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the Northwestern Lutheran

Rejuvenating
our spiritual service
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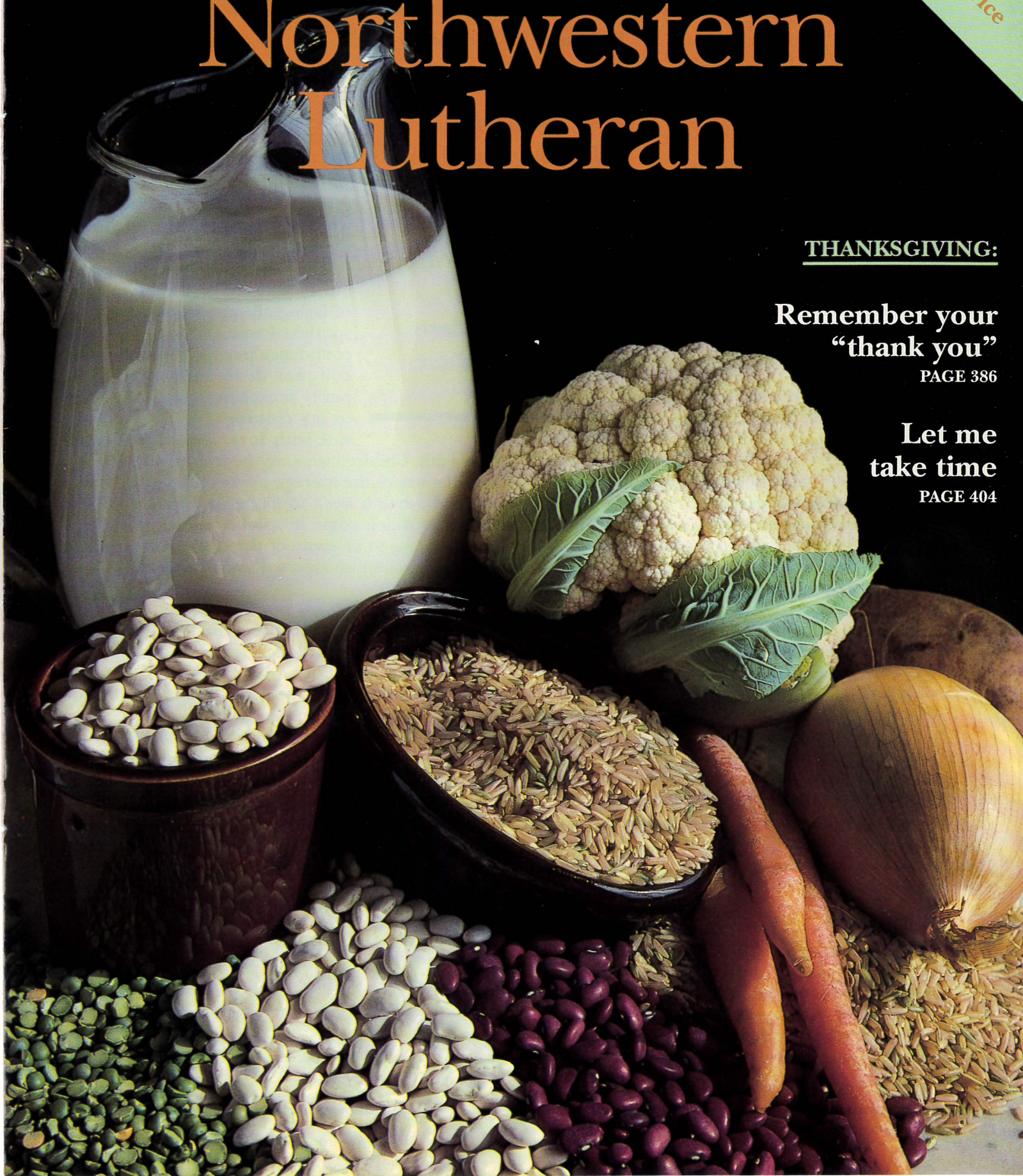
THANKSGIVING:

Remember your
"thank you"

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Let me
take time

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Remember your "thank you"

by Richard E. Lauersdorf

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" (Luke 17:17).

“What do you say?” Mother has to prompt her little one clutching Grandma’s present in her hand. Ingratitude infects not only little ones, but all of us. That’s why we need a Thanksgiving Day to remind us about our “thank you” to a gracious God.

Humble thanks

From a distance the leper begged with the rest, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us.” Lying in the dirt at Jesus’ feet after the Master had heard and answered, the man knew how much he had received. Before, he was walking death; afterward, restored again to his family and society. Before, he was heading for hell; afterward, readied for heaven. No wonder he was at Jesus’ feet with his humble “thank you.”

