

ARE YOU A NONCONFORMIST?

FROM THE PASTOR

When one hears the word "nonconformist," it is usually negative thoughts that come to mind. A nonconformist might decide to wear his hair long when everyone else's hair is short. A nonconformist may be one who makes a break with tradition. When I was at the seminary, preparing for the ministry, there was a period of time when the students began to wear jeans with their shirts and ties instead of dress slacks. There were no written dress codes. Up until then there wasn't a need for everyone conformed to the tradition.

While nonconformity often carries with it a negative connotation, it was with such an attitude that our country was founded. It is called "rugged individualism." A rugged individualist is one who dares to do things that others would never consider. A rugged individualist doesn't care if he fits in or whether he is accepted by others.

I think that everyone likes to think of themselves as something of a nonconformist. In practice, however, we probably aren't. As soon as someone does something that is different others seek to copy it. Before you know it everyone who is trying to be different ends up being the same.

When it comes to our lives as Christians, the Bible has a great deal to say about being a conformist. In Romans 12:2 it says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." God wants us to be different. He wants us to be like him. In Philippians 2:5 it says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." In Ephesians 4:22 it says, "...put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." What it boils down to is that God wants us to be like him and he does not want us to conform to the world.

That is the challenge that faces the child of God every day. It's there in the life of the teenager who is pressured into doing things that are wrong just so they won't stand out, so they can be popular. The

challenge is there for the adult who sees so many around them seeking to acquire as much money and possessions as they can.

Christians are pressured to forsake their belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and free from error. They are asked to conform to the notion that the Bible is merely the work of men and cannot be trusted.

Christian denominations are pushed to conform. They are asked to forsake religious truth and doctrinal beliefs, to go along with the crowd. Religious truth is put to a majority vote. It is not society, however, who determines what is right or wrong, acceptable or not. It is God.

At the end of this month, we will celebrate the Festival of the Reformation. We will remember how almost five centuries ago, Martin Luther followed God's Word and stood alone against the world. The church of his day was leading people astray with the false teaching that we are saved by our own works. Martin Luther learned from God's Word that "we are saved by God's grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ." Our works don't save us. Jesus saved us! This good news was so precious to Martin Luther that he was willing to take a stand for it.

God tells us to live our faith, to stand firm, to hold tightly to the truth, to avoid error and sin. He wants us to hold on to the message that teaches us about our Savior! Don't be afraid to take such a stand. Don't conform to the world! Ask God to help you. He will help you and he will bless you.

Pastor Kehren

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EGGPLANT FESTIVAL

Hope Lutheran will have a Kid's Craft booth at the Eggplant Festival again this year. This is a wonderful opportunity to make our Church and School known to the community. We need helpers to assist the children with their craft and also to talk to the parents while the kids are busy. Please look for a sign up sheet in the narthex. Please direct any questions, to Pastor Kehren.

AREA REFORMATION SERVICE

Sierra Circuit Area Reformation Service: The WELS congregations of the Sierra Circuit are invited to gather at Hope Lutheran Church in Penryn, CA on Sunday, October 26 at 4 PM for a Reformation

Festival Service. Our guest preacher will be Pastor Peter Kruschel, our district mission counselor. A dinner will follow the service.

PROJECT LINUS

Project Linus will meet in the Fellowship Hall on Tuesday, September 23rd from 10am to 2pm. We will meet in October on the 27th
November on the 25th
December on the 23rd

The participants of Project Linus make quilts and blankets for various charitable organizations. If you are interested in attending but don't quilt or sew, please come anyway. There is always plenty to do to help, cutting fabric, ironing seams, etc. A light potluck lunch is served.

HOPE SCHOOL NEWS

Student Sponsorship

At Hope Lutheran School we love teaching children the truths of God's Word on a daily basis. It is amazing to see the Gospel work in the hearts of Jesus' little lambs! Our school offers tuition assistance to those member families who know the importance of a Christian education but cannot financially meet the cost of our tuition. To offset this cost for the school I would ask that you consider making a donation to our Tuition Assistance Fund. By donating to this fund, you give the children of our congregation a gift that will strengthen their faith NOW, guide them throughout their LIVES, and show them the only way to HEAVEN. If you would like to make a donation, please see Mr. Leifer or the School Ministry Leader, Jimmy B.

Upper Grades Camping Trip

All their bags are packed, they're ready to go! Students in grades 5-8 will be camping at Nevada Beach from September 25-27. Part of a 4-year rotation, this trip allows students to learn the

science and history of Lake Tahoe first hand. More information will follow next month on exciting happenings during the trip.

