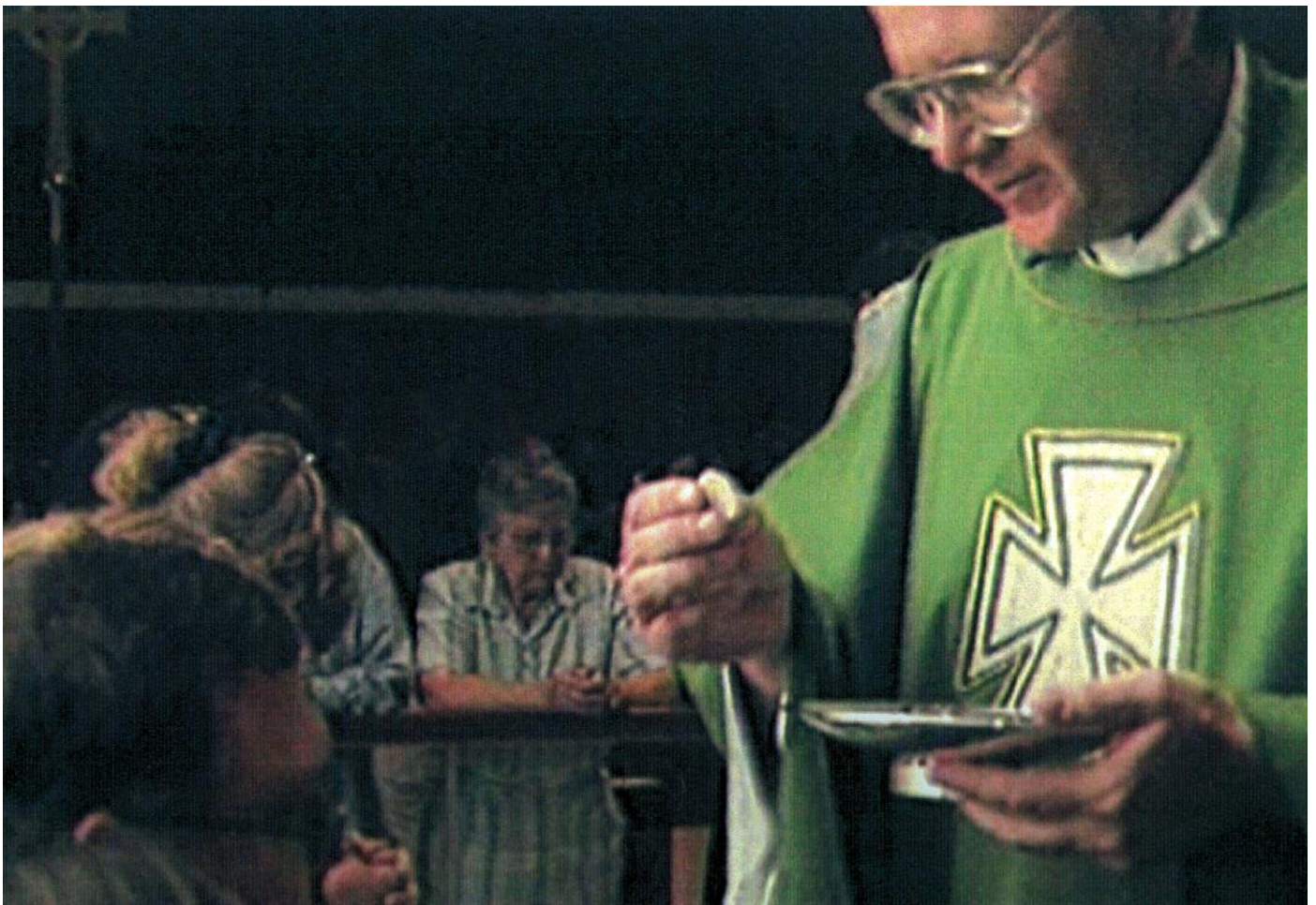


For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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For the LIFE of the WORLD

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FEATURES

4 The Lord's Supper in the Congregation

By the Rev. Kenneth W. Wieting, Pastor of Luther Memorial Chapel, Shorewood, Wis.

The Lord's Supper was central in the worship of Christ's Church right from the beginning. Our Lutheran Confessions trumpet the Scriptural and historical practice in the church when they affirm that the Lord's Supper "is celebrated every Lord's day and on other festivals, when the Sacrament is made available to those who wish to partake of it." In highlighting this weekly presence our Synod's explanation to Luther's Small Catechism rightly describes the gift of the Lord's Supper as "a regular and major feature of congregational worship, not an occasional extra" (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:20,33).

