

Are You a Baptist?



BURNING BUSH TALK

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Founder Lutherans in
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the Gospel with him, and finally he said, "Are you a Baptist?" "No," I replied, "I'm Lutheran."

I have no idea whether Eric knew what a Lutheran was, nor did I care to tell him. I wanted to stay focused on sharing the Gospel. But later on I thought about *why* he asked me, "Are you a Baptist?" He had apparently been witnessed to before by one or more Baptist Christians. This is good news ... and bad news. It's good news that another Christian had cared enough to share the Gospel with him, but *perhaps* bad news that he did not say, "Are you a Lutheran?"

Baptists do outnumber Lutherans in the United States about 5 to 1, so that could explain why he thought I was a Baptist who had the chutzpah to witness to an Israeli Jew. Or, it could be something else. Garrison Keillor has a little vignette called "The Young Lutherans Guide to the Orchestra" in which he represents different cultures and ethnic groups by instrumentalists in an orchestra. First and second violin, out in the front row, are Jews — playing away with verve and passion. Lutherans are represented by the triangle player, who patiently waits in the back row for his one chance to strike the triangle at

the proper moment — making a high-pitched tinkling sound. Are we really triangle players? I don't know. You tell me.



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not only because apples don't talk, but the Bible records that a burning bush did once talk to Moses. God spoke out of the burning bush to Moses, a Jew, to reveal to him a job, a ministry, a calling: "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Ex 3:10). Thus ensued a terrible argument between God and Moses, an argument which God finally won.

It is our hope that through this column we can speak God's Word to our Lutheran readers to encourage and equip them to

"So now, go ... I am sending you to my people the Jews to deliver them out of spiritual bondage." (very loose paraphrase of Ex 3:10) We may argue with God about that — telling God that we can't speak well, that they won't believe us, that they won't believe that God *wants* us to do this and that we are terribly uncomfortable with it.

Moishe Rosen, the founder of Jews for Jesus. He asked me, "Do you want to go out on the streets and hand out tracts?" I replied, "Do you mean, *now*?" (The triangle was speaking to the violin.) So I did. I learned a little bit of Jewish chutzpah — and we spoke the Gospel to quite a few people!

The Jewish festival of Purim is coming up on Sunday evening, March 4. We have a humorous, melodramatic play that could be put on by your youth group (or older adults) which tells the story how an ancient "Iranian" government official wanted to exterminate the Jews, but who was stopped by the courage of a beautiful Jewish woman. Purim can be celebrated with Christ in the center and as a teaching tool to expose the sin of prejudice. Call us at 877-457-5556 x220, or E-mail us at blieske7@bellsouth.net, for more information. □

I was Christmas shopping in local mall last year when I stopped to examine some I-pod accessories. (I am determined to learn about this stuff so I can keep up with my teen-aged grandchildren — for me this will be, like, awesome.)

The tall gentleman had a foreign accent, so in the process of negotiating a purchase, I asked him, "Where are you from originally?" Eric told me, "I was born in the United States, but raised in Israel." When I asked him if he was Jewish, he said, "Yes." As we conversed I shared

About 30 years ago I attended a conference on Jewish evangelism in Minneapolis. It was about 10 p.m., after the sessions, and I was chatting with one of the presenters, Rev.

Wanted: Caring Christians for First Mercy Conference

Caring Christians are invited to the first LCMS Conference on Mercy, April 30-May 2, in St. Louis.

Highlighting the theme *Christ's love and mercy in action*, the two-day event will bring together Lutherans with ideas and needs for ministry with experts who have experience and resources. Those invited to the conference include congregation leaders, pastors, deaconesses, parish nurses, agency executives, social ministry volunteers, and students training for social ministry vocations, among others.

Speakers will include:

- Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief/Human Care, the conference host;
- Dr. Leo Mackay, former deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Top Gun Navy pilot, and board chair for the new LCMS National Housing Support Corporation;
- Dr. Kurt Senske, CEO of Lutheran Social Services of the South;
- Gene Veith, former World magazine culture editor

- and head of the Cranach Institute;
- Non-profit funding consultant Jerry Twombly;
- Jill Schumann, CEO of Lutheran Services of America;

- Tim Goeglein, White House advisor to President Bush. Erin Bode, a popular jazz recording artist with deep Lutheran roots, will entertain at the evening banquet.

Registration must be completed by March 31. The conference is partially supported by a donation, enabling LCMS World Relief/Human Care to keep the registration cost to \$100, which includes meals.

LCMS World Relief/Human Care is the mercy arm of the LCMS. For a complete list of speakers and sessions, visit www.LCMSConferenceOnMercy.org or call 800-248-1930, Ext. 1380. □



LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER 25 YEARS