Fundamentals Asserted at 2002 Aus Lectures
Ravi Zacharias Presents Perspectives Uncommon for Luther Seminary Campus

By Robert O. Smith
Managing Editor, The Concord

On March 5 and 6, the Aus Lectures were delivered to the community of Luther Seminary by Ravi Zacharias, an internationally-known Christian speaker. His lectures centered on Christian response to the new sense of plurality that has come to dominate Western culture.

At the age of 55, Zacharias, the father of three grown children—Sarah, Naomi and Nathan—travels extensively, writes profusely and produces a radio show weekly. He took time out of his busy Twin Cities itinerary to flesh out some of his lecture topics with The Concord.

Zacharias is pleased to be known as a "conservative" Christian. However, he is quite aware that "the conservative position is given small voice in divinity schools and seminaries," even in those schools once considered conservative.

"In those schools that have accepted the liberal mantle, the conservative is mocked, ridiculed and marginalized," Zacharias asserted. He is not pleased with the fact that "many of the students in mainline divinity schools have not read the conservative scholars."

It is his feeling that an earnest conversation between 'conservative' and 'liberal' positions should begin in the academy. "The acceptance and understanding of plurality is needed in the academy," he said. "We have not adequately engaged these areas."

Ravi Zacharias is quite well-known among Christian groups that would describe themselves as "evangelical fundamentalists" or at least "conservative." Before last week, many students here at Luther had no idea who he was and, if they did, were surprised to see his name on this year's Aus Lecture announcement.

According to Walter Sundberg, chair of the Aus Committee, however, Zacharias was a perfect fit for the lecture series.

The committee—consisting at that time of Sundberg, Michael Rogness, Gracia Grindal, and former professor Steve Ramp—listened to some of Zacharias' tapes and was immediately impressed. "We heard the tapes and said, 'Great. Let's go,'" Sundberg said.

The Aus committee—chosen by members of the Aus committee alone—makes it a point to look for speakers from the evangelical Christian community. Well-known figures such as Tony Campolo, William Willimon, and Lyle Schaller have all been Aus speakers.

"We're only limited by the fact that we can afford only certain people," he added. "If we had enough, we would go for another level of speaker."

"These speakers certainly bring in a broader crowd," Sundberg said.

These past few years have been unique for the Aus Lecture series. Although the series is held in March, weather has rarely been a major issue. "When Tony Campolo came two years ago, it was the only big snowstorm we've had," Sundberg recalled. "His was the only flight that came in and he made it. We kept the school open for Tony and the place was packed."

Last year's guest—Roberta Hestenes, a Presbyterian evangelical—was the series' first woman speaker. Zacharias was the first speaker from a non-Western country.

Sundberg explained that the Aus Committee is interested in evangelical Christians giving their witness. "That was George Aus to a 'T'," he said of the lecture series' namesake.

"Aus would have been thrilled with Ravi—with what he said and with his ability to say it," Sundberg said. "It was breathtaking; it was wonderful."

"For our campus, it was a fresh perspective," he added. "That's what we want to do, stimulate and get fresh ideas."

And the committee is fully aware that not everyone is thrilled to be exposed to this "conservative" perspective. "Does it correspond with the dominant orthodoxy at Luther Seminary? The answer is 'no.' I repeat, 'no,'" Sundberg said. "I'm glad the fur flew. If we could do that every year, the Aus lectures have done their job."

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Letters to the Editor

Silence, Worship, and Homosexuality. Do topics get any more difficult than those? Possibly so, but these are the ones we’re dealing with now. Below is another round of your reflections on these themes. The topic of homosexuality generated lengthy responses, so they’re on pages 4 and 5.

Have you been LPDR’d?

Thank you for your refreshing comments, Ben. I agree that it is essential that we be bold and honest in our beliefs. Being a Methodist at a Lutheran seminary gives me many opportunities to share differences and to hear them all in great love for one another as children of God. The harder thing is to share my beliefs in the world; things are much less loving out there. I would like to encourage all of those called to serve Christ to be bold and honest and stand up for what is right no matter what the price.

