

The **VINE**

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An Inland Christian Mag.

A Big Thank You



Grace to you and peace from God our Father!

Time flies. Sep 9, 1999 has passed without any disaster. However natural disaster in the form of massive earthquakes exceeding 7 on the Richter scale did strike Turkey and Taiwan. Life is indeed precarious if one is not prepared for eternity with God. For those of us still living and are Christians, what is our response? Let us dedicate ourselves to love and serve Him even more faithfully while we are here. Let us be good stewards of our time, life and money.

What is Christian stewardship?

Christian stewardship is the recognition of God's sovereignty through creation and is a grateful response to God's manifold gifts. Human response is expressed by a dedicated and creative use of all these gifts toward fulfillment of Christ's mission in the world.

Christian stewardship is a response to the love of God as revealed in Christ is expressed in terms of the worthy management and care of all resources available for the sustenance and

We would like to express our most sincere "Thanks" to many of you who have stayed up late on last Friday and Saturday to help make our wedding come true. A very "BIG Thank You" to all of you. To those who may not know, last Sunday (26/9/99) was actually our last visit with you as we have a wedding reception to prepare in Kuala Lumpur. Thereafter, we will fly to Melbourne on Monday, 4th October 1999.

Please don't treat our going off to Melbourne as a "Goodbye" but as a long holiday we will be back here again sometime. Do give us a call or visit if you are visiting Melbourne, Australia, or you could drop us a mail at bing@bigpond.com

May the blessing from our Father be with you always.

With warmest regards,

Edward & Ann



enrichment of life.

The only appropriate response persons can make to the grace of God is to cooperate with God in fulfilling the divine will and purpose. This is done as person recognize that what they receive from God is to be developed and invested in enterprises of the kingdom. All that is committed to the fulfillment of God's purposes is sanctified. The Christian steward whose life and abilities and resources are totally committed to God's purposes is thus totally sanctified. Such a commitment to vocation brings the Christian's life into the stream of God's purpose so that the spirit of God flows through such a person in a blessing to the world.

Christian stewards accept life, including abilities, power, influence, and money as special trusts from God and relationship with God. These persons will seek to develop these to the fullest, and endeavor to use body and mind and abilities for the purpose of God. Christian stewards also feel a responsibility for the well-being of all people, giving them the opportunity to develop their full potential as well.

Christian stewards accept the family as a trust from God and seek to provide the atmosphere in which each member can realize his or her fullest potential. Every person is accepted as a child of God, worthy of equal worth, and the exploitation of any person by other individuals, groups, or systems is rejected.

Christian stewards accept the church (as the fellowship of the committed ones) as a trust from God, and seek to assure through this fellowship the extension of God's mission into the community and into the world.

Christian stewards accept the gospel as a trust from God, seek to understand it fully, and endeavor to be faithful custodians of its liberating and reconciling truth. They endeavor to transmit it to others so that they may see its relationship to the whole of life.

Christian stewards accept material resources as a trust from God to maximize the use of these resources. They use the power of this wealth for the purposes of God. Stewards strive to increase the productivity of the world without exploitation and to make it possible for others to share in this bounty.

Christian stewards accept power and influence as a trust from God and endeavor to administer them according to the purposes of God. They encourage others to do likewise.

Christian stewards accept this world with its tremendous resources as a trust from God, seeking to understand what God is doing in the events of history and through technological developments, and endeavoring to be involved in the decisive issues facing society. They strive to penetrate the arena of secular society with the good news of the kingdom.

Christian stewards are hopeful about the ultimate outcome of history, accepting their personal destiny as a trust from God, and endeavoring to invest life and abilities and resources as partners with God and others in shaping one's personal destiny as well as the world's future.

Biblical and theological foundations

An examination of the origin and background of the word stewardship enriches the understanding of the concept. In classical Greek, the word used is *oikonomia*, which is derived from two words: *oikos*, meaning "house," and *neimein*, meaning "to distribute." These words combined set forth the idea of the administration of a house.

