

The Water of Life



APPLE TALK

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I am not averse to wasting a little time in trivial activities. Frequently when I turn on my computer I check the weather conditions at the South Pole Station.

In the past several months there were times when the temperature was -100F or colder with visibility of one mile in ice crystals — water in its frozen state. In fact, the South Pole Station sits atop two miles of frozen water.

My favorite devotional booklet is *Our Daily Bread*. The

cover photo of the Winter 2006-2007 issue shows the frozen seas off Antarctica and cites Job 37:10: "By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen." God gave us water, and we need it to live.

Water is frequently used as a metaphor in the Bible to convey the spiritual truth that we need God for fullness of life. Jeremiah calls God "the spring of living water" (Jer 17:13). Ezekiel prophesies a time of restoration for Israel when he says:

"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." (Ezek 36:24-26)

Today the Christian Church is growing in Israel, adding numbers from Israeli Jews and from Arabs who have forsaken the false religion of Islam and discovered the grace, peace and love of God in Messiah Jesus.

There is a strong Lutheran Christian work in downtown Jerusalem, although it is not projected as "Lutheran" because denominational names have little meaning to Israelis. It is called the "Caspari Center,"

named after Carl Paul Caspari (1814-1892) a German Jew who came to Christ while a university student. After his conversion he became a brilliant Lutheran Christian scholar, contributing greatly to the church. You can find the virtual Caspari Center on the web at www.caspari.com, and when you actually visit Jerusalem you will find the staff gracious and hospitable.

Jesus used the metaphor of water to convey that eternal life is found in Him. He told the Samaritan woman: "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

One of the major Jewish festivals is Sukkot, which occurs in September-October. Some 2,000 years ago on the seventh and last day of the Festival of Sukkot there was an impressive ceremony on the steps of the temple, with a large group of singers and the Jewish high priest pouring out a pitcher of water on the temple steps. Large crowds gathered to see

this. The Gospel of John records how Jesus observed this festival.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is

have the abundant life without the gift of the Holy Spirit which Messiah Jesus gives. And Jesus gives us the water of the Holy Spirit which gives us eternal life — through faith in Him!

We need sufficient water to be healthy. In fact, we cannot live without water ... And Jesus gives us the water of the Holy Spirit which gives us eternal life — through faith in Him!

thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. (John 7:37-39).

We need sufficient water to be healthy. In fact, we cannot live without water. We cannot

Would you share a glass of water with someone dying of thirst? I believe that we all would do that. Jesus has the water of life. Offer Him to your Jewish friends. They may refuse at first, but that doesn't mean you can never offer Him again! Need help? Call us at 877-457-5556 x220 or E-mail at blieske7@bellsouth.net. □

Solicitation of Congregational Pledges Begins

Preparations for the 2007 Ministry Spending Plan of the Florida-Georgia District have begun. The District staff and Outreach Council are working to present a forward-looking, mission oriented plan to the Board of Directors for approval at its January meeting.

A key component is the support that will be coming from congregations. According to Rev. Edgar Trinklein, chairman of the District Stewardship Advisory Council, "Congregations are being challenged to increase their support for our common work, that we might move forward in strengthening existing congregations and starting new ones."

Materials to assist congregations are being developed which build on the 2006 District convention theme: "Walking in Love as Children of Light," based on Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-10.

An initial mailing has been sent to all congregations to encourage them to designate a percentage of their income for the work we do together as a District. In keeping with the resolution adopted by the June 2006 District convention, congregations are encouraged to increase this percentage, striving toward the goal of 20%, which is the percentage of congregational receipts the District forwards to the Synod. The District is also challenged to raise its support of the Synod.

Modeling is a central idea behind the practice of percentage first-fruits giving, according to Gerhard Michael, President of the Florida-Georgia District. "As a congregation gives its first portion for ministry beyond itself, it provides an example to its members to put the Lord first in their personal and family spending habits," he said.

"It is our confidence that as we put the Lord first in our personal, congregational, and District spending, we will discover that God will grant us wisdom to help us manage what is left. Our stewardship then becomes an act of faith in God's providing and a witness to our desire to have God's influence guide all of our money management."

Trinklein stressed that the District Stewardship Advisory Council stands ready to assist congregations in promoting healthy stewardship practices. The stewardship program, "The Blessing of Tithing," was provided to all congregations either at the District convention or by mail. Five District pastors have been trained to serve as Guest Leaders for the Consecrated Stewards program, sponsored by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. Please contact Trinklein directly at ETRINK@juno.com or Kathy Keene at the Lutheran Ministries Center for more information on either of these programs: KKeene@flga-lcms.org or 1-877-457-5556, extension 4.

Additionally, the booklet *Servants Together: Mobilizing for Mission*, which gives an overview of the ministry the Florida-Georgia District currently conducts, is available in bulk quantity for distribution to congregations. To secure copies, please contact Keene.

"Given the ambitious goals the District adopted in convention to start 200 new congregations by 2017 and to revitalize 22 congregations each triennium, the support of all District congregations is urgently encouraged," Michael concluded. "Treasurers are asked to report their congregational commitments on the pledge cards which were included with the mailing." □

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