



Sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world

A Cross-Eyed Thank You

By Pastor James



Growing up in a large family usually meant being a little mischievous at times. Often my brothers and I would think of great ways to get under the skin of our sisters. One such way was for us to make faces at them when Mom and Dad weren't looking. We soon learned that this especially bothered

our sisters when we were in the car together on trips to and from town. On one such trip, I placed my index fingers on either side of my mouth, stuck out my tongue and looked cross-eyed at my sister. The only problem was that I didn't know that my mother was looking at me through the rear-view window. When she saw the face that I had made, she quickly quipped, as most parents at some point have, "Stop that, or your face is going to get stuck like that forever."

I know her comment was meant to curb my inappropriate behaviour, but perhaps being cross-eyed is not that bad of a thing. Lent is often referred to as a journey, and in many ways it is a summary of our lives as Christians. It is a journey where we see Jesus venturing through the garden of Gethsemane, up to the cross high on Calvary's hill and triumphantly breaking forth from the tomb in His glorious resurrection. For us, as redeemed Christians, our focal point becomes the cross upon which the Prince of Peace demonstrated His great love for all of humanity. So again, maybe being "cross-eyed" is not that bad of a thing.

As our gaze is fixed upon the cross, we see God's abundant mercies and blessing in our lives. Blessings that are far too many to count, let alone to articulate here. Among the many blessings in my life are all of you. It is such a great privilege to be called and to serve here at Bethel. My family and I are so thankful to be able to be a part of this community. Thank you for your love, support, caring, and prayers. We were also blessed by all of the thought, work and effort that went into making the installation service and fellowship as memorable as it was. Both my family and I join in expressing the words that St Paul wrote to the church in Rome when he said, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world." (Romans 1:8). Your kindness and support for us truly demonstrate God's love and mercy working in you. Thank you!



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“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”

~Genesis 1:31

Environmental Stewardship

By Pastor Marv

As a people of faith we are environmental stewards. Theologically this flows from our belief that God is creator and owner of this earth...and that he has entrusted its on-going care to us.

April 22 is Earth Day. With the advent of spring, our hearts and minds turn to the outdoors. Spring and summer provide us a multitude of opportunities not only to enjoy our “earth” but also to care for it. At Bethel this spring we plan to do some clean up in our neighborhood...plus, we are going to organize a day to do some landscaping, including the planting of flowers, shrubs and trees. What are you going to do at your place and in your neighborhood?

I know that there are a variety of ways to celebrate Earth Day (not merely on April 22 but throughout the spring and summer). Some activities are clean up your neighborhood; plant flowers, shrubs and trees; plant a vegetable garden; clean out and recycle toxic materials such as paint, oil, and fuels; compost refuse; reduce the amount of garbage from the household; recycle as much as possible; enjoy the outdoors hiking and camping – and not picking the wild flowers.

This is a good opportunity for parents to teach their children the responsibility of environmental stewardship. What are you going to do this spring and summer to care for the environment?



Confirmation Service Saturday, April 18

By Michael Gillingham

Confirmation is a special day in the life of a Lutheran young person, as they have the opportunity to publicly declare their faith in the God who has created them, called them, redeemed them, and filled them with faith and the Holy Spirit. Most young people at Bethel begin Confirmation in Grade 7. They meet weekly for classes on the Bible, Luther's Small Catechism and church history. During class, there's time to pray, to review memory work, to study the Bible, and to share in small-group discussions. Most young people at Bethel attend the classes for three years. At Bethel, we're also blessed to have some very interested and involved parents who also attend classes with their young people. Many parents share that they appreciate the review and even the new things they learn along with their young people. In addition to weekly classes, our confirmation students are encouraged to attend worship, Junior High youth events, confirmation retreats, and servant events.

This year, we have 21 young people who will be confirmed in their Christian faith. The Confirmation service is planned for Saturday, April 18 at 3:00 p.m. here at Bethel. Consider yourself invited as we gather to celebrate God's gifts of life, faith and forgiveness in Jesus. Please pray for the confirmands and their families as they celebrate this special milestone in a lifelong journey of learning about God and following Him.



“Common Roots”

By Connie Bromley

As I was searching for a title to pull together the three groups which will perform at Bethel on April 19, I happened to look at the website for the **Friesen Family Band**. On their website there is a beautiful old tree, with several trunks (apparently it is in Sherwood Park at the Mennonite church based community garden). The thought came to me that all three groups have the love of music in common, and for the most part, all three groups perform mostly sacred music. The theme of “**Common Roots**” came to mind. For the concert, each group will present 20-30 minutes of music, and with the variety of styles, there should be something for everyone.

