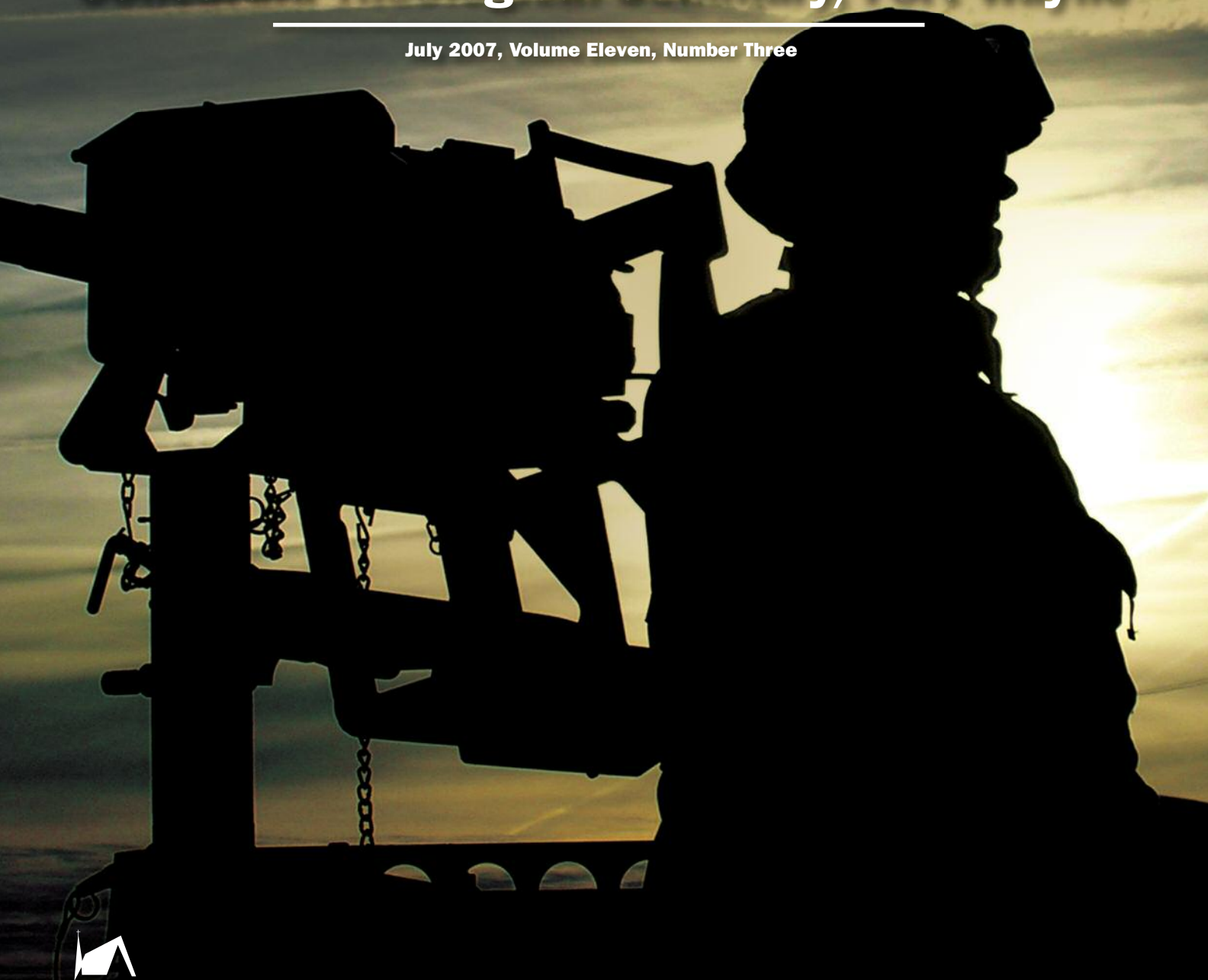


# For the **Life of the World**

**Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne**

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July 2007, Volume Eleven, Number Three



## **Kneeling in the Mud**

Dr. Daniel Gard

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## For the Life of the World

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## FEATURES

### 17 Kneeling in the Mud

by Dr. Daniel Gard

Since September 11, 2001, the lives of our citizens and especially those citizens in uniform have radically changed. Christians may differ on the political issues of the war in Iraq, but what cannot be debated is that those who serve in the armed forces are more than cogs in a military machine. They are human beings that need the great Good News of Jesus Christ. The Son of God comes into our world right in the midst of the muck and mire of our own making. Yet He comes not to condemn us, but to bring His own righteousness and peace to those who know only sin and warfare.