Why do we so often forget our “thank-you”? Could it be that, unlike that leper, we forget what we deserve and how much we’ve received? How quickly we can stride right up to God and demand what we feel we deserve. How quickly we can demand from him what we think we have coming.

Thanksgiving is time to remember that the one thing I deserve from God is something I hope he never gives me, damnation in hell. Gratitude that I have a door to open, a slice of bread to butter, a stitch of clothing to wear, fresh air to inhale, a loved one to enjoy, a car to drive, a church in which to worship, and much more, comes only as we’ve learned to say in catechism class, “because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven.”

Thoughtful thanks

Don’t you wonder what that leper thought when he felt new life surging through his body, smooth skin replacing his sores? He was whole, healthy, alive. Family, freedom, future, were words he could use again. And all because of Jesus.

Also from Jesus he had received the gift of faith.

*We need
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but genuine
thanksgiving covers
and colors each day.*

In Jesus he now had life’s treasure. No wonder he ran back to Jesus that day to say his “thank-you.”

Why do we so often forget our “thank-you”? Could it be we forget to treasure what our Lord has given us? That instead we grab what we can get and then trot thoughtlessly on our selfish ways?

Thanksgiving is time to count our blessings. There’s the blessing of laying all my sins on Jesus, that spotless Lamb of God. The sure confidence that he lives and I shall conquer death. His word in its purity preached to me and taught to my children. A spouse at my side with love, shared joys, com-

mon faith. Children who are the fruit of our love. My country, where the average worker labors less than a day and a half a week to pay for his groceries. The problems which come in somber colors, but in the end turn out to be some of the richest as they drive me closer to him who is my dearest treasure.

Daily thanks

Down the road that man ran after Jesus. Nor, we imagine, was he silent along the way. Everybody had to hear the story. “Look,” he shouted, pointing at himself, “look what’s happened to me.” “Look,” he shouted again, pointing to the Lord, “look what Jesus did for me.” You can’t help but wonder if his thanksgiving ended with that eventful day or continued all his days.

Some reserve that one day, that fourth Thursday each November, for their “thank-you.” Genuine thanksgiving covers and colors each day. We know, as Paul put it, “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). Each day is the time for our “thank-you” to a gracious God.



Richard Lauersdorf is pastor of St. John, Jefferson, Wisconsin, and the synod's first vice-president.

May the Lord our God be with us
as he was with our fathers;
may he never leave
or forsake us. 1 Kings 8:57

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FORWARD

- Two new series begin with this issue. Fredric Piepenbrink begins a series of Bible studies on Colossians (p. 399). "The year was 60 AD," he writes, "but it could just as easily have been 1991 AD," and the congregation in Colossae to which Paul wrote "could just as easily have been your congregation."
- Wisconsin's Door County is a favorite vacation spot, and now there's one more reason to recommend it. Curtis Peterson put his vacation there to good use. The trees which

surrounded his family's campsite planted the idea for a series on trees. The first article, on the tree of knowledge of good and evil (p. 394), will be followed by two others on the tree of Calvary and the tree of life.

- If you've missed "From this corner," you can look for it in the December issue. Pastor Schaefer has been absent while he recovered from surgery. We're happy to report he is now back at his desk.

DJS



Rejuvenating our spiritual service

by Paul E. Kelm

God's answer to being
edgy and unhappy,
tired and discontented,
unfulfilled and empty

Michael is, to casual acquaintances, the American success story. He has it made. The title on his office says so. The Mercedes outside agrees. So why is Michael unhappy?

His wife thinks it's because he never took the time to develop the other dimensions of his life. Michael is all business. Close friends assume this is a common response to "arriving" in the competitive world of business, a tendency to second-guess self, coupled with a fear of failure that plagues people at the top. Michael just knows that his work has become unfulfilling. As the song says, "Is that all there is?"

Virginia couldn't relate to Michael's ennui. She's in the middle of raising three kids, juggling a part-time job with a demanding household. What started as the great American dream has become a nightmare.

Virginia is tired, unappreciated, bored, and becoming bitter. She'd blame her husband, if he weren't going through the same thing. It's not the kids' fault, she realizes. And that makes her feel guilty. She should be a better mother, she tells herself. Lately Virginia has been daydreaming about running away from it all. She won't, of course, but she's come to hate her life of meaningless housework and empty wage-earning and unresponsive family members. "Why?" is the question that won't go away.

You've met Michael and Virginia, in plays and books, then movies and television. Before long you were seeing Michael and Virginia in your neighbors and friends. Now, I'm afraid, you're seeing them in the mirror. Intellectuals call it existentialism, this fatalistic search for meaning in a meaningless world, this preoccupation with the thoughts and feelings of self.