The **Josephburg Men’s Chorus**, directed by



Greg Jeffrey (a former Concordia student), is comprised of a group of 20 men who love to sing. Established in 1979, the original group of ten men

sang in local churches, seniors’ residences, schools and community halls. As time has passed, the Chorus has traveled farther than the local area. This year, by the time they sing at Bethel on April 19, the **Josephburg Men’s Chorus** will have just completed a tour of Alberta. Their music ranges from classical and gospel to show tunes and old favourites. The members of the Chorus come from all walks of life, and, ironically, not one of the members actually resides in Josephburg!

The **Friesen Family Band** is a husband (Chris) and wife (Louise) with a family of 5 children. The youngest member of the band is a toddler of less than two years.



The Friesens present original Christian music in a variety of musical styles, pointing the listener to the joy and hope of life with God. Using instruments and voices, their music appeals to all ages and walks of life. Members of a Mennonite church in Edmonton, the **Friesen Family Band** has presented concerts to churches and schools throughout western Canada. Be prepared to be inspired by the incredible talent in this family. You can learn more about them at their website www.friesenfamilyband.com.

The **Concordia Community Chorus** is just what its name implies – a choir which offers an opportunity for community members to sing. It



was begun at Concordia College in 1985 by professor Gordon Hafso, and remains a non-auditioned group. The size ranges from 120-160 voices.

The group is presently conducted by Dr. Joy Berg, (Joy has not only played organ for services here at Bethel, but last December also presented a three week series on the history of music in the church during our Sunday morning church school hour). In the summer of 2005, the Community Chorus had the privilege of singing at Carnegie Hall in New York under the direction of Richard Sparks (conductor of Pro Coro Canada). This summer, many of the singers from the Chorus have accepted an invitation to sing in a Haydn Festival in Austria, and will travel and sing in the cities of Vienna, Salzburg and Innsbruck. This group of 60 singers is the group which will sing at Bethel on April 19, singing repertoire that they will perform on this tour.

The concert on April 19th will begin at 7 p.m. and there will be no admission charge. There will be no intermission in the concert, and goodies will be served following the concert by the Recycled Teens, WWF, and the Blended Choir. We hope that you will mark your calendars to come and enjoy a wonderful evening of music here at Bethel.



They were human, too!

By Bobbi Belsek

It seems to me that sometimes we forget that Jesus and the apostles shared humanity just like we do. Of course we all know that Jesus was fully man and fully God, God in human form. It seems to me that even though we know and remember that the disciples were human beings, we still deny them a lot of human foibles and anxieties. Often we are tempted into thinking that those in the Bible were somehow above all of the raw, real, nitty-gritty emotions that we associate with our humanity. If we think of those involved in the Passion Story as somehow better than we are, then it puts what happened on the cross in an easier context. We can then say, “Oh well, they really didn’t feel that back then!”

As God so often likes to do, He gave me a swift kick in the rear one night last year when I realized that the people in the Bible were actually just like me. Just under a year ago, I had the privilege of going to see a very well-produced and generally amazing production of the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*, with one of my very good friends playing the lead role.

The musical depicts the late life and ministry of Jesus, right up until his death on the cross. And it was there, right at the end where Jesus is on the cross, where my emotions got all messed around, chewed up, and spit back out into my lap! For some reason I was actually quite concerned for my friend’s well-being. The play was so well done, with the part and scene so expertly portrayed, that it just seemed *real*. At any rate, I held the person on that make-believe cross very dear to me, and that scene shook me up and was very hard to watch. (I’m also a wuss and think I looked away at some point.)

This made me think about what Jesus’ friends were actually feeling on that day. They must have been scared, filled with anguish, sorrow, sadness and so much hurt. If I was feeling many of those emotions over the staged death of my friend, then I can only imagine that the feelings

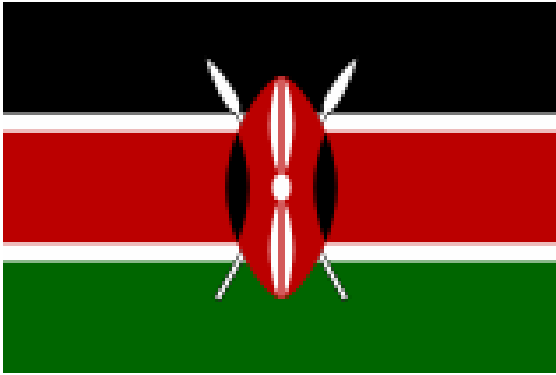
of those who loved Jesus were thousands of times more poignant when He was crucified on Good Friday.