### 18 Bringing the Word to God's People

by Pam Knepper

Rev. Kavouras serves as the chaplain for the Cleveland EMS, the police department, as well as the FBI helping to provide great comfort and light in the middle of so much darkness by bringing the people who work in those departments the Word of God. The sacramental understanding of the ministry became even more important on September 11, 2001.

### 23 Chaplaincy in Action

by Lt. Richard Malmstrom

Without a doubt, military chaplaincy is incredibly physically, spiritually, and emotionally demanding. Spiritually, it is demanding to be the voice of reason and hope in the midst of chaos. At the same time, military chaplaincy affords rewards beyond measure. As God carried Lt. Malmstrom and his Marines through the worst they could imagine, he saw faith grow. Every church has its own unique challenges and opportunities to proclaim the Gospel. The military chaplaincy is indeed unique. It is like no other.

### 4 Chaplain in Training

by Shawn Found

### 8 A Life of Service... Continued

by Valerie Kister



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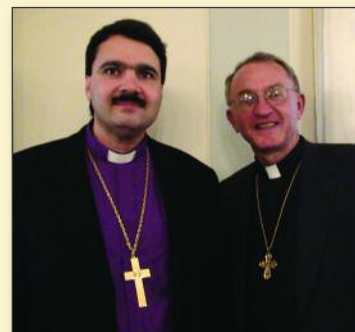


*L to R: Archbishop Janis Vanags (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia), Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania), Dr. William Weinrich (CTS deployed to Luther Academy in Latvia), Igor Kisyev (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Siberia), Vladislav Ivanov (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Siberia), and Alexander Hahn (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Siberia).*

Concordia Theological Seminary rejoiced on May 6, 2007 at the Consecration of the Rev. Vsevolod Lytkin as Bishop of The Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Archbishop Andres Podor of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church was the chief consecrator at the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Tallinn, Estonia. President Wenthe, Dr. Timothy Quill, and Dr. William Weinrich represented the seminary. Concordia Theological Seminary has supported Bishop Lytkin's leadership in establishing a seminary program by deploying the Rev. Alan Ludwig and sending professors as needed to Novosibirsk, Siberia. This seminary has become the source of faithful Lutheran pastors who have established preaching stations and congregations throughout Siberia. What a wonderful day for this exciting missionary work to be recognized by all the bishops of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Concordia Theological Seminary is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate and partner with Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin and his pastors.

*Dean O. Wenthe*

Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe  
President, Concordia Theological Seminary



Fathers, brothers, and sisters: I would like to begin my sermon with a quote from the song of a famous bard of the Soviet time.

I remember, I was silly and young,  
I heard from my parent  
How my parent destroyed  
The Church of Christ the Savior.

You know that this is not black Russian humor. There is history in these words, history of my country of Russia as well as history of your country of Estonia, since by evil destiny you were forced to share our sufferings with us. For over fifty years, you were part of the Soviet Union, the country that was founded by hangmen and tzar-murderers.

This country is no more. We now live in free democratic countries. Still, almost all of us have come out of that Soviet time. Some people were touched more by this, others less. Some tried to oppose the regime, others have realized all the terror of the Soviet system only after its fall.

“I remember I was silly and young.” From a Christian perspective, one realizes that the most terrible thing was that such a great multitude of people was born in unbelief. They lived all their life in unbelief and the most terrible thing is that they also died in unbelief. I don’t like to speak about politics, particularly while preaching, but it’s impossible to forget those times. I remember them especially when I visit Estonia, as it was here that all my Christian life began at that time.

Just like many others, I was looking for God. I remember how “silly and young” I was, yet, gradually, little by little, I began to seek answers to *eternal questions*. My family was not Christian. Nevertheless, my parents taught me not to trust Soviet propaganda, and so I did not. Since Soviet propaganda said that God did not exist, it seemed quite likely that he did. Thus my Christian faith began due to my parents, though they did not tell me about God directly.

Like many other people at that time, we also understood that it was impossible for God not to exist. What would one live for if one’s life were limited to earth, not even in a sense that we were just temporary dwellers on this earth, but, as one priest once wrote, “if there is no God . . . then all humankind is found collectively not on earth, but in the earth, in our common grave.”

I understood little of religion, but I knew that there must be something besides this material world, in which we live, only to die.