7 It Is Not Ours, But the Lord's Supper

By the Rev. Prof. Naomichi Masaki, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Is it the Lord's Supper or our own supper? Is it the Lord's Supper or the Christians' supper? Even if the world of Paul and Luther may seem different from our own, we are still challenged by the same old enemies: the devil, the world, and our flesh. All these enemies continue to attack in order to "diminish my Lord Jesus Christ" (Luther). The confession that it is *the Lord's Supper* has profound implications. Probably the most recognizable thing would be to acknowledge that it is not the pastor's supper nor the congregation's supper as if they may do whatever they please.

11 Where Is God?

By the Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Some say that everything changed on September 11 and, in some ways, they are right. Where is God? The answer is right there in our tears. Where is God? He was there as His own Child suffered the agonizing death of the Cross. Where is God? He is there in the rubble and in the pain, never distant from His suffering, sin-wrecked creation but always in the midst of it all. Where is God? He was there at the Pentagon, in New York City, in a field in Pennsylvania.

20 In the Field

By Monica Robins

Featuring the Rev. Scott L. Murray, Pastor of Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas

Where Is God?



REFLECTIONS OF A LUTHERAN CHAPLAIN ON SEPTEMBER 11

By the Rev. Daniel L. Gard



On September 23, 2001, twelve days after an American Airlines jet crashed into the Pentagon, a recovery worker emerged from the wreckage with a child's shoe in his hand. He looked at me, the nearest Chaplain, and asked the question, "Chaplain, where is God?" His question was the question of many in our nation that day.

Some say that everything changed on September 11 and, in some ways, they are right. Certainly we see things that no one would have imagined on September 10: long lines at airports, increased security precautions, the presence of armed soldiers in civilian airports. American confidence that the troubles of the world end at our shores has been shattered.

No one in this country has failed to be affected. The seminary community certainly was not exempt from the pain of that day. September 11 began as any other day begins. Before the first class of the day, reports came in about a plane crashing into a building in New York City. No details were known. By the time the Chapel bells rang, the horror of the morning had unfolded. As the community met to pray, our President, Dr. Dean Wenthe, reminded us all of the importance of our vocation in the face of the confusion and pain we all felt that morning. His words took on added importance as soon two of our colleagues, Dr. David Scaer and Dr. Peter Scaer, would learn that their nephew and cousin had perished in the World

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Trade Center, leaving a young widow and three small children.

As a Naval Reserve Chaplain, the routine of my life and that of my family was dramatically rearranged by a phone call ordering me to the Pentagon. The weeks that followed have affected my family and me in ways that I am only beginning to comprehend. This was made especially clear to me some months after September 11. My second-grade daughter's class undertook a history project on the events of that tragic day. Every child drew a picture of his or her "most vivid memory" of September 11 and every picture was the same: an airplane crashing into the World Trade Center. Only my child's drawing was different. Hers was an image of her father getting on an airplane to go to the Pentagon.

When I reported to the office of the Navy Chief of Chaplains, I was immediately detailed to the crash site at the Pentagon. The operations there had already moved from search and rescue to search and recovery. My "congregation" was a group of young soldiers tasked with the responsibility of working through the debris in search of human remains and personal effects of the victims. They were simply doing their job as they entered the wreckage of that wounded building, a job they could not have imagined while in high school a year or two before. The media paid no attention to them, but to those of us who worked with them, they were and are unheralded heroes.

Later I was reassigned to the Pentagon's Family Assistance Center. There the needs of the families of the victims were attended to by a number of helping agencies. Among those helpers were military chaplains from every branch of the service and from a variety of faith groups including three Missouri Synod pastors: Air National Guard Chaplain Charles Smith (FW 77), Army National Guard Chaplain Robert Koehler (SPR 72), and me (FW 84). I count it a great privilege to have worked with these brother pastors as they, in the missionary tradition of their *alma mater*, brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those for whom He died and rose.

All of the Chaplains labored with the rescue/recovery workers and the families of the victims throughout twelve-hour shifts. Day and night they were present. While it was always uplifting to be visited by celebrities, political figures, and religious leaders, after a "photo-op" or two they would leave. The Chaplains, however, would remain behind. We would remain and look a child in the eye when he asked why God allowed his father or mother to die. We would hold the hand of an elderly person grieving over the tragic loss of a child or grandchild. We would reach out to the young widow who would later give birth to a child who would never know its father.

We would hear the question again and again, expressed in so many ways, "Where is God?"

How inadequate are the answers of the religious spirit of our times to this penetrating question! Is God to be found in the imaginations of the human heart? Can He be constructed or reconstructed to fit the circumstances in which we live? More importantly, can He be found apart from Jesus Christ?



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The failure of the pragmatism of cultural relativism was nowhere more apparent than in the face of these horrible events. All religions are not the same. Christians alone understand that hurting, broken, and frightened people can find strength only in the most blessed and holy Trinity, and that access to the Triune God can be obtained only through the incarnate Son. In times of crisis, the Church's confession must be more clear and certain than ever. Only through the Name of Jesus can life and salvation and hope be found in the midst of human suffering.

