I, send me”* (Is.6:8). I asked myself: *“Am I daily allowing this cleansing?”* Are you aware of your talk? What comes out of your heart? Are you praying for that cleansing every day?

- The third supernatural “sign” was **FOR WITNESSING POWER** – *“But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them. . . now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ . . . and fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. . . and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”* They heard, they were cleansed, now they were ready to be sent out! The hearing, the cleansing, the witnessing power resulted in many being saved that day. They heard and saw a miracle! The Spirit’s power prepared the people to receive and repent and respond to the call. Again, I asked myself: *“Am I witnessing **MORE** power in my life?”* Are you witnessing **IN** power? Do people come to salvation because of your words? Are you sharing your faith (what God has done for you) with all you meet? Are you ready to be sent wherever He wills?

All of these thoughts began to flood my mind and I thought:

“What could happen today if we believers heard, were cleansed and spoke ‘as the Spirit gave utterance’ to a dying world?”

Imagine! Think of the power that would be available! Wouldn’t it be great to see *“fear come upon every soul”* and *“signs and wonders being done”* (Acts 2:43) in our homes, our churches and in our own lives? Are you waiting breathlessly to see this happen? I sure am! I want to be in on the move of God in the world today. I want to flow where He flows and march where he marches – to be a part of that great army of God moving across this land. So, I’ll continue to pray every day: *“Lord, give **ME** another Pentecost at any cost. Use **ME** to speak your Word with boldness. Empower **ME** to be a means to bring many to You while there is still time.”* Dare I ask, dear reader, **HOW ABOUT YOU?**

Beverly Rossin
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“Fanning The Flame”

Thirty page booklet edited by Roman Catholic scholars Kilian McDonald and George T. Montague pursues the question, “What does Baptism in the Holy Spirit have to do with the Sacrament of Baptism?” Especially challenging are references from early Church leaders (Justin Martyr, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Tertullian, etc.) who vividly describe manifestations of spiritual gifts in connection with adult baptisms during the first centuries of the Church.

Use blank on p. 7 to order.

Symptoms of The Great Apostasy

(What follows is my response to an article by a pastor acquaintance of mine in a publication of an on-campus ministry in NYC. The premise of his article is that Jesus stating that *"He is the way, the truth and the life"* is a claim of Christian "superiority" and gets in the way of peace between religions. He writes, *"I affirm that their traditions offer as meaningful a way to God as mine. For them, Jesus is **not** the way."* Perhaps what follows will give you a little help and insight into dealing with this ever encroaching false gospel of many paths to God:)

Dear Friend,

My reading of your article leaves me with the impression that compromise reigns in the university halls of academia. Compromise is a logical strategy to keep many in the arena of religion smiling. With minimal effort we could rationalize a way to make every spiritual path lead to heaven.

Quotes

(Feel free to use these in your ministry)

"Jesus Christ is not valued **at all** until he is valued **above all**."

"Your intercession may be the key to God's intervention."

"Christ became a curse **for** us to remove the curse **from** us."

"Every child may not deserve a hug, but every child needs a hug."

"The more attracted we are to Christ, the less we'll be distracted by the world."

*"If God brings you **to** it, he will bring you **through** it."*

"The measure of God's love is that he loves without measure."

"The heart of worship is worship from the heart."

"Only after talking to God about people are we ready to talk to people about God."

Imagine the picture . . . Billy Graham arm in arm with Rev. Moon who is hooked by arm to Gandhi who is hooked to Joseph Smith who is hooked to the Dali Lama who is hooked to Confucius who is hooked to Mohammed who is hooked to a local guru . . . and the list grows longer as does the chain of religious notables hooked together arm in arm blissfully passing through the gates of heaven into the presence of their definition of God. Then the scene turns to God graciously welcoming everyone, in the name of Allah and Buddha and Jesus and whomever.

Friend, it seems to me there is something very off center in that line of thinking when compared to the teachings of basic Christianity. The release of such teaching on a college campus to impressionable minds through a Christian ministry is to me very troubling. God does speak quite pointedly and graphically about misleading people with a twisted or false gospel. As we both know, the Scripture I'm talking about refers to a millstone being wrapped about the neck of the false teacher and heaving him into the water. I, for one, fear God.

As Christian Bible teachers we yield and submit ourselves to the absolute authority of the Bible. The Bible tells us that the tomb was empty. Perhaps I don't understand your essay, but it seems to issue forth a personalized definition of Christianity that flies in the face of the teachings of the prophets and apostles of the Bible. To believe in a Jesus who is one of many or several ways to God is simply not believing in the Jesus of the Bible.

God's love letter to humanity from Genesis to Revelation seems to me to be a far cry from being called a *"claim to superiority."* Rather than a claim to superiority, how about a simple proclamation of truth . . . Jesus is **the way, the truth and the life**. To take issue with that statement is not only a debate with the Bible of Christianity, but would be a debate with Jesus, the Son of God.

In light of the cross, Jesus' statement is clearly not arrogant "superiority," for these words are spoken by the one who humbled himself to become a servant, laying down his life for us all. This is **the way** of love, not superiority.

