

# JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN Mission

September 2014 | Vol. 1 | No. 2

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Editorial office:  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road,  
St. Louis, MO 63122-7294,  
314-996-1202

Published by The Lutheran Church—  
Missouri Synod.

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This journal may also be found at [www.lcms.org/journaloflutheranmission](http://www.lcms.org/journaloflutheranmission).

From the President

# THE HOLY CROSS AND MISSIONS

**W**HAT DO MISSIONS AND PERSECUTION have to do with each other? Why is the “holy cross,” as Luther called the seventh mark of the Church, the theme of this issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Mission*? In John 15:20, Jesus said, “A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.” Christians who go out into the world can and should expect to be treated as our master, Jesus, was treated. The message of the Gospel is either received with great joy, or it is rejected. With the rejection of the Gospel comes persecution. The Lord promises that His Word will not return empty and that He will work all things for a blessing and the good of His Church.

The articles in this issue of the journal are from the International Lutheran Council (ILC)’s fifth world seminary conference — centered on the theme “Suffering,

Persecution and Martyrdom as a Mark of the Church” — held in Palanga, Lithuania, Aug. 8–11, 2013. The Lutheran churches of the world have faced persecution in different forms. For instance, during the Communist rule in Lithuania, half of all the Lutheran pastors were imprisoned and executed — a higher percentage than any other religious group. Lutherans in Africa face persecution from Islam, while here in the Western world, particularly in Europe and the United States, the culture and secular governments are becoming increasingly

hostile to the Church. These papers represent the voice of Lutheranism from around the world, explore how the Church has suffered and offer insight into how we might face the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel to a hostile world.

Although we can and must expect persecution and opposition to the proclamation of the Gospel and resistance to planting Lutheran churches around the world, we have the promise of Jesus that the gates of hell will not prevail against the

Church. In the midst of trouble and suffering, we can expect a blessing from our gracious Lord.

President Matthew C. Harrison

“For I decided  
to know nothing  
among you  
except Jesus  
Christ and Him  
crucified”

(1 Cor. 2:2).