In addition to the meaning, "a place of residence," the word *Oikos* in the scriptures also implies a bond

which unites all who belong to the household. While the household begins with the immediate family, it is extended to include relatives, servants, and guests. The biblical concept includes the idea that God is the architect of an entirely new household. To be included in this household means to participate in new life which emerges from God's constant process of creation. A place in the family of God means becoming a member of the Body of Christ in which all Christians are included. The growth, nurture, and attainment of maturity on the part of the Body depend on God's continuous acts of grace and love in creation and on the faithful response of all who are involved.

Inasmuch as Christian stewardship begins with one's recognition of God's sovereignty, our most appropriate first response is an act of grateful worship. All of us are dependent on resources and activities, which we did not create but which are abundantly at hand for our use. It is only through the grace of God that we live and move and have our being.

Christian persons also have a part in the process of creation. They have been placed in God's garden "to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). In the work of "dressing and keeping," we become creative. Many products indispensable to an

abundant life would not come into existence without the cooperation of stewards. This clearly makes us creators with God as we use the raw materials, which are gifts from God, to develop the garden and its products. This concept maintains the primacy of God as the creator and, therefore, owner of all creation. Our part is significant and indispensable, but it is not primal.

This concept of the role of stewards as co-creators with God brings stewardship quickly and boldly into focus. We are confronted by generous gifts from God and, therefore, have the obligation to mold them into life as God intends it to be, and to sustain and enrich that life.

Stewards, by the gifts and grace of God, are free moral agents. They can remain aloof, observing the vast gifts of God and sensing their possibilities, while doing nothing to develop them. They can go their way in selfish abandon, thereby refusing to recognize any stewardship responsibility. While some persons have chosen this irresponsible way, many others have responded to the call to become partners with God in the act of creation. This is the way of responsible Christian stewardship.

God is the author of all creation, including persons. God has acted

redemptively in history through Jesus Christ. When persons realize this, they respond by becoming involved in the continuing redemptive process. God's presence is evidenced through the stimulating and empowering activity of the Holy Spirit, enabling persons to join God in helping others to achieve wholeness of life. Thus God is revealed as creator, redeemer, and life-giver, and sensitive Christians are challenged by this revelation to commit their lives fully to God. In this way they become good stewards of God's redeeming grace.

Some things, by God's decree, are not accomplished without the active participation of persons. This points up a central emphasis of Christian stewardship. From the standpoint of human capacity to serve, persons are entrusted with a variety of resources including time, material things, and human abilities. These are provided in order that each may have a part in the achievement of God's purposes.

May we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Pastor Martin Lee

Matthew 24 in the light of current world events.

If you have not read Matthew chapter 24 before, here it is in full in the KJV (copyright free). I am not advocating the end of the world but I am suggesting that we have a duty to carry out: **To preach the gospel of the Kingdom to all the World.**

In November 1999, we are planning to go door-to-door tracting in our neighbourhood. Are you willing to be counted for Christ?

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to [him] for to show him the buildings of the temple.

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you,

There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for

all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

Wars :

Rosovo
EAST TIMOR
Rumours of wars
TAIWAN

Earthquakes:

Turkey

Taiwan
MEXICO

AIDS
Mad Cow
Disease
Virus

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here [is] Christ, or there; believe [it] not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, [he is] in the secret chambers; believe [it] not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [is] nigh:

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, [even] at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

But as the days of Noah [were], so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two [women shall be] grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh,

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed [is] that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming. And shall begin to smite [his] fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for [him], and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint [him] his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew, the Apostle



Is there anything wrong with watching television programming in particular movies, daytime soaps, and other fare?



Who among us shall dwell with the Lord? *Answer:* He "...that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: brethren shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. (Isaiah 33:14-16)

Beloved, are you stopping your ears from hearing of blood or violence? Are you shutting your eyes from seeing evil? Then, you have the answer. One cannot both seek to attain righteousness and watch carnal television, which is filled with violence, sex, and utter moral depravity.

