

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Anchored



**LIFE
LINES**

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District President

With the hurricane season upon us, I don't think any one of us questions the need for our houses to be solidly anchored on their foundations. Laws dictate that mobile homes be appropriately strapped to minimize their vulnerability to the ravages of nature.

In the Christian faith, we also need to be anchored. In Ephesians 4, Paul makes clear that a major function of pastors and teachers is to equip

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the saints for ministry, to build them up, to help them grow to a maturity that is measured by the stature of Jesus Christ.

Such training, molding and teaching have not only the positive purposes mentioned, but also the avoidance of negative consequences: "That we no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine,

by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." (v.14)

Are we aware of where the winds in our society are blowing from? Obviously, we think of religions which do not teach Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. We do not want to get sucked into following that which does not bring us the

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good news that we are saved by God's undeserved mercy in Jesus Christ, for that would be a dead one, a way without an outlet, a way without hope, for God the Creator holds us all accountable. Since we all have sinned there is only one way: Jesus Christ.

Thus, even though we value tolerance in our society and we seek to respect other people, we dare not let our society's emphasis on tolerance lead us to act as if it does not make any difference what one believes, that all religions are equally valid. We need to know the

basics of our faith, stay anchored on them and witness to them in a confident and persuasive way that others, too, might believe and be saved.

Faith does not come by osmosis; it is the result of the Holy Spirit using people's words to convince and convert. Knowing and witnessing are a key component of the Christian life!

But the winds that would blow us off the sure anchor of Jesus Christ come not only from false religions, but from emphases and attitudes that are common in our society. Since they come from respectable,

integral parts of our society, it is easy to succumb to their influence without being aware of it. That's why we need one another, helping each other search for God's wisdom, that we might be his kind of people in the world.

Think, for instance of the way financial institutions seek to influence us with our investments. They make it sound like financial investments are the way to security for the future. Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:13-21 teaches us that money is absolutely no guarantee for the future. Certainly we should plan for the future — that's part of our stewardship — but it does not translate into security!

Knowing God as the Lord of life and death who holds us in his care is what gives us security for the future, especially when we know that his Son not only lived and died, but rose again!

To help us sort out the advertisements, the commentaries we see on the news reports and the perspectives we read in the

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newspapers, we can help one another approach these issues responsibly through the wisdom of God's word, lest we get drawn into the spirit of the time.

As an illustration, think of how many people are suffering after getting carried away with the recent housing boom. Over-reaching by both bankers and would-be homeowners has resulted in substantial disruption in the markets. Might not the wisdom of God's Word help us counter greed and live life with contentment, especially as the Word makes clear to us what a generous God we have, who will provide for our needs day by day. After all, he got the Israelites through the wilderness with his daily provisions and ultimately led them to the promised land.

The beginning of school is a natural time to encourage Chris-

tian education for the anchoring of our souls — for both children and adults. When the measure of our learning is not the Florida or Georgia Comprehensive Achievement Tests but rather Jesus Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), we have the endorsement of continuous learning.

Learning therefore does not stop with Confirmation. Rather, our junior Confirmation programs are making sure that the basics have been covered, that a solid foundation has been poured upon which our youth can erect the superstructure of their lives. Having Jesus as the standard of what we need to learn, we are urged to adopt

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I am hopeful that all of you who are reading this column are in congregations where a healthy Bible study program is in place — where age-appropriate classes are offered to your children, where challenging lessons are taught to our Middle and High School youth, where options are available to our adults, that they might find the help they need to face life responsibly and confidently as God's people. If your congregation does not have such an educational program, may I encourage you to speak with your pastor to change this sad situation.

My concern, though, does not rest only with congregations

offering classes. It ultimately resides with each of us taking these classes — parents getting their children and youth into their classes and then attending adult classes themselves. When Mom and Dad go to class they model the importance of lifelong learning.

Can we say then, given the benefits of lifelong learning, "If you are too busy to participate,

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it is likely you are too busy?" By making time to join in, you will find direction and power for understanding and living the Christian life.

This month the Pastors' Conference will focus on the topic of

the "Pastor and Politics." Why do you think that your pastors are taking time out from their busy schedules to focus on a topic like this? Might it be that it is not always clear how one unpacks Jesus' words, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" or the pastor's role in teaching this? (Matthew 22:21)

Some would argue that this passage suggests a separation of church and state, but how can that be when one asks the question, "What is God's?" Does not God own everything? Would that not include government? If the church is the people who know and believe God and they know that God is Lord of everything, how can we divorce

ourselves from interest in and involvement in politics and government?

Or take another passage we are very familiar with from our study of the Fourth Commandment, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities." (Romans 13:1) The phrase "every person" includes every Christian! We cannot escape our duty to government, but how do we carry it out especially when the government is a democracy? That we might help one another carry out our responsibilities in this sphere of our Christian calling, we can study God's Word together on this topic and gain some insights and direction.

The matter of the Christian's responsibility toward government is only one aspect of Christian living. There are many more: work, family, community, congregation, recreation, investments and the like. When Christ redeemed us, he rescued us totally. No corner of life is outside of his concern. Our call is to grow up into Christ, that we might live like him in the world.

A teaching precious to us Lutherans is the priesthood of all believers. A study of this important doctrine in the Scriptures leads us to recognize that God is calling each Christian to serve and witness in the world, so that God's grace can be mediated to the world. To be a priest means to be a mediator. How can we fulfill this calling if

we do not know what it means in the various facets of our life — and do not have the power to practice our calling?

Bible study can provide both the instruction and the power for our responsibilities as his royal priests in the world. Let's take advantage of it!

-gcm



Every congregation is a church in mission, and every member is a missionary; with all of us working together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, empowered by His Gospel to share His love.

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