It's not new. Wise Solomon searched for meaning in success and pleasure, things and thinking. "Meaningless," was his conclusion; "It's all meaningless." Read Ecclesiastes to get the rest of the story. A somewhat cynical "Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life" rises to the lyrical "God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That every man may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil — this is the gift of God."

Solomon counsels hard work, charity, happy contentment with what is, and "Remember your Creator" when times are good. Then abruptly he concludes Ecclesiastes with a word for Michael and

Virginia: "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Rejuvenating our spiritual service is God's answer to the edgy and unhappy, the tired and discontented, the unfulfilled and empty. "I urge you, in view of God's mercy," Paul told the Romans, "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — which is your spiritual worship."

Significance is an attitude

Don't tell Jesus he wouldn't understand your dissatisfaction with your life and work. He experienced rejection and unjust criticism, but he didn't get depressed. Fickle crowds and recalcitrant disciples made his teaching appear useless, but Jesus kept teaching. Callous sinning and corrupt religion would have caused us to abort the mission, but Jesus continued the course to the cross.

When his disciples couldn't understand why he was wasting his time with a Samaritan whore during the lunch hour, Jesus explained: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Satisfaction lies, not in probing the why or judging how much in the life God gave us, but in doing that for which we were sent.

When the disciples got into a squabble over what are the significant jobs, the important roles in the kingdom, Jesus offered himself as the answer. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Significance is not determined by the audience, but by the motive. Importance isn't a position of honor, but a role of service.

Paul applied the lesson for the Philippians when he wrote: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Get down and serve!

Your life, Christian, has value because Jesus gave his life so you could live it. It doesn't matter that changing diapers won't change the world, that pushing paper only means more paper to push. It doesn't matter that no one else cares what you do or that too many days you don't care what you do. Your life has intrinsic significance, apart from any yardsticks you want to apply to it.

Your life, Christian, has value because God gave you something to do. Whether it's honest bookkeeping amid a gaggle of bookkeepers or cheerful nose-wiping in a chorus of sneezes, your life is worthwhile because God has you living it.

Your life, Christian, has value for the sake of the

people you serve. If only a kind word for a co-worker or alleviating a customer's aggravation, if no more than fresh towels to help wash away a bad day, your life is meaningful because Jesus said: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

The universal priesthood of all believers

Martin Luther restored a sense of spiritual significance to every role or occupation. Jesus, Luther reminds us, not only enabled each of us to come before God with confessions and prayers, assured by his sacrifice of forgiveness and a Father's ear; Jesus also took service for God out of the church and into homes, offices, factories, and playing fields. We minister for Christ, as his witnesses, his arms and legs and voices, in whatever place and role is our lot in life. From 1 Peter 2:9 Lutherans derive the term "universal priesthood of believers," more popularly "lay ministry."

Notice the difference in understanding roles and relationships when Paul says: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord," and "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Homemaking isn't just a job, whether for wives or husbands. It's an opportunity to serve and love Jesus in our spouse, to glorify our Lord in the way that we relate to one another. Not what you have to do, but why you want to do it gives significance to chores around the house and favors done for the family.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord," the apostle goes on. Jesus takes children beyond behaving to respect, love, and obedience. You see, that's ministry — service — for Christ, whether or not parents have earned it or appreciate it.

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men" is counsel for Christian employees a few verses later in Ephesians 6. This goes beyond the ethical maxim of a day's work for a day's pay. This is worship at work, glorifying God by the way we do our job, whether it's on an assembly line or in an office.

Calling government "God's servant," Paul says: "That is why you pay taxes." Anyone can pay taxes to stay out of jail — and gripe about the necessity. Only a Christian can see paying taxes as serving God. We're citizen-witnesses, not just taxpayers. Attitude is everything.

When the tasks in our life are meaningless and the roles insignificant, it's time for the attitude adjustment only Scripture provides. In the Lord, our lives

are ministry.

Member ministry within the church

Repeatedly Scripture uses the illustrative metaphor "Body of Christ" to describe the church. In 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle draws several points from that metaphor.

The first is that every Christian has been endowed with spiritual gifts designed for service in and with the church. Wisely, the Holy Spirit distributes different gifts to different people so that, as each fills an appropriate role, the church is built up. One major reason people are unhappy and unfulfilled is that they haven't discovered, developed, and deployed the gifts God has invested in them. There should be a search for significance in any life that hasn't made the connection between Christ's mission for his church and the personal mission for which Christ graced us with gifts.

