

qualities have made him a great role model for many aspiring leaders, and he is a true inspiration to many.

Bill George will be sorely missed by Medtronic, but the Twin Cities community will continue to benefit from all that he does for so many. I applaud Bill for a stellar career at Medtronic, and I wish him and his wonderful wife, Penny, and their family continued success and happiness in future years.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. JOHN E. PETERSON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 9, 2001*

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 100, I put my voting card in and it did not register. Had it registered, I would have voted "Yea".

CONGRATULATING EISLEBEN  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH ON CELEBRATING THE  
ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNI-  
VERSARY

### HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 9, 2001*

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor and pride that I stand before the House today to extend my congratulations to Eiselben Evangelical Lutheran Church as the congregation celebrates its 150th Anniversary.

Named after the town in Germany where Dr. Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran Church was born, Eiselben Lutheran Church was formed in 1848 in what is now known as Scott City. Formally organized in 1951, the first congregation was comprised of just 19 members gathered together in a home. But although small in numbers, they were large in faith. 1848 was a meaningful year. It was that year the first baptism was performed in the church and it was that same year the first communion was celebrated on the Sunday following Easter.

Slowly the congregation grew, and steadily the numbers rose to a point where in 1855, the church was fortunate enough to welcome the arrival of its first permanent pastor. A short time later, a log building was erected as the first house of worship in 1867 and a second facility was added in 1897—a school building.

Other timely and memorable events followed, including the organization of what is now the Lutheran Youth Fellowship in 1893. The church construction was completed in 1913 and the Ladies Aid Society was organized that year as well. Finally, Sunday School, the education program for the youth in the church community, began in 1922.

The church has seen many changes during its colorful 150-year history. Twenty-five pastors have dedicated their time and energy to growing this spiritual community including the current Rev. Robert Azinger.

Mr. Speaker, on this very special occasion, I ask that all of my colleagues join me in congratulating Eisleben Lutheran Church on its 150th anniversary. May the blessings they

have enjoyed thus far continue so that they might remain strong and solid for years to come.

#### ANTI-SEMITISM IN DAMASCUS

### HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 9, 2001*

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, during the historic visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Syria earlier this week, Syria's new president Bashar al-Assad, in a speech welcoming the Pope in Damascus, spewed forth the most vile and vicious anti-Semitism. He said that the Jews "tried to kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality in which they betrayed Jesus Christ and the same way they tried to betray and kill the Prophet Muhammad."

This venomous remark was in stark contrast to the theme that the Pope voiced during his visit to Syria—peace and understanding. This was reflected in his visit to the Great Omayyad Mosque in Damascus, the first visit by any Pope to a Moslem house of worship. His Holiness on that occasion called for a "new attitude of understanding and respect" between Muslims, Christians and Jews.

The Wall Street Journal yesterday editorially expressed the concern for the response from President Bashar Assad and others in Syria. "But instead of being met by reciprocal gestures, Sheik Kuffaro, with Syrian President Bashar Assad, used the Pope's visit to showcase their own intolerance. The Sheik delivered a speech urging Christians and Muslims to line up against 'Jews and Zionists.' Assad helpfully reminded the Pope of the role played by Jews in the death of Christ. And from Syria's state-controlled media came the line that Israelis were 'enemies of God and faith.'"

The Journal also noted that vicious anti-Semitism which the Pope's visit brought out in his hosts is certainly not limited to Syria alone. The editorial quoted an Arab school text: "Perhaps Allah brought the Jews to our land so that their demise would be here," reads a characteristic passage of a Palestinian textbook for children. In Egypt, popular columnist Ahmad Ragab recently wrote, "Thanks to Hitler, blessed memory, who on behalf of the Palestinians, revenged in advance, against the most vile criminals on the face of this earth." The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a notorious anti-Semitic tract penned in czarist Russia, remains in wide circulation throughout the Middle East."

Mr. Speaker, how much at odds with the purpose and message of the Papal visit were the vile words of President Assad. He used the occasion of the Papal visit to throw gasoline on the flames of anti-Semitism at a time when this region of the world is most in need of soothing remarks and racial healing. I welcome the condemnation of the statements of President Bashar Assad that have appeared in the large number of American newspapers.

Mr. Speaker, The Washington Post published an excellent editorial yesterday criticizing Bashar Assad's vicious anti-Semitic, outrageous and inflammatory statements. I ask that this editorial be placed in the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to read it.

#### VILE WORDS

Editorial, The Washington Post, Tuesday,  
May 8, 2001

SYRIAN PRESIDENT Bashar Assad on Saturday offered a vivid, if vile, demonstration of why he and his government are unworthy of respect or good relations with the United States or any other democratic country. Greeting Pope John Paul II in Damascus, Mr. Assad launched an attack on Jews that may rank as the most ignorant and crude speech delivered before the pope in his two decades of travel around the world. Comparing the suffering of the Palestinians to that of Jesus Christ, Mr. Assad said that the Jews "tried to kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality in which they betrayed Jesus Christ and the same way they tried to betray and kill the Prophet Muhammad." With that libel, the Syrian president stained both his country and the pope, who so far has failed to adequately respond. He also confirmed something about himself that has become increasingly clear during the months since he inherited the presidency from his father: This 35-year-old naïf is headed in a dangerous direction.

John Paul's decision to visit Syria and to become the first pontiff to visit a mosque offered Mr. Assad a remarkable opportunity. The former ophthalmologist has been struggling to establish himself as a credible leader both in and outside of Syria, and could have drawn on the pope's enormous prestige by welcoming his latest attempt to reach out to another faith. But Mr. Assad seems to have little understanding of the world outside Damascus, or how he can productively relate to it. Since taking office, he has abandoned his father's uneven efforts to reach out to Israel and the West and instead taken a series of militant and provocative steps, ranging from increased support for the Hezbollah militia in southern Lebanon to the illegal export of hundreds of millions of dollars of Iraqi oil through a Syrian pipeline. At an Arab conference in March he proposed the reinstatement of a boycott against Israel, saying the Israelis were "worse than the Nazis." The Arab leaders wisely ignored his proposal, while his rhetoric drew widespread condemnation.

Having evidently learned nothing from that episode, Mr. Assad sought Saturday to recruit the pope and the Catholic Church for his war against Jews. Vatican officials maintained that the pope did not have prior notice of Mr. Assad's medieval appeal, and the pontiff's own words implicitly rejected it. But the Vatican's response to Mr. Assad was shockingly blase, considering the effort John Paul has made to repudiate the church's own history of anti-Semitism. "We are guests of the president and he expressed his opinion," said longtime papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls. "I wouldn't call it strong; I would call it clear."

What is clear is that Mr. Assad converted a visit meant to symbolize tolerance and reconciliation into a display of obtuseness by the Vatican in the face of religious ignorance and hatred. During the past decade the United States engaged diplomatically with Mr. Assad's father, gaining his support in the Persian Gulf War and drawing him into the Middle East peace process. Despite the totalitarian nature of his regime and its sponsorship of terrorism, Hafez Assad seemed to understand that peace with Israel and engagement with the West offered the only way forward for his country. His son clearly does not—and should be treated accordingly.