Sincerely,
LORONDA SCHULER
MA Junior

I’d like to share my experience with LPDR. I took my junior year of seminary at Trinity Seminary in Ohio. I was the only student to speak publicly against CCM. Not surprisingly, after I spoke out, I lost friends. People stopped talking to me. The grades on my systematics papers went downhill—what more could be expected when the professor was Michael Root, one of the CCM document authors? There was an intense pressure to be in lockstep with the prevailing beliefs of that school, and if one disagreed, then one was ostracized. Such was my experience, sadly one of having to live in fear of shunning and of unfavourable (in the school’s eyes) reports to my candidacy committee. I transferred to Luther in 2000 to get into a better academic program. My experience with Luther has been devoid of LPDR. Numerous din-nertime conversations turned to more controversial topics of today’s church, and after those conversations concluded, I still was able to talk with and be a friend of those on the opposite end of the theological spectrum. Thank you to the Luther community for being open to and caring enough to allow those with differing viewpoints to have civil and ongoing conversations with each other.

ANDREA HAKARI
MDiv. Intern

The Continuing Difficulty of Worship

I’ve noticed that chapel attendance is not very good this year. I’m afraid that one reason is professors who do not end second-hour classes on time so that students can make the trek to chapel without walking in late. It seems to me that if chapel is an important part of our education here (and I believe that it is), that professors and students should make every effort to end on time so that we don’t just give up and not go. I notice that many students and professors walk in 5-10 minutes late when they have classes that are over earlier.

THERESA KRAFT
MDiv. Intern

After reading “Memoirs of an MDIV Senior: Chapter 1” and a number of the response letters, I must admit that I am a bit distressed. At one level, I am concerned that a senior does not know the meaning of such words as “heresy” and “Gnosticism” and that he cannot distinguish between worship and music (even after speaking with “worship gurus”). It is worrisome as well that an article can be described as having “well-expressed thoughts and recommendations” when it makes such dizzying arguments. For example, the author asserts that since we live in a book culture and are moving toward an aural-oral culture, “it makes sense” to use the tools of a visual-media culture. Further, we are told, “The screen along with repetitive, singable lyrics free us to be more fully human.” (Isn’t that in the Bible somewhere? If the screen sets you free, you shall be free indeed?) I suppose a lack of care in writing a Concord article should not be surprising considering the mediocrity that shines through in so many other areas of our life together at this school. One does not have to look far to find self-professed BS-ers writing their papers the hour before they are due. And who hasn’t heard the statement, “Oh it doesn’t matter, I’m just taking the class pass/fail anyway”? So we substitute exegetical presentations with skits or playing with Play-Doh as we discuss our feelings about the text. And we tell each other to go to chapel and look for the “truth” even in “the worst sermon.” Rather than settling for so little, however, would we all not be better off expecting more from one another in all that we do?

Yet, over all these are really minor concerns. On the whole, I am mostly deeply troubled that we have forgotten the central point of Christianity in our Concord “worship wars.” It is not worship that is “defining us as Christians” as our senior’s memoirs assert, but rather Christ Jesus. The style of the music or the form of the liturgy or even the status of the preacher has no ultimate consequence.

THERESA KRAFT
MDiv. Intern

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Tiede Receives ALDE Executive Award

St. Paul, Minn.—The Rev. Dr. David L. Tiede, president of Luther Seminary, received the Outstanding Executive Award at the 2002 Association of Lutheran Development Executives (ALDE) conference, held Feb. 22-23 in Orlando.

Tiede was recognized for his visionary leadership, effectiveness in management and fundraising, inspirational leadership, boldness in proclaiming Christian stewardship and commitment to the mission of the Church at large.

“David’s leadership extends beyond the borders of Luther Seminary’s campus. He is a teacher of the church, a preacher of the gospel and a leading contributor to the essential and sometimes difficult dialogue of a church in transition,” said Paul Dovre, president emeritus of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn.

Under Tiede’s leadership, the Luther Seminary Foundation (a primary source of volunteer fundraising leadership) was established. In his presidency, he has overseen two highly successful capital campaigns, which drew a total of $97.5 million in funding for the seminary. He is also well recognized for his efforts in reinventing theological education—uniting the seminary community around a common mission to prepare leaders for ministry in the 21st Century.

“David Tiede has a creative, expansive and hopeful vision for the church,” said Kathleen Hansen, vice president for advancement at Luther Seminary.

“He is a visionary who commands the respect of leaders within the national religious community.

More significantly, he has a capacity for effective leadership that brings people together to make these dreams a reality.”

