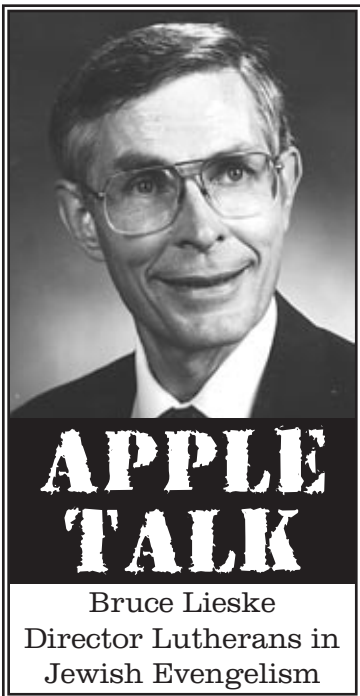


## First Things Last



### APPLE TALK

Bruce Lieske  
Director Lutherans in  
Jewish Evangelism

I recall an outstanding president of one of my congregations. Enthusiastic, responsible, Spirit-filled and positive — I felt blessed to be his pastor. However, one Sunday as I was doing the pastoral “post-service” cleanup all by myself (typical for most churches), I noticed something: two children. In all the busy confusion they

had been left behind by their father! I called my president, “Jim (not his real name), didn’t you forget something at church this morning?” Shocked, he replied, “Oh! My boys! I’ll be right over.”

We sometimes put “first things last.”

It has been my persistent observation that Lutherans are incredibly creative in ways to avoid evangelism — the personal sharing of the good news of Jesus as Savior. Because the word “evangelism” is scary, we find ways to eliminate it. We find reasons why evangelistic crusades by visiting evangelists are inappropriate, or perhaps not quite theologically correct. We take a good word, “outreach,” empty it of its evangelistic content and then consider human care ministries as Gospel proclamation.

Yes, we must imitate Jesus and feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the widows and visit the prisoners. But above all, as a *first priority*, we must “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (Mark 15:15) In all of our busyness, in all of our doing good

things, in all of our helpfulness, we frequently avoid and evade the simple act of speaking the good news of Jesus.

We can be creative in our evasion. My first congregation was in Philadelphia. One morning I stood on the platform waiting for a train to take me downtown so I could make hospital call on a parishioner. As I waited I struck up a conversation with an elderly lady, whom I perceived to be Jewish. The thought came to me, “I could share the Gospel with her!” When the train came I deliberately did not sit with her, but instead sat elsewhere on the train and began reading some literature on *how to share the Gospel with Jewish people!* This made me feel good and “spiritual.” It also made me feel guilty. I had evaded an opportunity to do the Great Commission.

Later that afternoon, after I had made the hospital call, I stood in the congested train station in downtown Philadelphia,

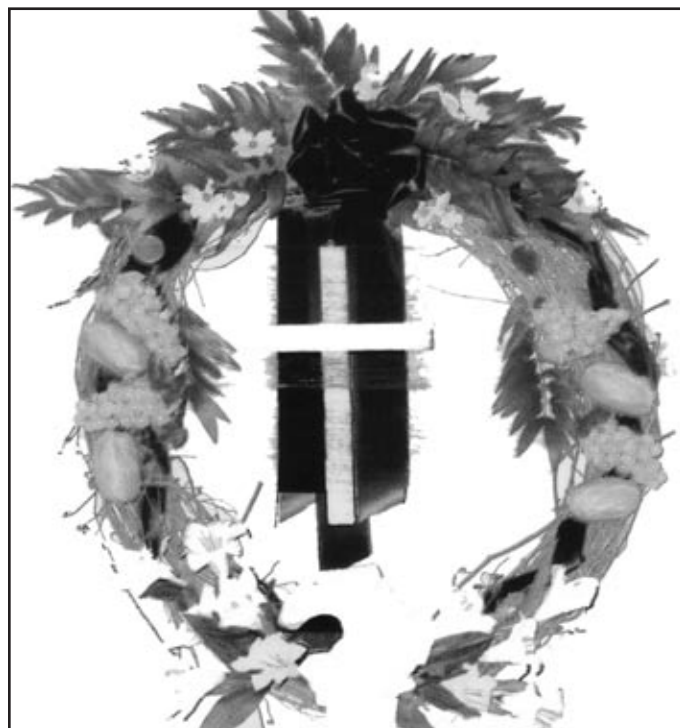
waiting for my train back to Fox Chase. I was shocked to find the same lady standing next to me! Feeling a little bit like Jonah, and aware that God had arranged another appointment for me, I did sit with her and share the Gospel with her and several days later visited with her in her home.

Paul, the great Jewish missionary to the Gentiles, shared a Divine truth with us: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16) What did he mean by “first for the Jew?” Some people think it only means that historically the Gospel came first to the Jewish people. But when we read the Book of Acts we note that Paul — a highly successful missionary to the Gentiles — always went first to the Jews.

Here in our Florida-Georgia District we have ministries to many nationalities, needs and races, including African-American, Haitian, Sudanese, Eritrean, Deaf, Campus, Hispanic and Hmong. But as we reach out in love to all the various groups, let us not forget that we have 800,000 Jewish people in our District. They, too, are lost without their Messiah. Paul was a multi-cultural missionary who shared Jesus with Galatians, Ephesians, Corinthians, Cyprians, Cretans and others. But he always went first to the Jews. First things last? No! Let us follow in Paul’s footsteps.

Call, write or e-mail us for help and materials on sharing the Gospel with Jewish people. Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism/FL-GA Branch, 7207 Monetary Dr., Orlando, FL 32809. Phone 877-457-5556 x220. E-mail: blieske7@bellsouth.net. □

**EASTER WREATH** — Inspired by an article in their local newspaper, Faith-New Port Richey, FL, members Dorothy Mallett, Ralph Laesch, Dennis Pullen and friend Bill Schaefer crafted an Easter wreath that was displayed in the chancel during Holy Week.



The palm fronds at the top are for Palm Sunday; two large coins located on either side of the wreath are reminders of Jesus driving the moneychangers out of the temple. Bread and grapes represent the Lord’s Supper. A black ribbon at the top of the wreath symbolized Maundy Thursday, while the cross represents Good Friday. A lily represents Easter and “appears to trumpet the good news that Christ is risen,” said Faith Pastor Roy Lidbom. □

## Pastors Retreat Announced

A three-day Pastors Retreat is set for August 21-23 at Camp Linn Haven, Linville, NC. The retreat is designed to give participants some insight, guidance and encouragement in the discipline of their devotional and prayer life; and to provide the opportunity for sabbath rest and/or recreation.

Retreat program leaders include Rev. Dr. William Diekelman, First Vice President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; Rev. Dr. David Ludwig, professor of psychology at Lenoir-Rhyne College-Hickory, NC, and author of more than 100 professional articles and seven books; and Rae Fangmeier, an experienced retreat leader. She and her husband, Rev. Tim Fangmeier,

are members of Mountainside Lutheran Church at Camp Linn Haven.

Wives are invited to participate in the scheduled program or to take the opportunity to have the time to themselves.

The cost for the retreat are:

- Sunday, August 20, arrival: pastor-\$85; wife-\$70; children-\$12-\$35 depending on age.
- Monday, August 21 arrival: pastor-\$80; wife-\$65; children-\$10-\$30 depending on age.

For complete details, contact Rev. Dennis Quackenboss, PO Box 235, Linville, NC 28646; telephone 828-733-4404; or email [pastordq@bellsouth.net](mailto:pastordq@bellsouth.net).

Registration deadline is August 7. □

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