The human tragedy that was initially the horrible event of the crucifixion was again thrust into my lap later that night, just in case I didn’t get it the first time. I had the privilege of being there on opening night, while my friend’s family would not see the performance until later in the week. As I was waiting in the lobby after the play on opening night, my friend’s mom asked me how the play was, and what she would think about it from a ‘mom’s perspective’. I can’t remember the exact answer I gave her, but it was something to the effect of, ‘Maybe it’ll be rough’. I was then reminded that Jesus had a mom, too, who loved Him deeply with the absolutely unexplainable, undeniable, lunatic love that a mother has for her children. That day she must have been in so much anguish to see her son killed right in front of her eyes.

The crucifixion wasn’t just an historical event that we can comfortably look back on in some antiquated history book. It was a real event with real people involved, who were just like you and me and who had real emotions and reactions.

And even though the crucifixion was an amazing event that saved you and me from a world of eternal despair, it was for three days a moment in one of the world’s greatest human tragedies. Whenever we experience the anguish of losing someone close to us (even if it is only a staged performance), we can remember that Christ already died so that we no longer need feel the sting of death. Jesus suffered a horrendous death, and those around Him suffered the sting of the unbearable loss of one they loved, so that we can be free from the sting of death. The fact that people in the Bible suffered so that I can experience less pain and sadness in my life makes what happened on that hill called Golgotha even more amazing.





Kenya 2009

By Pastor Marv

The people of East Africa (Tanzania and Kenya) are facing some very difficult times. This past October-November (short rainy season) brought little moisture. The major rainy season (February-May) has also provided little moisture. As a result the people already are dealing with food and water shortages for flocks and herds, as well as small harvests for their own food supply and produce for the markets. Please remember the people of these countries in your prayers.

Our Kenya 2009 team (Debra Strutt, Deloyce Elle, Neil Davies, Rick Kilford, Ric and Debbie Paterson, Mike and Cheryl Williams, Becky and Pastor Marv) will be leaving for Nairobi on August 17. We will arrive at Springs of Life Lutheran Church in Nairobi on August 19. For ten days we will partner with the people of Springs of Life to work with children from their impoverished neighborhood. Many of these children are orphans whose parents died from HIV/AIDS. In addition we will do some work around the church and school facility as they continue to recover from their structural losses in the post-election violence. In your prayers please remember our team as well as our brother and sisters in Christ at Springs of Life.

To support children's ministries in Kenya we are going to gather supplies such as crayons, pencils, toothbrushes and toothpaste, used eye glasses and soccer balls. In addition the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) is gathering baby clothes for Springs of Life's mis-

sion.....new or gently used (like new) clothes for newborn to 3 years...baby towels, face cloths, sleepers, cloth diapers, bibs, receiving blankets, t-shirts and shorts. If you are able to assist in gathering these supplies and materials, please bring them to Bethel by June 30.

Our 2009 team is also checking into the possibility of sending a sea container to Kenya. The purpose of this is to fill it with equipment for the medical centre and school at Springs of Life. We will keep you informed as plans unfold.

Our team members pay their own expenses for the mission trip. We thank all who have been generously supporting this mission with financial support. These offerings will be given to the ministries in Kenya to assist them in the care of people and the sharing of the Good News of Jesus.



Dates to Note

Holy Week Worship

Maundy Thursday: (with Holy Communion)	7:00 PM
Good Friday Tenebrae Services	10:00 AM 7:00 PM
Easter Sunday (with Holy Communion)	8:30 AM 9:45 AM 11:00 AM