Tiede has served as president of Luther Seminary since 1987. Previously, he served on the seminary’s faculty in the New Testament department for 16 years. He is currently a board member of Tentmakers Ministries and co/chair of the Luke?Acts Seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature. Recently, he was elected vice president and president elect of the Association of Theological School in the United States and Canada.

In 1962, Tiede earned a bachelor of arts degree from St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn. He attended Princeton Theological Seminary in 1962-63, and received a bachelor of divinity degree from Luther Seminary in 1966. In 1971, he received his doctorate degree from Harvard University.

The Outstanding Executive Award is given each year by ALDE, a 900-member, professional organization for Lutherans involved in resource development. It is designed to honor a deserving CEO or president, executive of a church-related institution, or any Lutheran serving a non-Lutheran organization who serves the Lutheran church by deed and example.

Letters to the Editor

Only the Gospel—only Jesus—has any ultimate significance for our lives. Rather than thinking cosmetic changes will provide a quick fix, let us give the proclamation of Jesus the central place in our worship—in the singing, the prayers, the liturgy, and the preaching. If the Gospel is at the center of our corporate worship it will matter little who is standing up front or what style of music we sing.

MARY ANDERSON
Ph.D. Candidate

And then a response from the author to a critical perspective published in our last issue:

Mike [Schmidt],
Thanks for your article. I appreciate all that you said. I agree with you whole-heartedly. Thank you for putting some more flesh on the bones of what I was trying to hint at. When I wrote my article there was a lot that I left out for the sake of brevity—much that you pointed out. I especially truncated the definition of "contemporary" to mean a certain thing and you are right to say that there are other ways of thinking about it. And yes, many (most) "contemporary" lyrics are less helpful to evangelical Christian worship and formation than singing the phonebook would be—hence the challenge to write some new and better stuff in that genre.

Finally, in regards to being critical, you are absolutely correct. In fact, after I submitted it I felt a little bad because I was long on the bad and short on the good (or omitted it altogether). I do need to say that I love chapel here and find them worshipful. I also hope that I did not sound like I think certain staff/faculty members who are associated with worship in our community are fools, because I think exactly the opposite. I have learned more from them and respect their opinions more than most people in favor of "contemporary" worship. I just think that there are some important unexplored challenges for us to embrace as well as a wake up call to obedience.

ps. Get another name for your column or I will sue. (kidding) In Christ,

BEN RANSTROM
MDiv Senior

“The Concord appreciates the courage it takes for each of you to share your thoughts in so public a forum (especially in the face of LPDR). We also believe that it is your responsibility to speak out. "You shall be my martyrs ... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).
I wish I could tell you it has been easy. I wish I could tell you it has been pain-free. I wish I could smugly say that we in the United Church of Christ are way ahead of you on this homosexuality and the church issue. That would not be true.

Quite honestly, it has been a struggle. Some people have left our church over it. We have had to take time to listen to each other as we have attempted to navigate the waters. I imagine many of you will have similar experiences. Like you, we have had to address much misinformation as we have deliberated on this issue.

Some argued that the high incidence of AIDS in the homosexual population was evidence of God’s punishment for their sexual behavior. This is a myth. I was more than a little stunned that a Ph.D. student here at Luther, from North Africa no less, would pass on such misinformation. Magdi Gendi wrote last month, “I have learned that a high percentage of HIV patients are homosexual. To embrace or to encourage homosexuality means the church is leading society to death.”

According to the United Nations and the World Health Organization, Africa has suffered more than 50% of all AIDS deaths and they are almost all transferred among heterosexuals. More than 11 million Africans have died of AIDS and more than double that number are currently infected with HIV. I wonder whether Gendi would suggest some moratorium on heterosexual relationships since heterosexuality seems then to be as Gendi puts it “leading society toward death.”

Others, like Meron Stroman in the Metro Lutheran, have argued that gays and lesbians should subject themselves to reparative therapy so that they may be cured of this affliction. Stroman appears to examine whether homosexuality is a choice, deftly bypassing the obvious question: whether sexual orientation for anyone is a choice. Some gays and lesbians have subjected themselves to such “treatment.” It is something telling however, that there is no similar line of people in the heterosexual community willing to participate in such an experiment. This leads one to believe that it is the judgment and scorn of one’s peers that motivates one to seek reparative therapy.

Whether such judgment and scorn should be part of the church mission is perhaps a different argument. The evidence does not seem to demonstrate that such therapy is effective. However, I imite Stroman and his supporters to undergo such therapy and notify the rest of us when they have successfully been transformed into homosexuals.

