

Truth can be harmful

"If it doesn't work right, tell us. If it does, tell others." A once familiar promotional. Not well-written, perhaps, but unmistakably clear. Could anyone doubt what was meant?

Students of religion might find this dictum remarkably similar to the commandment of the Ten that reads "You shall not bear false witness." Evangelical explanations to this commandment emphasize not the restraint of false witness, but rather the necessity to speak well of others and put the best interpretation on all they do.

That was always the most disconcerting part. It wasn't the bearing of false witness that was so troublesome. It was trying to speak well of others and putting the best interpretation on all they had done that was extremely difficult.

"Not bearing false witness" or "telling us if it doesn't work right" are not concerned with lies. They are concerned with telling the truth in such a manner that the esteem of all will be enriched. This is not an issue of deliberate lying, but rather of intentional truth that will build community.



moral perspectives

Rev. Lloyd Buss

TRUTH CAN be used to destroy, just as truth can be used to build and to enrich. A truthful statement can destroy a person as easily as a malicious half-truth or lie.

And even more demonically, a truthful statement can be used not only to destroy the other person, but also to build up one's esteem in the minds of others.

The fabric of our society has been so distorted in recent years by deliberate deception and vested self-interest that the building of community through truth will be difficult. We are more inclined to use truth as a sword to maim and to kill than as an experience of shared hope that builds community.

Seeking out the best in others — putting the best interpretation on ev-

erything others do — explaining their actions in the kindest way — are gifts of trust and hope and kindness we offer to others. They are the building blocks of community that dares to move beyond self-defense. The spirit of acceptance and affirmation builds acceptance and affirmation.

WE ARE, of course, free to choose either one. And that is the ultimate issue. . . what we choose to do.

What is at stake is the quality of life we would choose. The process of seeking the best in each person can only create a life together that builds on the best each has to share and give.

Choosing only not to bear false witness against those who do otherwise would not offer much life together, because there would be so very little with which to begin.

The Rev. Lloyd D. Buss is the pastor of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Rochester.

Dance aids dystrophy

A "Super-Dance Marathon" will help raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association the evening of Friday, Feb. 13. Sponsor is the Student Governance Council on the Auburn Hills Campus of Oakland Community College.

The event will run from 6:30 to 11:30 p.m. in G Building of the campus, on Fothergill Road two miles east of the Pontiac Silverdome.

Ticket information is available from the student activities office at 853-3569. Donations are tax-deductible.

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