Following is an excerpt from Romans 1 that is relative to television. The passage includes a profile of a "hater of God," someone who has been turned over to a reprobate (morally abandoned) mind. Interestingly, these are the aspects that one sees when watching television.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Rom 1:28-32)

Did you catch the point? Not only they who commit such things are worthy of death, but they who take pleasure in them that do them. If you are watching murder, violence, sex, perversion, hate, people using the Lord's name in vain (as, O' my God), then you must be taking pleasure in the programming. Otherwise, you would not be watching it. Beloved, do not be deceived, if you are watching the programming, you are enjoying it.

A good rule of thumb: Only watch those programs that you would not be ashamed for Jesus to watch with you. Did you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Did you not realize that you grieve the Holy Spirit when you force Him to watch sexual scenes, violence, and the like? Did you not know that the holy angels turn their heads and will not look upon such things? Then, how do you justify your continuing to watch carnal television?

The youth ministries in JCC consist of the DTP, BB and GB. These are exciting ministries as we have the opportunities to influence the lives of young people for Christ. Although we have not grown by leaps and bounds, we thank God that in the last few years, He has raised up a few committed young people who are now teachers of younger students and are also serving in other ministries in the church. We are praying that in the year 2000, as we start the new millennium, there will be a revival among the youths. We pray that God will give us a hunger for Him, a desire to know Him personally and intimately and to actively make Him known.

From 17 to 20 December 1999, we will be having our Youth Camp. The

theme is "Living life to the fullest" and the camp will be held at the BB/GB Campsite.

The camp fee is \$45 and this camp is open to all young people who are at least 13 years old. If you are one of these young people, we welcome you to join us. Or you can encourage your children, nephews, nieces and friends to come to this camp too. We are trusting God to start the revival during this camp.

Please pray for us.



The BB and GB have been informed that starting from

JCC AN UPDATE ON THE YOUTH MINISTRIES IN



next year, all Secondary 1 and 2 students in Shuqun Secondary School will have to join an uniform group as one of their ECA activities. We are therefore anticipating a larger enrolment for the BB and GB next year. This is a great ministry opportunity for us. It is also a great challenge as there are very few labourers who are now serving in these ministries. If you have a burden to serve these young people, you can approach the pastors, or any DTP teachers, BB or GB officers.

Chong Wong Mui



P.U.S.H.



- When everything seems to go wrong, just push
- When the job gets you down, just push
- When people don't react the way you think they should, just push
- When your money looks funny and the bills are due, just push
- When you want to tell them off for whatever reason, just push
- When you ask the question, when is my ship coming in? (as I often do), just push
- When people just don't understand you - just push not to continue on with when, when, when, etc.

Let me tell you what it STANDS for:



- P- ray
- U-ntil
- S-omething
- H-appens

NOW EVERYBODY PUSH!

If your life is going just well and you have nothing going wrong, just remember you are truly BLESSED! you too should be able to PUSH for more blessings!

LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SINGAPORE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Church in Singapore was officially constituted on 30 Oct 1997, after forty years of jurisdiction under the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS). The departure from the LCMS provided an impetus to the Lutheran community in Singapore to work towards a self-renewal Church with full autonomy in administration. Being a newborn Church, there are great potential for growth and expansion. However, with limited resources inherited from the LCMS in terms of infrastructure and finance, coupled with the fact that the Church is also found wanting in human resource, the future endeavors will be difficult ones. Nonetheless, with faith and guidance from the Lord, all the difficulties will be circumvent.

Saving of wayward souls needs the total commitments, dedications and hard works of all the pastors, lay leaders and church members. Besides, a detailed plan must also be developed to guide the growth of the Church in stages. This "Growth" will be realized when there is a shared vision and unity amongst the pastors and lay leaders. To this end it is hoped that all the Lutheran congregations in Singapore would come together in unity, share their resources and pursue together the fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus, so that A HOUSE THAT BEARS THE NAME OF THE LORD IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM could be built.

SHARED VISION

The shared vision of the Church are as follows

- a. A united Lutheran community where there is no boundary found between congregations in all facets.
- b. Sufficient parish workers in all congregations to yield growth in churches.
- c. A good reach out to propagate the Lord's Gospels.