I purchased books, atheistic books, for there were no others at the time, and I tried to find quotations from the Bible in them, words about God, and I found them and tried to understand. Obviously, the atheists quoted the word of God only for critique. But, we were *Soviet* people—we got used to interpreting all things official backwards.

Finally, God’s grace led me to Estonia. Here I met Christians for the first time in my life. I will never forget how I talked to an old man who was the guard at the Holy Spirit Church. Then I spoke with the wife of Pastor Jaan Kiivit, and finally with the pastor himself.

I was twenty when I came here for the first time in order to find the Lutheran church. I did not know anybody. I had virtually no money, and I lived at the train station for a week and memorized Luther’s Catechism.

I would never dare do that now. But then I came back to the train station every evening and tried to find a seat on a bench in the waiting hall area. There were a limited number of seats. I was surrounded mostly by similar poor travelers, and also alcoholics and homeless people. It is so strange to recall it now. But I learnt the Catechism, and then Jaan Kiivit baptized me. This is how my Christian life began here in Estonia during the old Soviet era.

I remember, I was silly and young,  
I heard from my parent  
How my parent destroyed  
The Church of Christ the Savior.

You know, these words are perfectly descriptive of the Soviet life! Certainly, *my* parents did not participate directly in the destruction of Christianity, but a number of people participated on *a global scale* in the construction of society with no room for God. Wily rulers deceived them by promises of earthly paradise, and they gullibly followed them.

Afterwards it was too late. Millions of Christians were tortured in prison camps; thousands of churches were blown up and demolished. To be sure, the Orthodox Church suffered the most, but other confessions also shared in that horrible slaughter.

As you know, we have no Lutheran church buildings left in Siberia. All that could be destroyed was destroyed. The last Lutheran church building—St. Peter’s in Barnaul—was destroyed in the early seventies.

So, what a grace has been given to us that this regime did not outlive us, but, rather, we outlived it! And we have not become only passive witnesses of its end but rather participants of building a new life.

It is so, because God placed us in the ministry in his church. We save people’s souls through the word of God and the holy sacraments. Can there be anything more wonderful than this task? This, nevertheless, is not of us; it is only due to Christ. It is he who came to us with his word. However little this word was to be seen in the articles in the atheistic books, nevertheless, God helped us to see his word there.

And he called us through this word, just as we read in today’s Gospel:

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden . . .**  
(Matt 11:28a)

The word of God always fulfills that for which God sends it. One believed secretly, and then he began to believe openly.



Another remembered the faith of his parents, and yet another began to seek and he found. You can meet such people, laymen and priests, in every parish. One of my colleagues almost joined the Communist Party, but he heard the gospel and was captivated by this news to such an extent that he finally left everything, took his wife and children and a box of potatoes, and went to work as a missionary, and then he became a priest. This is how miraculously God acts in our lives.

Today's sermon is based on the Old Testament reading in our church lectionary. It is taken from the twelfth chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah. This chapter describes the joy of deliverance, but it is not limited to *description*; it is rather a praise song of God's people, gratitude to God for his miraculous gifts.

It is obvious that this song of praise had a liturgical meaning because one may see a number of parallels here with the other hymns of praise, most notably with the *Hallel* psalms that the Old Testament church was signing at the Passover (and other celebrations) while thanking God for the gift of deliverance.

Our chapter has much in common with Psalm 118. As you may remember, we sang this Psalm on Easter Sunday.

**The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. . . . I thank thee that thou hast answered me and hast become my salvation.**

(Ps 118:14, 21)

Salvation is a major theme of both the Psalter and today's text from Isaiah. The key word here is *yoshuakh*, which is related to the name of our Savior:

**Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.**

(Is 12:2)

We also sing another part of Psalm 118 every Sunday. We sing "Blessed is he who comes in the names of the Lord!" when we greet Christ who comes to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

God comes to save us. Just as the people of old were saved from Egyptian slavery, so also have we been saved from the slavery of sin and death through the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Christ—Joshua—has become our salvation. He has come to us in order to bring liberty to the oppressed and to give rest to all who labor and are heavy laden:

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

(Matt 11:28–30)

That is:

Come to me, all who carry heavy burdens of life,  
And I will give you rest...

Take *my* yoke, not yours. Take *my* burden, not yours.

The yoke that our Lord gives to us is quite unlike those yokes to which we are accustomed to bearing in this world. There is no violence and oppression here, as Christ is gentle and lowly in heart.