Life in this world is far too fragile and uncertain to confess anything else, whether by word or by action. During my time at the Pentagon's "ground zero," the body of a victim was recovered, still sitting at his computer. I later met the widow of this man. The two of them had been "I-M'ing" each other as they did each morning. She had sent a message saying, "I love you." There was no response. The plane had hit at that very second and her husband was killed instantly. How fragile life is! How seriously we must take the task of holding up the Christ before the world!

Where is God? The Psalmist David wrote long ago:

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, Thou art there!
If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the
 uttermost parts of the sea,
even there Thy hand shall lead me,
and Thy right hand shall hold me. (Psalm 139:7-10)

The recovery worker who asked that question needed an answer. That answer could not be found in the wisdom of the world or in the frail wisdom of a chaplain. Still, the question needed and deserved an answer.

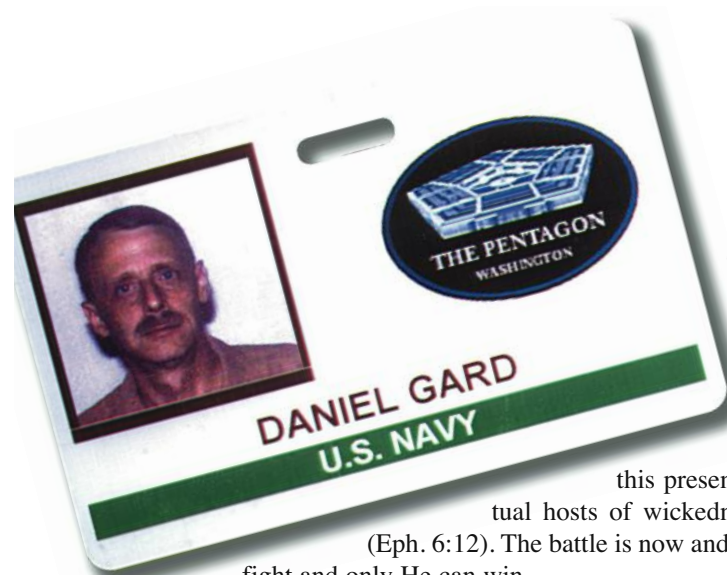
Where is God? He is there in and with His Church as she engages in her warfare against the evil that brought September 11 into history as a day of infamy. When I was a new Navy chaplain, I deployed upon a frigate, a small warship designed to hunt submarines. I shared a state-room with another Lieutenant, the ship's weapons officer. One night, as I was trying to get some sleep in my bed (known in the Navy as a "rack"—for good reason!), he was at his desk working and letting out a stream of profanities. I asked him what was wrong. He replied, "I wish we were at war." My reaction was, "Why?" He responded, "Because when we are at war we just do our job. When we are at peace, all we do is paperwork."

The fact is that the Church is at war, yet we continue to think that we are at peace and so all we do is paperwork. Statistics and cultural acceptability have become more important than engaging the conflict that actually engulfs the people of God on earth. While some cry "Peace, peace," the battle rages all around us. It was at ground zero in New York City, the Pentagon, and Pennsylvania. It is on every street in every city, town, and countryside of this nation. It is even within the Church herself.

The lessons of September 11 will not be fully understood perhaps for generations. But we cannot wait for generations to come and go. The United States and her allies are at war with terrorism, a war that engages armies and navies in armed

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conflict. The Church's war is even more intense and serious. It is war not against "flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of

this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"

(Eph. 6:12). The battle is now and it is a battle that only He can

fight and only He can win.

The battle is not ours—it is the Lord's. And when it looks overwhelming, when we grow weak and falter, when we simply want to capitulate, hide, and let things take their own course, we are called again to see the battle as God sees it. God knows our anguish. He knows the pain of loss. The Father sent His only begotten Son to fully engage this world of pain and death. The whole world was united with Him upon that ancient instrument of terror, the Cross. There He bore the pain of all that groan and labor and die in a sick and sinful world.

Yet on Easter the Son of God rose to destroy all the power of sin, death, and hell. Every enemy was defeated that day. Though Satan himself now walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour, he is a defeated liar. And you and I—who are united to the Lord Christ in Baptism, fed with His body and blood, absolved by His declaration—we are the victors with Jesus.

Where is God? The answer is right there in our tears. Where is God? He was there as His own Child suffered the agonizing death of the Cross. Where is God? He is there in the rubble and in the pain, never distant from His suffering, sin-wrecked creation but always in the midst of it all. Where is God? He was there at the Pentagon, in New York City, in a field in Pennsylvania. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"

Where is God? He is there wherever His blessed Word and Sacraments are present. He is there as He leads His people into the war around us. Those battles are not always clear to us while we are in the midst of them and the dusty clouds of spiritual warfare darken our vision. The outcome, however, is certain. The victory belongs to our God and to the Lamb.

The Rev. Daniel L. Gard is Commander, Chaplain Corps, United States Naval Reserve, and Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.



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