Harvest Festival/Book Fair

Please come and join the fun on October 10, from 6:30-8:00 PM. There will be carnival style games, a costume contest, bounce house, and of course it wouldn't be complete without the book fair. Invite your friends; this event is open to all. We'll see you there!

Stay Up To Date on School Happenings

If you would like to receive an email copy of the school newsletter, please email principalleifer@sbcglobal.net. Then each week you'll get the update on what is new at Hope Lutheran School.

Wish List

SMART Board Interactive Whiteboard
Newer Computers for Classrooms
New Desks

PARENTS NIGHT OUT

On October 24 we will be hosting our first Parents Night Out from 6:00-9:30 PM. Parents can go and enjoy a night out and trust that their children are in good hands.

We will be doing a Bible lesson, craft, and games with them. The cost is \$10 for the first child and \$5 for each additional child. Any proceeds from this event will go towards buying newer computers and desks for the school. Since this event is open to all, please invite your friends or coworkers so they can enjoy a night out as well.

We are taking volunteers to help work this event also. If you have the time, you can serve your school and the Lord by taking care of some children with us.

Sign-up sheets for volunteers and parents who want to use this service may be found in the narthex and in the principal's office.

IT HAPPENED IN OCTOBER...

3 October 1976 - The first worship service of what was to become Hope Lutheran Church was held in the Finnish Temperance Hall in Rocklin. The group was a mission outreach of St. Marks congregation of Citrus Heights. They had extended a provisional call to Pastor Paul Heyn to shepherd the new mission group. A total of 51 persons attended that first worship service. The group met at the Finnish Hall until January 1977, when it moved to a rented facility on Taylor Road in Penryn. In 1983 the congregation moved to its current location, where over the years it has constructed its Fellowship Hall, Parsonage, Sanctuary and School.

WESTERN BAR B-Q

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2008
AFTER SECOND SERVICE**

There will be plenty of Food, Games, Contests, and Fellowship. Everyone is invited. There is a decorated can by the drinks for your donations starting this Sunday. Make a Hat or decorate a Western Hat for the Contest. So, come and join us for a great day of fun.

YOUNG AT HEART

Young at Heart is going on a "Field Trip" for October! We will not be meeting on our regular date of October 21st, but instead we are going to Apple Hill on October 14th. Lunch is planned at High Hill Ranch. If you have reservations and are carpooling, we will leave from the church at 10:00am.

Our November get together is on November 18th and will be a general potluck. So if you have a new recipe for Thanksgiving and want to try it out before the BIG Day, here is your chance. As usual we will meet at 11:30 in the Fellowship Hall.

HOPE FOOD CLOSET

All food donations are given to Betty N's Hope Food Closet. Please help by purchasing the designated items for the month.

Leave your purchases on the counter on the East side of the kitchen. Thank you for your outreach to the community.

October: Baby food \ baby cereal \ formula

WOMEN'S RETREAT

The Women's Retreat was a wonderful study of 1st Peter. A big thank you to Ted and Myra Heyn for hosting the weekend. Some of the highlights were Jan B from Reno leading us in Bible Study, Pastor Kehren's Outdoor Saturday Night Church Service, food and field trips. Our guides on the field trips gave us the experience of hiking some uncharted trails that the Donner Party may have taken. However in contrast to their journey, we all made it to our destination.

LWMS FALL RALLY

This is a Rally that you don't want to miss!!! It will be informative as well as something that we, as Americans, have not ever had to- experience.

Jacob, our guest speaker, was a citizen of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, immigrated to the United States and has been accepted into the Ministerial Program at WELS.

"He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit; he that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil." (Surah 6:160. This quote from the Muslim bible, we Koran, reveals a religion that drives people to fear over whether they have done enough to get to heaven.

It is a blessing to realize that the Muslim-background believers on the WELS Muslim Task Force are not afraid to serve the Lord. It is heartwarming to see their expressions of joy as they experience the true freedom the gospel gives. They know that they might lose their earthly lives but will live in Eternity with Christ.

The WELS Outreach Team makes presentations to congregations about the religion of Islam and teaches Christians how to reach out to Muslims.

The Redwood Circuit Home Mission Project for Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 is "Outreach to Muslims." Monetary gifts help in the following ways: Provide tracts, support a Web site, and provide a DVD to help inform Pastors and Members about this Christ-centered outreach program.