True Christianity preaches Jesus. God came in the flesh and died for us on the cross, as the only way to God. Our call is to share this good news and leave the converting to God. Sometimes the messenger loses his life in the process. I can only wonder what the Christian martyrs in heaven would say if they read your article. Perhaps they would weep.

I'll try to bring home my point. All that I can say is that a person born **again** from above, by revelational truth, could never sit next to another person of another faith on a park bench and be in agreement with and encourage their path to heaven/God if it excluded Jesus the Christ as the only way. Perhaps you would call that arrogant "superiority." I would call it gracious, humble truth. You state in the essay, *"I affirm that their tradition offers as meaningful a way to God as mine. For them, Jesus is **not** the way."*

If you can be at peace regarding their eternal destination and accept your own quote as a Christian way of truth, then speaking between you and me, friend, we are two Bible teachers not believing in the same Jesus. If I'm right, then the way to heaven is as "narrow" as the Scripture teaches. Narrow not because all are not "covered" with the atoning blood of Christ, the Lamb, the Son of God; but because not all believe and accept that blood as their covering and passage into a vital relationship with the living God. An encounter with Jesus is not a tradition – it is a living relationship.

I pray the eyes of your heart be opened, friend. For whatever a little lay-evangelist's opinion is worth in the context of your sphere of Professors and Doctors of Theology, then I humbly believe your eyes are shut tight. I write to you as a thankful, forgiven sinner through the shed blood and broken body of Jesus of Nazareth, the only name under heaven by which men can be saved.

Friend, please read John 10:1-18!

Sincerely,
Bruce Carlson
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Jesus Alive Today (formerly "RIM Report") is published three times a year in March, July, and November. Authors welcome your comments; their names and addresses are included for your convenience.

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03-2005

Something To Think About . . .

Let's Sing To The Lord!

Over 300 times Scripture instructs believers to *"sing the Lord."* The Lutheran Church has been known as *"the singing church."* Martin Luther wrote thirty-two hymns and restored hymn singing to the people. St. Augustine wrote: *"Singing comes from joy and love, you want to sing about what you love."* The psalmist declares: *"I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live"* (Psalm 104:33). But why is singing unto the Lord so important for the individual Christian and for the body of believers assembled together?

- Singing provides a ready-made vocabulary as we identify with the Christian beliefs and experiences of the writers of the hymn or song.
- Singing quickly unifies our minds, hearts, and voices as we use the same words, tempo, and tune.
- Singing releases our inner spiritual emotions in an acceptable way to God, peers and to oneself.
- Singing moves each worshipper from a "listener only" mode to be a "participant." That is what God wants in worship. Worship is not meant for a few pros with spectators.
- Singing transforms the troops. Every revival has its songs, for they help the "whole man" respond to the word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Salvation Army's General Booth said, *"Who said the devil has all the good music?"*

Therefore, we are not just to sing songs but to praise the Lord with our minds **ON** the meaning of the words and our hearts **IN** them. Don't sing to or for people, but **to** the Lord. For singing to be worship, the singer must consciously be singing about or to the Lord.

A Problem Today:

Too often in churches we have good musicians who seem to be performing (like at a concert) and the people are listening rather than participating. And this problem can occur using traditional or contemporary music. The question we must ask is, *"Are the people really singing to the Lord?"* It is really tragic if the reaction after the service is mainly *"What a wonderful music group!"* The music group dare never call attention to itself, but rather must assist the people to **participate** as worshipers, not merely as listeners. Another trend today is difficult music with a beat that only the worship group can handle. Also, good worship doesn't have to be so loud that it almost blows out people's eardrums. Who said that loud is best? It seems we are taking some of our cues from today's music culture.

It is time to restore **"participatory singing to the Lord"** to our churches. That is the kind of singing the Holy Spirit uses to refresh and build up the body of believers and that will also minister to the seeker who needs to come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Something to think about . . .

-The Editor

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Worship Service Testimonies?

Lutheran worship is rich with its heritage of liturgy, Word, Sacraments, hymnody, etc. Certainly the objective Gospel of what Christ has done for us on the Cross and his glorious resurrection is the foundation and basis of our gathering together in worship.

Sometimes Lutheran worship has been criticized as being too clergy dominated with not enough opportunity for the laity to be more involved in a “participatory” way.

Many congregations are finding it edifying to provide a brief time, perhaps after the sermon, for people from the congregation to share what the sermon meant to them, other Scriptures fitting in with the theme for the

day, or personal blessings of God in their lives like answered prayers and witnessing opportunities.

These brief “testimonies” or sharings do not distract from the service, but rather underscore from “satisfied believers” that Christ is alive in their lives. Often these sharings result in the singing of a praise hymn or chorus as the congregation gives glory to God for what he has done.

When the prayers for the day follow such a sharing time, they often are prayed with more expectation since they follow the encouraging and confirming testimonies of previously answered prayers. St. Paul in 2 Cor. 1:11 points out that thankfulness flows to God when people testify to answered prayers.

Pastors need not fear introducing this feature into their services, for one of the thrusts of the Reformation is the “priesthood of all believers.” So why not let the believers who gather for worship have the opportunity to share in the congregation what Jesus has done in their lives?



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