What I can tell you is that it has been my tremendous privilege and honor to pray, sing, study and worship with gay and lesbian students here at Luther Seminary. I have found them to be committed in a special and courageous way to the Lutheran Church. Certainly, they could go elsewhere and be welcomed but they have a deep and abiding love for this church and for you, its members.

When I have sometimes been ignorant, they have been understanding. In the face of oppression, they demonstrate courage. I celebrate them. I can appreciate that this discussion will at times be a difficult one for you. I know that at times it has been difficult for us in the United Church of Christ.

It has been my experience with you Lutherans however, that you dialogue and deliberate in respectful manner and tone. I have found you to be a people that “gives light, so people may find their way.” Peace on this journey...

BOP WATERMAN
MA Junior

I have long considered myself a fairly tolerant person. Since my childhood I have been patient and accepting of others. As a nurse, I have learned to not be judgmental of those in whose lives are things that I consider unbelievably bizarre or unfortunate since but “by the grace of God, that could be me.” Recently, I was quite surprised to find out that I am a “homophobic,” you know, one of those intolerant types. I was raised to “love the sinner, hate the sin” a la Mr. Lewis.

However, the term “Homophobia” is broadly defined as anyone who does not entirely adopt what is commonly called the “gay agenda,” which would be the full embrace of people including their lifestyle. To flesh out this thinking more fully, homosexuality is a primary human characteristic that one is born with and is unattainable. God made them that way and thus their orientation is “good.”

Subsequently, in political life, the struggle for homosexual acceptance is not an issue about behavior in the first sense, but of identity. Thus, the struggle over homosexuality is an issue of equality and civil rights and not in the first place an issue of the morality of a certain mode of sexual expression. Hence, the attempt of some to love the sinner and hate the sin is anathema since it does not recognize that homosexuals cannot change their affections any more than a leprood can change its species.

Despite all of the problems with this view of homosexuality and how it eventually undermines the arguments of those who may have a “homosexual agenda,” the big problem that I have with this view of intolerance is that it is entirely intolerant. Before one raises one question or doubt, one is branded a “homophobic.”

This type of intolerance hinders and hinders everyone who is involved in this discourse, regardless of what side of the debate one is or what “orientation” one is. Look, how can we Christians get to the bottom of this issue or at least to some workable praxis regarding if we are not allowed to debate in Christian love. Of course, that is the heart of the problem with this debate, love has been missing—genuine concern for the well being of our neighbor. We are all in this together so let’s drop the fighting language of “homophobia” “flag,” and all those jokes that only demean each other and get to the issue at hand.

Now I am going to change the focus a little and offer what I think is a helpful pastoral stance. I am sure that what I am about to write will offend some of you. However, I wish to offend no one, but only to state a case and possibly dialogue with beliefs that you may hold. Please believe that I hold my thoughts on this issue with fear and trembling and see them as the best way to love and serve Christ and my neighbor at this time. My hope is that through dialogue I can grow in understanding and that so can you.

For me there are two central Biblical ideas that underpin human sexuality. They are found in many places, but for simplicity sake I will point to the creation story where God creates humanity and sets up an enduring pattern for marriage and family between a woman and a man. The second
Joining the Discussion

I'm also a voice from a different background and culture. Let me tell you about my own experience with GLBT young people.

In Egypt, I volunteered for more than 12 years to minister among youth. As a trusted person, some of them came to me expressing their concerns about their sexual orientation. Premarital sex, along with homosexuality, is a taboo in Egyptian culture (girls and boys consider virginity as their pride and a sign of their morality) so I was certain that they were not sexually active. Still, they expressed to me "different kinds of feeling towards their friends of the same gender especially when they touch each other."

I opened the Bible, read what is written about homosexuality, and trusted God that He would talk to them and tell them what He thinks about it because those individuals were very precious to me. I prayed for them for many years so God may open their eyes to His truth. They didn't commit suicide. They didn't lose their minds. They didn't leave the church and start their own churches.

Guess what? They are now wonderful wives and husbands. They have their own kids. They are very active, promising and committed Christians in the church (some of them are ministers).

They are helping other young adolescents find the truth the same way they found it. They are honest and willing to straighten themselves. They couldn't do it themselves, so they trusted the power of God. This is not my experience only. Every youth minister in our country will tell you a similar story, some even more clear than my own. Some of the cases were open and active homosexuals.