There are sign-up sheets in the Church entry and on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. This will be held at St. Mark in Citrus Heights, 18 October from 9:a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

I would like to thank all of those who have sent cards, e-mails, said prayers and made phone calls. Your prayers and well wishes have meant so much to Phil and me. This diagnosis came as quite a shock to us but we know the Lord is with and will provide us with the strength we need to get through the surgery and recovery period. Your continued prayers will be appreciated.

In Christ Jesus,
Diane and Phil

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

September 2008
Website: www.wels.net

September 4th

MORE DAMAGE FROM GUSTAV REPORTED

Breaking news

Another WELS congregation is reporting significant damage in the wake of Hurricane Gustav. The church and parsonage at King of Kings in Alexandria, La., were inundated with about four to five feet of water. Rev. Chris Esmay reports he and his wife and two young children escaped unharmed—they had been forced out of their home earlier this year by fire.

WELS Committee on Relief or "WELS Relief" is providing financial assistance so the family can rent a place to stay until the congregation decides what to do with the property. This is the fourth time in 30

years the property has flooded, although none of the previous incidents were as bad as this. The congregation does not have flood insurance. Rev. Phil Schupmann, chairman of WELS Relief, and Mr. Mark Vance, project coordinator, are traveling to Louisiana today to assess damage both at King of Kings and at Cross of Glory in Baton Rouge. There, high winds toppled several large trees causing extensive damage to both the church and neighboring homes.

We will report more fully on the damage from Gustav and WELS Relief's assessment of the two congregations' needs in the Sept. 15 edition of "Together."

September 15th

ONE YEAR OF "TOGETHER"

From the office of President Mark Schroeder

This week marks the one-year anniversary of the "Together" electronic newsletter. You'll recall that this was the first concrete step taken to carry out the desire of the last synod convention to improve the communication between the synod and its members. From all we can tell, many people have appreciated the timeliness and relevance of the news in "Together." Thank you for the many expressions of thanks and appreciation.

I would also like to thank WELS Communications Director Joel Hochmuth and his staff, as well as WELS Chief Technology Officer Martin Spriggs and his staff, for the fine work that they have done to create and produce this important communication tool.

Please encourage the members of your congregation and the people in your family to subscribe directly to "Together." You can do this at

<http://together.wels.net/subscribe>

Offerings decline in August

After the amazing financial support WELS received last year, enabling us to end the year with a significant surplus, offerings have declined in June, July, and August of this year compared to the same months last year. While Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) are still one percent above last year's offerings—and we are truly thankful for this in these tough economic times—the adopted budget calls for a three percent increase. This decline will not require major adjustments in our programs or

ministries for this year, since a potential shortage could be offset by the surplus from last year.

But it does raise a red flag looking to the future, since our commitment to expand our efforts in world and home missions and to maintain our ministerial education schools depends on the higher level of support that was projected. Keep this situation in your prayers, asking God to continue to move his people to support the work that he's given us to do. Serving in Christ,

Mark Schroeder

Read the entire monthly executive summary, prepared by WELS' chief financial officer for the Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council, online at: www.wels.net/jump/finance

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...

Hurricane Ike impacts WELS congregations

WELS congregations throughout metropolitan Houston are cleaning up after Hurricane Ike roared through the area Saturday. While contact has not been made with every pastor in the region, there are no reports that any church buildings or parsonages suffered significant structural damage. Some have reported minor to moderate flooding.

Lord of Life in Friendswood, southeast of Houston, is the closest congregation to Galveston, the community most damaged by the hurricane. Rev. Marc VonDeylen, his wife, Monique, and their four children still living at home evacuated to relatives in the area. They returned home Monday. Monique reports they are without power, but that the church and the parsonage appear to have fared well. "We were just thrilled to get back home," she says. "It's definitely not just luck that the church and house are okay." Two Lord of Life families live in Galveston. They had safely evacuated, but the fate of their homes is not known.

Aftermath of Hurricane Gustav

WELS Committee on Relief—or "WELS Relief"—granted King of Kings, Alexandria, La., and its pastor, Rev. Chris Esmay, \$60,000 to help the congregation recover after flood damage due to heavy rains following Hurricane Gustav.

Mexican pastor pulled from violence in Juarez

As a result of the increasing drug-related violence in Juarez, Mexico, the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church-WELS' sister synod in Mexico has decided to pull its national pastor and his family out of the city. The move comes after Rev. Juan Jose,

who we can only identify by his first name, and his family received death threats. His last Sunday at his church, Cristo Redentor (Christ Redeemer), was Aug. 31.

"It was hard for both of them to leave," says Rev. Mike Hartman, WELS missionary in Mexico, of Juan Jose and his wife. "They felt like they were letting God down and letting the people down. But sometimes the apostle Paul had to leave a city and give it a little while and get back to it later. That is what we decided was the situation here. You have to take care of your family."