The second point is that the church is a composite of gifts, mutually interdependent. Like body parts, Christians were designed to function together. We can expect the feeling that we are underachieving, until we've been plugged into the interactive ministry of Christ's church. That energizes the full range and capability of our gifts. We need each other's gifts to fully appreciate our own.

The third point is that there are no insignificant gifts and roles in the body of Christ. Who we are and where we are is just right, in God's design. Envy the gifts of others will only blind us to the significance of our own. Coveting the position of someone else only stands in the way of faithfully fulfilling my own. Importance in Christ's kingdom is an *a priori* fact, not a sliding scale.

The conclusion for our churches is that members need to be involved in the church's ministry for their sake, not simply for the church's. Christians cannot be happy, fulfilled people until they are using their gifts in their church. For that reason, the church will want to place people in volunteer ministry according to their gifts, interests, and personality, not merely to fill a slot in the organizational structure. While any Christian will want to serve his or her church at a point of need, Christians serve best when the task matches their gifts and nature.

No doubt this will mean creating new opportunities for service within the church. New people aren't easily slotted into old roles, especially when the people already filling those roles have designed those positions around their own gifts and way of doing

One reason people leave a church is that the significance Christianity gave their life is not experienced in that congregation. We won't long retain people we don't involve.

things. New people-needs, new opportunities for reaching out with the gospel, new gifts and interests, will forge new roles.

One reason people leave a church is that the significance Christianity gave their life is not experienced in that congregation. This is especially true of teens and twenty-somethings, whose gifts and faith are inadequately assimilated into the active ministry of many congregations. Unwittingly, the church may have mustered seniors out of service and failed to find meaningful roles for the hurting (such as the divorced or grieving) and the different (whose cultural or religious background, personality or social interests differ from the norm). We won't long retain people we don't involve.

The pastor's ministry

The reasons for which pastors leave the ministry are complex, but often similar to the experience of their members. Burnout, whether among clergy or laity, has several factors. Trying to do more than one is capable of doing, under unrealistic expectations and unfair criticism, with little sense that all this effort has made a difference — that's a formula for dropout. Pastors, too, can feel overwhelmed and underappreciated. Pastors, too, can experience the frustration of working outside their gifts, without the cooperation of fellow saints, in a climate of pessimism that questions the significance of their work.

In Ephesians 4, Paul calls pastors and teachers gifts of the ascended Lord to his church, whose role is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." That model of ministry allows both pastors and members to find fulfillment in serving Christ. Pastors work with word and sacrament to nurture God's people to spiritual maturity, equipping them in the process to serve their Lord in home and society as well as in church. There are spiritual, emotional, and physical crises through which the pastor shepherds God's people; but the goal of ministry remains preparing them to serve, both here and in eternity.

Members and pastors alike need to affirm the sig-

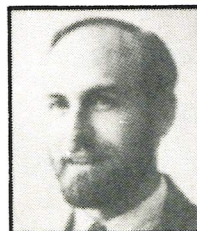


nificance of that ministry. Peripheral issues and false comparisons dare not intrude on that ministry. Unbiblical expectations ought not demean the faithful exercise of that ministry. And human nature's measurement of success must not falsely judge that ministry.

Like every other Christian, the pastor finds fulfillment in simple service, in the role to which God has called him, in the faithful use of the gifts God has given him. Maybe your gift and role is to encourage your pastors, teachers, and leaders in the church. As Paul urged the Romans: "If a person's gift is encouraging, let him encourage."

That gift of encouragement has a wide range of application in a society of unhappy and unfulfilled people. You can remind them of what Jesus has done to transform life. You can direct them into God's word for the joy of salvation. And you can quote the final implication of Easter in 1 Corinthians 15: "Therefore, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."



Paul E. Kelm is director of the synod's spiritual renewal program.



*God's unconditional acceptance
of us through Jesus
is a powerful weapon in our struggles.*

Addicts aren't

by Philip W. Merten

Michelle is not an alcoholic. But her husband is. So is her father. Michelle has a problem, and the problem doesn't lie just within her husband and her father. It lies within her. "Co-dependent" and "adult child of an alcoholic" are two terms commonly used to describe her condition. But whatever label you use, the fact remains: there's something wrong with Michelle. Something she's recovering from, in the power of the Lord.

It was hard to believe Michelle had a serious emotional and spiritual problem. She is an intelligent, enjoyable, attractive person, someone with whom I've sat in Bible studies and discussion groups and from whom I've learned a lot. But she's very much aware of her problem.

She laughed a little as she looked back to a time when she was under the assumption that her husband was the only one in the family with a problem. After all, he was getting drunk, not she. She was relieved and happy when he started attending a recovery group, but her happiness was shaken when he kept quitting the groups he was going to.