The bottom line is, God is so clear about this matter and very willing to work with those who are honest, trusting Him and willing to change.

When we first arrived in the USA, we started church shopping for almost 18 months. We were surprised at the number of churches that were empty of young people. We finally found a church that is full of youth and young adults in spite of the very clear beliefs and open articulation that this church does not accept homosexuality (the behavior not the individuals). I have to be honest with you my friends. I'm deeply concerned about the church in America. I'm really concerned about the children who will be raised in GLBT homes. I'm wondering what image they will have about Father or Mother, about the relationships between men and women, and about their own identity! I wonder!!!!

HEBA MUSSAD
Seminary Spouse, M.Ed. Student, UM
that there can allow for a healthy interaction," he said, contrasting this to the situation in the streets where such discussions quickly become a matter of "my house against yours."

"We need for the academy to not demon-
ize the ones who hold to certain truth claims."

The lectures Zacharias presented to the Luther community hinged on his definitions of the nature of truth and the nature of one's claims of truth. In his approach to knowledge, there is no distinction between philosophical and religious truth.

"All claims of truth must be measured, verified and tested over and against reality," he explained. "What is necessary is the recognition that truth can be meaningfully known, not just comprehensively known."

This approach to the nature of truth has implications for theology and, of course, one's theological method.

Among many others, David Yeago has observed that Martin Luther's own theology—in content and in method—is best described as "a legacy of tensions." The characteristic phrase that the believer is both a sinner and righteous at the same time (simul peccator et iustus) is just one example of these tensions, often known as 'dialectical' tensions.

While not commenting on Luther's theological method per se, Zacharias commented that while "there is clearly a place for dialectic in theological reflection, that does not mean that any system of thought can be systematically contradictory.

"Dialectic does not necessitate holding mutually exclusive positions. While it does allow for interplay, both positions cannot be held equally," he explained when asked to comment further. "There will be some outworking of dialectical tension in day-to-day existence, but that is not a foundation for working out a theology. Theology intends to establish what is true.

"Your son or daughter may not be in full agreement with your views," Zacharias offered as an example. "You may both hold to your convictions deeply and let truth win out in the end."

This approach to the exclusivity of truth of a person's faith should not be limited."

For Zacharias, Christian engagement with plurality entails a move to apologistic. He describes his work as "clarifying truth claims and presenting the Gospel."

"I hope that we would not be seen as persuading men and women with arguments. Arguments prove what error is and the Holy Spirit only can lead to truth," Zacharias said, while not diminishing his own rhetorical prowess. "If apologetic detracts from the work of the spirit, it is destructive."

According to Zacharias, the attitude of Christian apologistic is as important as its technique. "I am very comfortable to be described as a conservative person, but I certainly hold an irascible spirit, a very tender heart towards people who disagree," he said.

"For us to cut down opponents at the knees is not a Christ-like way of dealing with others."

"Deep in my heart, I know opposing views can't be right, but that doesn't mean that we are to be disagreeable," he continued. "I am confident in His truth and that it will triumph. The biggest danger is our getting in the way."

Talk of holding fast to exclusive claims of truth is offensive to many, more 'liberal' Christians. Zacharias is aware of the many reasons Western culture—and the Christian- ity often assumed to be its foundation—is often described as hopelessly exclusivist.

Zacharias considers these charges to be without merit. "It is ironic that when we raise the question [of exclusivism], we assume that we have somehow fallen short in relation to the rest of the world," he said. It is his observation, though, that "intolerance and judgmentalism are much stronger" in many other parts of the world.

Zacharias offered India—the land of his birth often considered a paradigm of plurality—as an example. "India is a land of great strengths and opportunities, but it is not necessarily a very accepting culture," he said. "Anything that departs from a region's undergirding ethic is very rigorously enjoined and strongly castigated. The tensions are strong." While rejecting the proposals of religious relativism, Zacharias encourages all religious persons to engage in a conversation regarding our culture. "These issues are serious," he said. "Those who hold to a religious worldview need to join together to stop our cultural slide; otherwise, we will face dire consequences."

And while valuing religious perspectives, Zacharias does not characterize all secularists as enemies to be fought. "They are not an enemy," he said. "There are many honest secularists who fear some sort of religious hegemony that takes over and dictates."

"There is a great need for us to find arenas where we can pit ideas against each other," he added. "And these are ideas, not sword against sword."