Violence has increased in many areas in Mexico over the past two years due to drug wars. With more than 900 murders this year so far, Juarez, a city of 1.5 million people, is considered one of the most violent cities in Mexico.

According to Hartman, besides fighting each other, the warring drug cartels also target the police and drug rehabilitation centers, which are often connected to churches. In the past month, five pastors in Juarez have been killed or kidnapped.

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church was trying to open a rehabilitation center in Juarez, and Juan Jose was vocal on his weekly radio program about his desire to help those with drug and alcohol problems.

Since Juan Jose's arrival in Juarez a year ago, Cristo Redentor has grown to more than 50 members, many recovering from drug and alcohol problems. "[People] were just flocking to the church. He had so many contacts with so many people asking him to help them," says Hartman.

Juan Jose is now living in a different city in Mexico, helping cover a vacancy at another church. The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church is using Spanish correspondence Bible studies to continue serving the members of Cristo Redentor. Once a month, another Mexican national pastor or seminary student will travel to Juarez to conduct worship, encourage the members, and analyze the current situation.

"It's all new Christians. They need a shepherd," says Hartman. "Please pray for the members and pray that the violence will subside in Juarez enough so that their pastor can return and keep leading and serving his congregation."

End of an era in Japan

After 41 years of service in Japan—their entire ministry—Missionary Kermit Habben and his wife, Margie, returned to the United States Aug. 25. They plan to retire to Phoenix, Ariz.

WHAT IS THE DEAL WITH LIGHTNING BUGS?

I mean, here is this rather ordinary looking flying insect, but wait ... it has a glow-in-the-dark rear end!

What was God thinking?

I'm sure science has all kinds of explanations about how this fluorescent fanny is useful for mating and other stuff, but why did God choose to make the lightning bug glow?

There may be some crucial purpose for the Lightning bug that I don't know about, but I have a feeling it may be quite simple.

I wonder if when God was creating all the animals and everything around us, He came up with the idea of the Lightning bug and said, "The kids are gonna love this."

We know that God loves us enough to create all the things we need to survive, but does God loves us so much He created some things just to make us smile?

Just seeing Lightning bugs takes me back to those warm summer nights of my youth. I'd be running around the back yard with my empty Mason jar, racing toward the flashing lights all around me. I can still feel the joy and hear the laughter echoing through my memories. Lightning bugs were as much a part of summer as fireworks, fresh tomatoes, and big ice-cold slabs of juicy watermelon. (I also have a theory of why God created watermelon seeds the perfect size to spit, but that is another story.) God created so much diversity in this world, much more than is needed for mere survival. He made all of this for us, and He wants us to enjoy it. We can get so busy surrounding ourselves with man-made goods that we don't notice the living tapestry God has laid out all around us.

I guess Lightning bugs do have a purpose after all. They are a reminder of a creative God who loves us

so much; He'd even paint the rear end of a bug ... just to see us smile.

THREE TREES

Once there were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said, "Someday I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see the beauty."

Then the second tree said, "Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take kings and queens across the waters and sail to the corners of the world. Everyone will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull."

Finally the third tree said, "I want to grow to be the tallest and straightest tree in the forest. People will see me on top of the hill and look up to my branches, and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me."

After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of woodsmen came upon the trees. When one came to the first tree he said, "This looks like a strong tree, I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter" ... and he began cutting it down. The tree was happy, because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest.

At the second tree a woodsman said, "This looks like a strong tree, I should be able to sell it to the shipyard." The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship.

When the woodsmen came upon the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him down his dreams would not come true. One of the woodsmen said, "I don't need anything special from my tree so I'll take this one", and he cut it down.

When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for.

The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship and carrying kings had come to an end.

The third tree was cut into large pieces and left alone in the dark.

The years went by, and the trees forgot about their dreams. Then one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event and knew that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep. While they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man, and he stood and said "Peace" and the storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of Kings in its boat.

Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the streets as the people mocked the man who was carrying it. When they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of a hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it was strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as was possible, because Jesus had been crucified on it.

The moral of this story is that when things don't seem to be going your way, always know that God has a plan for you. If you place your trust in Him, He will give you great gifts. Each of the trees got what they wanted, just not in the way they had imagined. We don't always know what plans are for us. We just know that His ways are not our ways, but His ways are always best.

WHAT DOES LOVE MEAN?

When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

Rebecca- age 8

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."

Bobby - age 7