So she started attending meetings along with him. "I was sitting in these groups listening to these people — spouses of alcoholics — say what they were doing to their children and talk about their behavior due to the drinking that was going on in their households, and I thought, 'That's what I'm doing.'"

So Michelle quit assuming she had no problem. With the help of other husbands, wives, and children of alcoholics in her recovery group, she started looking at her own unhealthy and destructive patterns of thinking and living. And she found she'd taken on the same characteristics that virtually everybody else does who's been in a close relationship with an alcoholic:

- Suppressing her feelings
- Putting herself down
- Rigidity
- Denial that anything's wrong, or rationalizing the problem away

the only ones in trouble

- Taking on much more responsibility than she's capable of handling
- Constantly blaming and finding fault with others
- Perfectionism and constant fear of failure
- Running away from problems and avoiding confrontation.

"I could probably fit in just fine in an alcoholics' meeting, instead of a meeting for spouses," she told me. "I have all the characteristics of an alcoholic."

Michelle's problems began before her marriage to an alcoholic. Her twisted approach to life is the result of responses she and the rest of her family made to her father's alcoholic behavior.

Her father constantly found fault with her and put her down, so she learned to do the same. "I keep hearing my dad telling me I'm no good."

In an alcoholic family, it's dangerous to acknowledge what you're feeling, so Michelle learned to be emotionless. And when Dad was drunk, conflicts always got ugly, so Michelle learned to avoid conflicts.

Once Michelle joined a recovery group, changes started happening, beginning with the realization that change is possible. "I'd never confront a problem; I always assumed nothing's ever going to change. I never even realized there was the possibility of change. That was an awakening that came by going to a recovery group: it is possible to change."

Before this she hadn't seriously examined what she believed about herself and her life. Now she started asking herself questions. She discovered that she didn't have to suffer in silence and denial amid the alcoholic madness of her family. She could acknowledge and speak her feelings. And she started learning new ways of relating to her family, instead of the ways she'd learned as she grew up.

"I had no compunctions about screaming at my kids and degrading them. I thought that was normal. That was what my father did. Now I'm realizing that's verbal abuse, and it's just as much a sin to be repented of as drunkenness or adultery."

Michelle knows she and her husband have a long way to go to recovery but I could sense her optimism; and her primary source of hope was her relationship to Jesus.

Since her father and her husband were more devoted to their drinking than they were to her, she struggles with an obsession to be accepted by other people. But God's unconditional acceptance of her through Jesus is a powerful weapon in that struggle.

"The love and acceptance God has for me, the love of Jesus dying on the cross — that breaks through the emotionlessness, the lack of love that adult children of alcoholics are used to. To see Jesus dying on the cross for me — boy, if that doesn't pick up a person's self-worth. I am somebody. There is somebody who cares."

I asked Michelle what she thought Christian churches could do to help people with problems like hers. "There's an attitude in some churches that says, 'There are no problems.' They don't want to see or hear problems. Hurting people are scared to share their hurt; then sometimes when they do, people tend to push them away, to close their ears and deny there are any problems. In the church I envision God has in mind there'd be more caring — helping one another carry the burdens, somebody ready to give an ear and listen. I remember hearing a really good sermon once about the tendency of people in church to expect perfection, and about a guy who left the church because he felt he was unworthy to fit in. Those are the ones who really are the church, the ones who know they're unworthy."

I thought of Jesus eating with the tax collectors and telling the Pharisees, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." And I thought, yes, that is God's mission for his church.



Philip Merten is a chaplain with the Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry in Milwaukee County.

The tree of temptation

by Curtis A. Peterson

Trees figure prominently in the Bible and are crucial to the story of salvation, beginning with the tree of temptation.

Poet Joyce Kilmer once wrote, "I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree / Poems are made by fools like me / But only God can make a tree."

God surely beautified the earth with trees. The quaking of aspens, the beauty of the birch, the whispering of pine, and the swaying of palms provide relaxing vistas for us all. Our memories conjure up wonderful scenes of the quiet beauty of winter in the woods, the color of maples in the fall, or lovely springtimes of apple, cherry, or orange blossoms.

Trees figure prominently in the Bible, and in fact are crucial to the story of salvation: beginning with the tree of temptation, to the tree of the cross at Calvary, and ending with the tree of life.

The first of these trees is found in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2 we are told how God placed two trees in paradise: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The latter served as a

test for our first parents, for God specifically commanded them not to eat of it. God wanted them to obey freely because they loved and honored him.

The abundance of fruit and vegetables placed before them by their Creator made this limitation no real burden for them. But God had made it perfectly clear that if they took the forbidden fruit they would know the difference between good and evil by experience, and they would die.