It is not difficult to see here an idea of *blessed exchange*, so loved by Luther. Those carrying their burdens may take them off their shoulders and take another one, which is of Christ. Those tired and looking for rest may find it with Christ, Son of God who humbled himself, took the form of a servant, and also took our sins upon himself so that he could present his righteousness to us.

He brings salvation to us as a gift. He does not require from us to redeem our own sins but grants forgiveness to repentant sinners at every liturgy. It is only in him that a soul of a sinner who is thirsty for forgiveness and reconciliation with God may find rest:

**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

(Matt 11:29–30)

As children we were taught that only obedient children receive the gifts. However, the gifts of *God* are given to us without any qualifications or conditions. God does not postpone his grace until *people* do something. God freely gives his blessings. (If I have to become somebody or do something for my salvation, if I have to *earn* salvation, then there is no grace here but only unrealizable Law.)

We can do nothing to be saved. The Lord does not require it from us. He came and died for us and rose even before we were born. He still continues to come and serve us by giving his true body and blood to us at the Eucharist. Through these he strengthens our faith and gives us power to follow him into the kingdom of his Father.

**With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**

(Is 12:3)

Remember your baptism now. Remember how God accepted you and how you became a Christian. Maybe, we do not remember it often, but today God gives us a new opportunity to thank him and rejoice that water from the wells of salvation was poured also on us, that we are saved, and that nobody may snatch us from the hands of Christ.

**And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the nations, proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth."**

(Is 12:4–5)

God always makes great things, even if it seems to us at times that he is idle. Isaiah wrote at a terrible time, when her enemies were threatening to destroy God's people. The strong

ones of this world attempted to destroy the chosen nation and her monotheistic faith. The hearers of Isaiah may have found it difficult to believe that their God would be known in all the earth. The ancient prophesies are, generally speaking, an unusual thing. They are spoken, and then time seemingly stops for ages until it finally wakes up and resumes moving. The powerful ones think that all the power is in their hands. Therefore they create empires and call cities in their honor, they build monuments and mausoleums for themselves. But in the end, it turns out that time is not in their hands. Time is in God's hands.

A day comes when that which seemed indestructible and unshakeable is destroyed. People in all the earth are given knowledge of God, acquire faith, come to church, are baptized, and bring their children. The church grows—this is how God acts in our lives.

**Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**


(Is 12:6)

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is in our midst. We are able to hear his word and partake of him. He comes so close to us in the sacrament of Eucharist that we can even touch him.

Eucharist does not only connect us to Christ, but also unites us with each other.

It is so wonderful to have spiritual fellowship with the brothers with whom we share a common faith. However, the special character of this day for us Siberian people is that not only have we been *one in faith* with the Church of Estonia, but, for a long time, we have also been a part of her. Now we become the autocephalous church. Still, though we are independent, the Church of Estonia will always remain a spiritual mother to us. No matter what happens, we will always remember the many years in which you cared for us.

No matter what happens . . . We went through a number of things together. And who knows what else we will have to go through. We know how the church buildings, even those that are large and sturdy, are destroyed. We know also how fragile temples of human lives are destroyed. It happened often—and who knows—it may happen again. Who knows what the future has in store for us. Global warming, materialism, street extremism, Islamic terrorism, liberal theology: there are so many terrifying and deadly things around us!

But Christ is among us, both now and forever. Neither death nor hell nor the devil may change that. We will receive forgiveness of sins, rest, and a blessed eternity in Christ. Amen. 



## CTS Student Mission Society hosts “Mission in the City” and Every Wednesday Lunch

Over lunch on Wednesdays, CTS students were able to hear pastors speak about missions. The pastors came from campus ministries, inner city churches, mission plants, ethnic ministries, world missions, established churches reaching out to neighbors and the community, and churches who support specific mission projects. One of the highlights of Student Mission Society was a 3 day series during Symposia, entitled “Mission In The City.” Featured speakers were Rev. Elliott Robertson and Rev. Charles Wildner of Baltimore and Rev. Eric Andrae of Pittsburgh.



*Rev. Charlie Ravelonjato received his M.Div. from CTS in November, 2001. He was born and raised in Madagascar. He received his university education in Russia. During his time at CTS, he traveled to Haiti for his vicarage. He now serves at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brampton, Ontario. He is married to Tanya and they have four children: Steve, Emilio, Veronica, and Christian.*



*Presenters from all over the world and even our own church body address our students over lunch in the Katherine Luther Dining Hall or the Student Commons.*