FIVE YEAR PLAN

In order to drive the growth of the Church, a five-year plan will be charted out for implementation. The details of this plan are not cast in stone. Modifications can be made to suit changing situations. However, as far as possible, it will be used as a guide for the build up of the Church.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The following are the objectives of this proposed plan

- a. To unite our congregations as a family, by developing good relationships among us, so that our identity and strength can be enhanced.
- b. To train and nurture our people into full measure of Spiritual maturity in Christ for services in the church and the community.
- c. To extend the Kingdom of God in Missions locally and regions beyond, so as to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fundamental presupposition for this plan to be accomplished is that all the Lutheran leaders must:

- a. Understand the importance of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and are willing to commit themselves to fulfil His command.
- b. Have a shared vision and common goals.
- c. Be willing to share resources in pursuance of common goals.
- d. Be able to mobilize church members to propagate gospels.

GUIDELINES

These guidelines will help to fulfil the goals of our plan.

- a. Renewal and Revival for our congregations and leaders in preaching, fellowship and evangelism.
- b. Use of effective means to preach the Gospel of Christ.
- c. Set up a dynamic prayer chain.
- d. Mobilize and motivate members to participate in services and ministries.
- e. Establish close networking relationship among various

congregations so as to show the spirit of oneness and team ministry.

MISSION

Our mission is to bring our Church from the present status in the next five years to the following growth:

SIX THOUSAND MEMBERS, FORTY CO-WORKERS, TEN CONGREGATIONS AND TWO SOCIAL WORK CENTRES

REALISTIC GOAL

Is this goal too high to reach? Is it realistic and workable? This goal is based on a step of faith. It is an assurance of our vision.

Is it unrealistic and beyond reach? It depends on which perspective we view and evaluate it. It will be too high if we look at it pessimistically as many churches do and it may be too low if we see it through God's eyes.

Today we have about three thousand members. To reach the target we must have 100% growth in our membership. This means that each member need only to bring one person to Christ during these five years. The number will not be high if we view it in this perspective. Therefore, let us in faith take up the challenge to accept the goal of **"six thousand members, forty co-workers, ten congregations and two social work centres"**.

- a. Six thousand members - This is the average Sunday worship attendance which includes adults, youth and children.
- b. Forty Co-workers - This includes Pastors, Parish Workers, Youth Workers, Ministry Assistants, etc.
- c. Ten Congregations - This includes Congregations, Preaching Points, Mission Centres and House Churches.
- d. Two Social Work Centres - This will be Social ministries relevant to the Mission of the LCS.

Annual Compounded Growth is 15%

Note: SWC - Social Work Centre, NROP - New Reach Out Point

Annual Growth

2000 - 450 Members

2001 - 517 Members

2002 - 596 Members

2003 - 684 Members

2004 - 787 Members

The projection above is a modest one. Basing on 15% per annum growth rate, the church will have a total of 6034 members in five years, which is not an untenable number.



STRATEGY

How do we go about achieving these goals? Neither a single Lutheran congregation nor committee can fulfill this mission alone. Therefore, we ought to have the following strategies.

- a. Honor Christ As Our Lord & The Holy Spirit As Our Guide
We must honor Jesus Christ as our Lord and the Holy Spirit as our Guide. We must pray that the Spirit of God moves and works among us, His power and the fruit of the Holy Spirit manifested in the life of the members, so the Church is renewed and revived significantly.
- b. All The Lutheran Congregations Must Unite Together
All our Congregations must unite together as one, share and participate in all projects and programs, maintain a strong co-operation and co-ordination in all ministries.
- c. Mobilization Of Church Members
We must mobilize all our church members in all ministries, dedicate themselves with their gifts to save wayward souls and to build a Church that glorifies the name of our Lord.