Zacharias sees such an open exchange of ideas as a characteristically American virtue. "America is definitely based on a Christian way of thinking," he asserted. "Not Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, or Islam. America was clearly founded on the basis of the Judeo-Christian worldview with its fundamental tenets of the Supreme Being, the first cause, and that human beings are accountable to that first cause."

In Zacharias' understanding, this under-
A Matter of Wit: Reflections on Death

By Donvon L. Riley
MDiv. Senior

"The issues of death," wrote John Donne, "belong to God the Lord."

Emanating as they do from the pen of a 17th century metaphysical poet and preacher, Donne's words are hardly the expression of insignificant feelings written for sentimental reasons. They are not, as some might argue, a matter of wit. They are truth. Simple human truth.

The issues of death are not melodrama, not the modern novel, but what William James called "the worm at the core." They are the issues of life, death, soul, God, past, and present.

Hanging and weighty, mighty and dreadful, they occupy and motivate the significant experiences of our life. In turn, the significant experiences of our life bear out the meaning of Donne's words.

Simply put, and in spite of what we might want to believe to the contrary, we are not in command of the issues of death. We do not possess them as objects to be experimented upon, categorized, catalogued, and finally tamed into domesticity. No, the issues of death are wholly beyond our attempts at meaning. As far from us, it would currently appear, as the truth.

Yet, the uncompromising truth may be exactly what Donne is pointing to with his words.

We are not, we discover, the possessors of the issues of death but rather the possessed. To take this to lightly is to rob Donne's words of their full meaning. It is to rob the words of their truth.

Donne is not pointing to an insignificant detail. He is writing about the insuperable barrier that separates life, death, and eternal life. Nevertheless, if we are not in control of the issues of death we must ask who, then, will save us from them.

To whom do the issues of death belong? According to Donne it is "God the Lord." Thus cornered, we are left with little else than, what Donne would call, "blessed dependency." We hang upon the words as the meaning draws in tighter and tighter upon us. We experience, by our conspicuous loss of control and meaning, the issues of death.

At this point we are literally at our wit's end. We have no way of escaping, by intellect or drama, the questions that Donne's words summon.

We can only appeal to the one to whom belongs the issues of death, the one to whom we must appeal for the meaning; for truth and for life.

No intellectual puzzles, no word play, merely the appeal.

We are discussing life and death, and not in the abstract, either; we are discussing our life and our death. Now is not the time for verbal swordplay, for unlikely flights of imagination, and wildly shifting perspectives, for conceit, for wit. Now is the time for simplicity. Being smart, even extremely smart, will not take care of it.

On this account, at least, we have been found out. For "it," although such a little word, signifies "being alive."

In the end, the answer we receive about it leaves us simply "in that blessed dependency, to hang upon him that hangs upon the cross. There we may bathe in his tears, there we may drink from his wounds, and lie down in peace in his grave, until he grants us a resurrection, and an ascent into that kingdom, which he has purchased for us, with the precious price of his innocent blood. Amen."

A Review of Ranstrom's LPDR

By Brian E. Konkol
MDiv. Junior

I applaud Ben Ranstrom's willingness to address issues that the majority has chosen to ignore. One thing is certain: Luther Seminary and the ELCA are not perfect. There are numerous items that need to be improved. Contentment and allowing deficiencies to persist is worse than the deficiency itself, so I hope more people follow Ranstrom's lead and sense the courage to speak out. The process of changing inadequacies must begin with open conversation.

The focus of Mr. Ranstrom's article was for us to pronounce our beliefs. I agree that there needs to be better lines of communication, but I think he may be going at it the wrong way. For better interaction on subjects of church shortcomings, we must first learn to listen to one another. Many people on this campus are great talkers but dreadful listeners. When we hear views different from our own, we often become defensive and immediately shut that viewpoint, and the person behind them, out and disregard anything the individual has to say. This attitude needs to change for there to be any progress. It is coincidence that God provided us with two ears and one mouth.

There are barriers that need to be broken before we can achieve open communication. As is the case with many students, I often desire to speak out on controversial issues; however, anxiety of inadequateness and incompetence often prevent me from doing so. When constantly surrounded by more learned students, pastors, Ph.D.'s, etc., it is quite intimidating to open your mouth at all. Each time I feel I have a grasp on a thought, I discover days later that I was completely wrong and may go to Hell for being stupid enough to believe such heresy!