Confirmation Service

Saturday, April 18, 3:00 PM

Bethel Hosts LC-C National Youth Gathering Planning Meetings

By Michael Gillingham

On March 1 - 2, the Lutheran Church - Canada National Youth Gathering Committee met at Bethel for some planning for the 2010 LC-C Gathering. The Gathering will be hosted at the University of Alberta campus from July 2 - 6, 2010. The Committee met to discuss the theme, schedule, program and presenters for the event. On the morning of March 2, they toured the U of A campus to see the dorms, cafeteria and meeting rooms that will be used for the Gathering. Lynn Gergens, Joel Haberstock and Pastor Sye Van Mannen have agreed to help as presenters for the Gathering. They met with the Committee to begin formulating their ideas for the Bible studies and speaking topics. The Committee also had a teleconference with the music group *Lost and Found*. As well, the Committee met with Dr. Paul Schoepp of Concordia University College of Alberta; Concordia is excited to host the Gathering during a special day on Concordia's campus. There's still a lot of work to be done, but the Committee is excited to have accomplished so much so soon. Please keep us in your prayers as we continue to plan the 2010 Youth Gathering.



2010 LCC National Youth Gathering Committee
Bill Wardekker, Pastor Mark Danielson, Michelle Galliazo,
Michael Gillingham, Regan Schultz, Tony Marchand



Exciting Vacation Bible School News!

By Deloyce Elle

Yes, it's true! We won't be having one VBS this year. There will be TWO! We will travel to *Crocodile Dock* July 20 - 24 **and** August 17 - 21. It is going to be double the fun! Children who will be 4 years old by Dec. 31, 2009 up to those entering Grade 6 in September are invited to attend.

VBS is an amazing experience! Even though it's a very short time commitment, it's a wonderful way to be involved at Bethel. If you have never had the opportunity to serve during a VBS, this is the year. There are many different ways to share your gifts and your friendship with the children, many who will be hearing the Gospel for the first time. It truly is a small commitment with high impact. Please speak with Deloyce to see how you might be involved, and



be sure to visit the display at the upcoming ministry market. Registration and volunteer forms will be available

MINISTRY MARKET
2009
COMING TO A CHURCH
NEAR YOU!!!

Where: the Activity Centre
Bethel Lutheran Church

When: Sunday, June 7, 2009
9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Watch for more information!

The Easter Surprise[©]

by Diane F. Raborn

If we think about it, there are many times when we find that the mere joy of surprise catches us, lingers, and then stays with us forever. The Lenten Season is a good opportunity to take a look at these times. These splendid times that take our breath away are times worth re-visiting.

Growing up, I think Easter was the most amazing time of year for me. It was not only the anticipation of something great coming but also the music, parades, flowers, food, and outfits heralding in the event. And it was an event, a wondrous event of great importance that signaled an unrivaled joy. For a child, it was joy at the end of 'giving up something enjoyable' coinciding with the treasure of Jesus.

The music introduced Spring and warmth following a grey and somewhat dismal North Carolina winter. Songs like "*Oh, Happy Day*", "*Were You There?*", "*He Got Up*", "*The Old Rugged Cross*", "*Jesus, I Love You*", among others, such as "*The Easter Parade*", "*Peter Cottontail*", and "*The Bunny Hop*" permeated the airwaves. "*Christ the Lord has Risen Today*" and "*He Arose*" played hourly on the radio on Easter Day. I can still hear all of them and wonder if anyone else can hear the music as well.

The Easter Parade made everyone happy. Why have they stopped having Easter parades? It was simply a glorious time ushering in 'the great phenomenon'. With it came anticipation and joy, two things I associated with Easter. I still do!

Of course, the flowers showed the Easter season in its full glory. Pink and white dogwoods were prevalent everywhere and seemed to bring the cross to mind. The lilies were trumpeting it all in! Flowers and food became feasts for the eye and soul. Food was presented in a special fashion on Easter and always with flowers fit for a King.

But, the outfit of Easter season 1962 was the one that brought joy and surprise to a young girl's heart. In previous years, Mom had made all of the Easter outfits for me and my sister. In fact,

I don't think I had ever had a dress for myself that was not handed down from my older sister or made from a pattern. This year I saw a little yellow dress from the window of our town's best store. It hung there with such style that I can recall my mouth actually watering. Even at my age I knew that the economy was in a slump. The company my father was the vice-president of had folded, and our house was on the market with no potential prospects. I did not even think to ask about a 'silly old dress'. But how I dreamed of that precious dress, one I could see Audrey Hepburn wear. I climbed to the top of my mulberry tree and sketched the dress, hiding the book in the branches. I dared not ask God a selfish prayer, I thought. But when I closed my eyes, I could see 'thelittleyellowdress' hanging in the window. Just waiting for me. "Well," I thought, "I could always wear that plaid skirt Judy gave me." Always the anticipation of something for Easter.