Genesis 3 relates how our first parents listened to Satan's lie and doubted God's word. Note the order here: first Satan raised a doubt in Eve's mind about what God had said, and then he questioned the consequence of disobedience: "You will not surely die."

As in every temptation, Satan's seduction provided our first parents with an opportunity to glorify God by rejecting sin. Sadly, they listened to Satan's lies, doubted God's concern for what was best for them, and disobeyed him by taking the fruit.

Their choice to set aside God's clear word and disobey his command fractured the life and fellowship they had with their Creator. They experienced guilt and shame for the first time. They were alienated from their loving heavenly Father.

Genesis 3 relates how God banished them from the garden, with an angel preventing them from tasting of the fruit of the tree of life. Access to the tree of life would now come only through the redemption by the blood shed on the tree of the cross. Only in heaven, as we shall see, will the tree of life be restored to us.

Illnesses, accidents, the aging process, strife, stress, tears, and ultimately death are all results of the fall. The Creator made good his warning: "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die."

But God does not leave us out on the limb of our own devising. He has prepared another tree whereon he nailed his Son for our sins in our place, there to die for our salvation.

Next: The tree of the cross.



Curtis Peterson is pastor of Resurrection, Milwaukee, Wis.

Presbyterians view membership decline as good news . . .

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the past eight years has lost 68 congregations with a total of 23,796 members, a number far lower than expected, according to Presbyterian officials. The exodus is over, because an eight-year "window" that allowed a graceful exit is now closed. The congregations that left were those objecting to a 1983 reunion of northern and southern branches of Presbyterianism, a plan aimed to heal a split that developed over controversies related to the Civil War. All but a few have linked up with the Presbyterian Church in America or the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, small, conservative denominations with Presbyterian roots. Marj Carpenter, who heads the denomination's news office, states that there's a "general feeling" in the church that the worst is over, that the membership slide is leveling off, and a turnaround is near.

Church marketing consistent with Bible . . .

Marketing churches to reach people is consistent with biblical principles and doesn't mean the message needs to be watered down or compromised, according to researcher George Barna. According to Barna, "we need to be scripturally accurate but culturally sensitive. We have something unchanging to give people but the way we give it to them may change." According to Barna, the least effective marketing strategies are unsolicited phone calls, ads in printed media, personal visits from church leaders and literature sent through the mail. Church growth is primarily accomplished by word of mouth. Barna advised clergy to see themselves as cheerleaders rather than leaders, as laypeople carry out the practical marketing of the church.

Church rejects evolutionary notion of humans. . .

The Christian Reformed Church, in a declaration that came as a minority recommendation at its annual meeting in Sioux City, Iowa, has formally declared that Scripture is incompatible with any notion of "evolutionary forebears of the human race." The report states, "the problem is that the Bible and modern science give apparently incompatible accounts of the origins of the universe and humanity, and none of the proposals for harmonizing them is completely satisfactory." When concerns were raised about the declaration's possible effect on scientific inquiry, delegates approved a footnote stating, "Of course, private research, theorizing, and discussion are not addressed by this declaration. It is not intended and may not be used to limit further investigation and discussion on the origin or scientific inquiry."

Lutheran College regents reject honorary degree for Catholic . . .

Roman Catholic Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, Wash., was nominated for an honorary doctorate by the faculty of Pacific Lutheran University, but the school's regents rejected the proposal. "On no previous occasion in the 17 years I've been here has there been failure of the board to ratify the faculty's nomination," said Robert Stivers, chair of the religion department. One issue considered was Hunthausen's refusal to pay taxes. He withholds half his federal income taxes to protest military spending. The government seizes a portion of his wages. "Some feel that Hunthausen is a marvelous exemplar of the faith of the church," said Rev. David Wold, chairman of the regents. "Some equally devout persons see those same actions in a very different way. These kinds of impressions and opinions were present in the voting, I presume."

Are denominations irrelevant?

The religious denomination may be fading, according to a recent article by Religious News Service. Several of the mainline denominations face severe financial shortfalls but the difficulties extend well beyond finances. Several face internal disaffection, even strife, within their ranks. Perhaps the greatest insult to the leadership of the various denominations is that no one is paying attention. The ecumenical movement of the past quarter century has tended to blur the theological distinctions that once made one denomination different from another. As mainline traditions have sought to cooperate with one another, attention to theological niceties has diminished. Denominations have also become too large and their bureaucracies too remote from the people they are supposed to serve. However, denominational executives expect to see further retrenchments in the coming years.

Highest percentage of Lutherans . . .