- d. Renewal And Growth Of The Church
Staying Constant will lead to decline, then decay. We must generate growth and promote renewal. Renewal will mobilize our members more powerfully, preach the Gospel more effectively and enable us to grow into maturity.
- e. Ministry Is Based On Local Congregation Though Joined Yet Independent
All congregations should carry out our activities using the same theme and having common publicity. The local congregation can make use of common resources according to their own need and context which indeed has been proven more effective in the development of ministry locally. Thus, it serves the purpose of joint effort, yet the result can be realized in the congregations individually.
- f. The Following Terms Will Be The Principles For Our Joint Ministry
- ❖ Mobilization - Mobilize all Lutheran congregations and members for the Great Commission.
 - ❖ Equipping - Equip everyone with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in life and evangelism.
 - ❖ Saturation - Preach the Gospel and the need for church planting.
 - ❖ Compassion - Express our love and concern to the needy in our witnessing.
 - ❖ Co-operation - Unite together and form a networking for ministry to share the love of God.
 - ❖ Urgency - Sense of urgency in preaching Gospel, because time is running out.
 - ❖ Realization - The goal can be realized by the help of God.

from The Web...

The Internet has been a great source of articles for The VINE. This is because we do not receive enough "local" or "home" news to publish in The VINE. I am sure there are many blessings and miracles which you have received from the LORD, which you may be reserving for the Watch Night Service to share and therefore The VINE does not get these stories for publication. If you are wondering why we only publish Internet articles and very little personal stories, which can edify many, it is because we respect your right to privacy. Unless you submit your story or even tell it to us so that we can publish it, it does not appear in The VINE.

While surfing recently, I came across this site <http://vanguardmag.com>, which has many interesting articles on many topics. There is an article which I think could be relevant to us: "HOW TO CHRISTIANIZE HALLOWEEN".

The author(s) begin by describing how a certain church Atlanta, Georgia in the USA celebrates Halloween. The church organises a "Hallowed be Thy Name Festival" with a live concert, food, games, pony rides, candy give-aways, petting zoo, space walks, puppet shows, popcorn and costume contests. Fun is promised for everyone and the admission is free. They then describe another type of celebration, organised by churches, called "Hell Houses". In these hell houses, a demon tour guide greets the visitor at the door with a fiendish welcome. Entering, the visitor is immediately overwhelmed by the stench of death. Bloody scenes are then shown, like an abortionist at work, bloody victims of murder and drunken driving. A disfigured AIDS victim lies in a coffin and other demonic inspired scenes of witchcraft, rape, violence, suicide, etc.



Quoting Isaiah 33:15-16, "(He) that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high", the author(s) then suggests that Isaiah would neither have visited nor sponsored one of these hell houses.

The author(s) claim that Christians celebrate this day with such frenzy that they have either forgotten or simply do not care just whose holy day they are promoting. What is Halloween about? It was originally a festival of fire and the dead and the powers of darkness. Some of the practices of Halloween are:

❖ BONFIRES

Bonfires are to attract the souls of the departed, thus deterring them from coming into the homes. People believe that the souls of the departed will visit their old homes to warm themselves by the fire because Halloween, which falls on 31st October, marks the transition from autumn to winter.

❖ TRICK OR TREAT

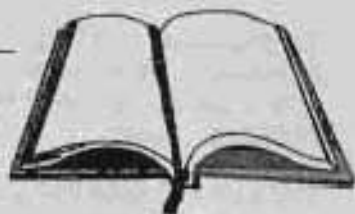
The Celts, Chinese, Egyptian and Aztecs believe that the spirits of the dead require food and drink. Long ago, during the festival, the Celts left various foods outside in order to placate the spirits on their journey to the netherworld. To supply nothing meant that the hungry spirit might intrude into the house and help itself to your belongings. This belief evolved into the modern day version of trick or treating where children dress up like ghosts and go from house to house for the food offerings.



The author(s) contend that to observe other gods and their holy sabbaths is an abomination to the Lord: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise." Deut. 12:30-32

Halloween is coming soon. This year, it will fall on a Sunday. Before you decide to celebrate it, go to the website and read the article in detail. Then decide for yourselves what you should do.

From this same website, you can download free the Authorised King James Version Bible. It will take approximately 34 minutes to download with a 57.6kbps modem.



Martin Cihak