This phenomenon results in an utter lack of confidence. Thus, when it comes time to speak out on topics that deserve attention, many students hold back their valuable insights in fear of humiliation.

Before we criticize Luther Seminary, the ELCA, or anyone else, I think it's important that we take a good look at ourselves. For example, after Ravi Zacharias' lecture on March 6, one woman openly proclaimed her support of St. Paul-Reformation's ordination of Anita Hill. I was shocked when I overheard a student mutter, "Who cares what you think." This doesn't sound like open communication to me. It is depressing to recognize how close-minded some of us have become. How many of us had the courage to stand up and say what we felt about the matter? We cannot make progress unless we first learn to listen.

To truly love our neighbor is to know and understand them. How can we understand without listening? When we listen to others, not only do we learn about them, but we also gain important details into our own
Hangin’ Out at GMI

By Clint Schnekloth

Program Director, GMI

There’s a pile of green hanging file folders next to me on the desk. Two are stuffed so full they are almost as wide as they are deep. It’s quite exciting, these folders. Although most seminary students are inundated with books, magazines, papers, and words, it just might interest you to know that the hanging files of the Global Missions Institute contain jewels with which to adorn, or begin, your research.

Chosen somewhat at random, how about the World Report, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS), A World Fellowship of Bible Societies? Our collection here at GMI goes back to 1997. The report publishes articles collected from Bible Societies around the world. Articles are written with enthusiasm, most with an incredible eye for detail. What follows are snippets.

Are you interested in that vast land that covers north Asia? Well, the Pentateuch was recently translated into Chuvas, “an important milestone in a project, which, when complete, will make the two million Chuvas-speaking the first of Russia’s ethnic minorities to have access to the complete Bible in their language. Russian and Yiddish are the only languages of the Russian Federation in which a complete bible is currently available” (Vol. 362, 33).

Or maybe you are interested in seeing a statistical break down of the World distribution of Scriptures (either in portions or full text) by Bible Societies. Last year a whopping 633,335,638 were distributed (vol. 360, p. 6). The chart includes a listing by continent of the type of literature distributed.

Volume 361 includes a moving account of the “United Bible Society Visually-Impaired People Research Workshop” in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The research workshop was incredibly hands-on, with workshop participants interviewing local visually-impaired people. The event was a model example of “Reading the Audience.”

What about languages more familiar to people who have studied in the U.S. or Europe? Volume 357 reports the official launch of the Parole de Vie (“Word of Life”), a translation of the entire Bible into français fondamental (“Basic French”). In a series of brief articles, you learn about the Centre de Recherche et d’Etude pour la Diffusion du français et its work to create a level of French language (with approximately 3000 words) that is “aimed primarily at people whose mother tongue is one other than French, or those who have learned to read only recently, but for whom French is nevertheless the normal language of communication” (22-25). This is the language into which Parole de Vie is translated.

In neighboring Austria, the national radio station, ÖRF, devoted a six-hour programme to a reading of the entire book of Isaiah, with brief commentaries by leading Austrian Jewish, Lutheran, and Catholic theologians. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with hundreds of people wishing for tickets to what became a sold-out performance.

If you wish to learn of the difficulties involved in Bible translation, you can read the harrowing story of war and translation in Liberia by Nancy Lightfoot, who worked to translate the Bible into Klaa (Vol. 359, 8-9).

Or returning to statistics, did you know that according to the 1999 Scripture Language Report, the Bible—in its complete form or portions of it—is available in 2,233 languages? But as the report goes on to note, since there are approximately 6500 languages in the world, only a third of them have Scriptures in their own language (Vol. 349, 3-4).

So come hang out with the hanging files at GMI. Who knows what you might find? All of this and more await those willing to open the files and dig in. I will leave you with this last image to whet your appetite, a glorious, rumbling, yet tasty tidbit...

The 18th Annual Transport for Christ Rally in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, is reported in volume 348. Imagine eight miles of trucks in a convoy headed for a “congregational” barbecue, where “the truckers and their families are greeted by clowns and balloons. They are provided with fresh-squeezed lemonade and apple fritters.” Meanwhile, the Mennonite neighbors, “Mennonite women with white lace caps on the back of their heads and young children at their sides,” bring our lawn chairs to sit in their yards and watch the procession. Yes, that’s right. The American Bible Society distributed Bibles at the event (6-7).