States with the highest percentages of Lutherans are North Dakota (37 percent), Minnesota (34 percent), South Dakota (30 percent), and Wisconsin (26 percent), according to a telephone survey of 113,000 households in the 48 contiguous states. The study was commissioned by the graduate school of the City University of New York. As in similar surveys, the number identifying with a particular religious group is higher than the number actually on the rolls. Those in Minnesota currently counted by Lutheran church bodies, for example, equal only 26 percent of the population.

News items appearing in *News Around the World* represent current events of general interest to the readers of the *Northwestern Lutheran* and should not be interpreted as representing the views of the editors.

Coordinated curriculum for youth is under way

The first phase of a curriculum which will coordinate Bible study for kindergarten through twelfth grade in all the educational agencies of our congregations has been completed, reports Gerald Kastens, administrator for youth discipleship. The coordinated curriculum was authorized by the 1989 synod convention.

The project was needed, said Kastens. "A young person could be involved in Lutheran elementary school, Sunday school, catechism class, and vacation Bible school. What the student learned in one place might be duplicated in another. Also, what the student learns is not always coordinated with what was learned earlier and what will be

learned later."

Prof. David Kuske of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary directed the initial planning by laying out a scope and sequence for Bible study lessons. Kuske consulted with youth workers, pastors, and Lutheran elementary and Sunday school teachers and incorporated their suggestions in the final curriculum plan.

Kastens will serve as project director for writing the lessons. About 70 writers will produce 20 to 30 lessons each. The lessons will be field tested before final publication.

While some materials will be available earlier, completion of the entire curriculum, titled *Light of Life*, is planned for 1997, said Kastens.



Preschool teachers, in a pilot program funded by a grant from AAL, participated in an early childhood workshop led by Prof. Beverly Haar and Dr. George LaGrow at Dr. Martin Luther College during the summer. Preschool curriculum, classroom management, and teaching techniques were stressed in the new program.



Pacific Northwest District principals and board of education members were among 400 men who took part in seminars in the 12 synod districts. The seminars, which demonstrated the use of videotape and teleconferencing techniques, were sponsored by the synod's Commission on Parish Schools.

Book notes

A book of interest to the general reader recently offered by Northwestern Publishing House is *Counseling at the Cross* by H. Curtis Lyon, pastor of Trinity, Crete, Ill. While the book is written with pastors in mind, many of us not in the pastoral ministry serve at times as "coffee cup" counselors. A careful reading of this book will substantially enhance our counseling. The strength of the book is its use of the law and gospel to bring the counselee to a realization of the full power of the gospel as it offers forgiveness and strength for a new life. At the same time the author recognizes and respects the counseling tools available in the medical field.

The book (stock #15N0528, softcover, 168 pp., \$9.95) may be ordered from Northwestern Publishing House by calling 1-800-662-6022.



Leslie Greaves Radloff, fifth grade teacher at Emanuel, West St. Paul, has won the Minnesota Historical Society award for excellence in history curriculum. She earned the award in the elementary education category for a social studies unit, "Emanuel's Neighborhood, 1900." She is a 1969 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College.

Minnesota District news

Emmanuel, Owatonna, celebrated the 40th anniversary of its pastor, Wernor Wagner, with a service on July 14. . . . **Peace, Owensville, Mo.**, rejoiced to observe the 50th anniversary of its pastor, Lloyd Lambert. A special service for the event was held on July 28. . . . **St. John of New Ulm** observed the 40th anniversary of Pastor Norval Kock on July 28. . . . **St. Croix Lutheran High School** celebrated the 40th anniversary in the teaching ministry of Miss Rhoda Arndt. The celebration took place in connection with the opening service on September 8. . . . **Dr. Martin Luther College** observed the 40th anniversaries of two of its professors, Glenn Barnes and Martin Schroeder. . . . **Holy Trinity of New Hope** celebrated its 40th anniversary and the 25th anniversary of its sanctuary on June 9. . . . **St. Andrew, St. Paul Park**, dedicated a remodeled narthex and building addition on June 9. The addition contains a fellowship area and two classrooms.

— Robert M. Edwards

Nebraska District news

On July 28 the congregations of **Salina and Russell, Kan.**, joined Pastor and Mrs. Donald Laude in celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary and the 35th anniversary of Pastor Laude's ordination into the ministry. . . . On August 4, 1991, **St. Paul of Plymouth, Neb.**, observed the 50th anniversary of Pastor em. Milton Weishahn's ordination into the ministry. On August 18 he and his wife, Vernita, also celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. . . . **Nebraska Lutheran High School** has begun a new school year with 109 students in attendance. Work is progressing rapidly in tearing down the old school building. . . . The members of **St. Paul, Columbus, Neb.**, have begun worshiping in their new church. The congregation purchased a former Baptist church last spring. Their church will hold 108 in its worship area and has two classrooms which will seat an additional 75 people. . . . Construction of a church building for **Living Hope in Omaha** is drawing to a close. The members of Living Hope hope to use their church by Christmas. . . . **Everlasting Love of Olathe, Kan.**, has rented a storefront to use as its chapel. For the past two years the members have met in a school.