So, when I awoke on Easter morning to find 'thelittleyellowdress' laying out for me, I was surprised to my core. Beyond imagining. I could not contain the happiness of the moment. Surprised to my 'Mary Jane' shoes.

But if the gift of 'thelittleyellowdress' was able to bring such a sense of joy, then the awesome wonder of the Resurrection leaves us pondering the ultimate joy given to each one of us. And we should ponder at the wonder of it. It is truly a gift beyond all imagining.

The first Easter was indeed the ultimate Surprise of all. Who could have imagined what was in store for the World? It was as if we had been given a gift that was so grand and so noble that no words could come close to describing its impact. Our Savior rose from the dead, and nothing would ever be the same. The veil was lifted and we could take our sins and our very souls to the cross to Him. Holy is the Lamb. Through Him is our bridge; through Him is our comfort. The first apostles found their joy in a surprise above all understanding. This stunning surprise was so true and so holy that it changed a fledgling group, and then a community, and later the World. It certainly changed me.



Bethel Slo-Pitch Ball Season is Coming

By Tracy Simons



The Edmonton Lutheran Mixed Slo-Pitch League is about to get started for the 2009 season. Last year Bethel was able to field four teams in the league. There were 28 teams in total with teams from Edmonton, St. Albert, Sherwood Park and the County of Strathcona.

The Edmonton Lutheran Mixed Slo-Pitch League's main goal is fun and fellowship. The minimum age is 14, with no maximum age. Each team needs a minimum of three ladies. Last year our players were aged 14 to 50+. Each team can have 10 players on the field at one time, and we play with a continuous batting order.

If you are interested in getting out one night a week for some fun and exercise, we are looking for you. The game nights vary each week between Monday and Thursday evening, with game time starting at 7:30 pm. Most games are played in Edmonton at various ball diamonds.

The first game in the season is usually held in the first week in May depending on the weather. The season goes through the first week in August with the year end tournament the weekend of August 21st to 23rd.

If you would like to sign up for ball or would like more information, please contact Tracy Simons at 780-464-3493 or tsimons@shaw.ca, or leave your name at the church office and I can contact you.

If you would like more information about the league, check out the web site at <http://www.leaguelineup.com/welcome.asp?url=elmsp>

Please sign up by April 15th as we have to register our teams by April 20th. Let's get together to play ball!



The Pearls

Author Unknown

The cheerful little girl with bouncy golden curls was almost five. Waiting with her mother at the checkout stand, she saw them, a circle of glistening white pearls in a pink box.

"Oh Mommy, please, Mommy! Can I have them? Please, Mommy, please?"

Quickly the mother checked the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face.

"A dollar ninety-five. That's almost \$2.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you, and in no time you can save enough money to buy them for yourself. Your birthday's only a week away, and you might get another crisp dollar bill from your Grandma."

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her penny bank and counted out 17 pennies. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores, and then she went to the neighbor and asked Mrs. McJames if she could pick dandelions for ten cents. On her birthday, Grandma did give her another new dollar bill, and at last she had enough money to buy the necklace.

Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere: Sunday school, kindergarten...even to bed. The only time she took them off was when she went swimming or had a bubble bath. Mother said if they got wet, they might turn her neck green.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story. One night as he finished the story, he asked Jenny, "Jenny, do you love me?"

"Oh yes, Daddy. You know that I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

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"Oh, Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess, the white horse from my collection — the one with the pink tail. Remember, Daddy? The one you gave me. She's my very favorite."

"That's okay, honey. Daddy loves you. Good night." And he brushed her cheek with a kiss.

About a week later, after story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, "Jenny, do you love me?"

"Daddy, you know I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh Daddy, not my pearls! But you can have my baby doll. The brand new one I got for my birthday. She is beautiful, and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper."

"That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you."

And as always, he brushed her cheek with a gentle kiss.

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indian-style. As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one silent tear rolled down her cheek.

"What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?"

Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. And when she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, "Here, daddy; this is for you."

With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's daddy reached out with one hand to take the dime store necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny.

He had them all the time.

He was just waiting for his little girl to give up the dime-store stuff so he could give her the genuine treasure. So it is with our Heavenly Father. He is waiting for us to give up the cheap things in our lives so that He can give us beautiful treasures.

Are we holding onto imitations that keep us from receiving God's genuine treasures?