—Theodore L. Wendt



**Mission
of the
WELS**

As men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.



Margaret Anderson was honored by St. John, Witten, S. Dak., at her retirement after 40 years as an organist. She and her husband, Brownie, also were thanked for many years of cleaning the church.

THE BIBLE IN 365 READINGS

Completing our program of reading through the complete Bible in one year, we list the twelfth month of readings beginning with December 1 and ending December 31.

- Dec. 1** Romans 6 — 8
2 Ro 9 — 11
3 Ro 12 — 15:29
4 Ro 15:30 — 16; Psalm 18
5 Ps 36; 1 Corinthians 1 — 3
6 1 Co 4 — 7
7 1 Co 8 — 10
8 1 Co 11 — 13
9 1 Co 14 — 15
10 1 Co 16;
 2 Corinthians 1 — 3
11 2 Co 4 — 7; Ps 98
12 2 Co 8 — 11:15; Ps 123
13 2 Co 11:16 — 13
14 1 Timothy 1 — 5:16
15 1 Tm 5:17 — 6;
 2 Timothy 1 — 3
16 Ps 23; 2 Tm 4;
 James 1 — 2
17 Jas 3 — 5; Ps 147, 100
18 John 1 — 2:11; Ps 20
19 Ps 132; Jn 2:12 — 3; Ps 92
20 Jn 4 — 5
21 Jn 6; Ps 111
22 Ps 64; Jn 7 — 8:11; Ps 61
23 Jn 8:12 — 9
24 Jn 10 — 11:46
25 Jn 11:47 — 12; Ps 49
26 Ps 26; Jn 13 — 14
27 Jn 15 — 17
28 Jn 18 — 19:30; Ps 41
29 Ps 34; Jn 19:31 — 21
30 Philippians
31 1 Peter 1 — 3

This world we live in

This world we live in is very strange.
There are many things we'd like to change.
The USA is a wonderful land,
But there are things I can't understand.

Why are people without a home?
They are out on the streets alone.
Why are children kidnapped each day,
While these kids are out to play?

Why do nations hate one another?
For what reason would they kill their brother?
Many people die in a war
When they're not sure what they're fighting for.

Yes, this world is very strange.
So many things I'd like to change.
So many things I can't understand.
But still this is a wonderful land.

*Rob Davis
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Sioux Falls, S. Dak.*

Abortion

Abortion is very sad
and must make God very mad.
Taking an unborn child, a precious gift of his,
And killing it, yes, that's what it is.
Taking God's gift,
God's gracious and undeserved gift,
And throwing it back in his face.
They also don't allow it a time of grace.
Some people say it's the woman's choice,
But what would the baby say if it had a voice?
More important, what does God say?
"You shall not kill," and that still stands today.
So there you have it.
Make speaking out against abortion a habit.

*Pamela Gohlke
Grace Lutheran School
Falls Church, Virginia*

Lights

I left the school and went outside
With two friends, one on either side.
To the first I asked, "What do you see out
there?"
She thought a moment and then replied,
"I see a lake
With the moonlight shimmering off into the sky.
I see lights from boats, red, yellow, green,
Resting silently in the still night air.
I see the marina with its many lights,
And if you look closely near the water there
they are,
The fireflies, blinking and flashing in the quiet
night air.
That's what I see," she replied to me.

Then I turned to the other and asked one
more time,
"What do you see out there?"
She thought for a moment and then began her
reply.
"I see a battlefield, two camps, one on either
side.
Each has an army which fights on this field.
But for tonight the fighting has ceased.
Each soldier has a light to find his way,
And there you can see the glow from the camp
fires coloring the sky.
If you listen closely, carefully, you may hear it.
The peaceful sound of the lone harmonica,
Playing pleasing melodies
While timid animals move through the night,
and men listen.
That's what I see," she replied to me.

I stood in amazement at what they had seen.
For I had only seen a city with many lights,
Lying in a cozy river valley.

*Dave Shilling
Minnesota Valley LHS
New Ulm, Minn.*

Dear Teens,

Just a note to say thanks to all of you who have sent material for TeenTalk. You have reached the hearts of not only many youths, but entire congregations.

At present we are particularly in need of brief articles or essays, artwork, photos, or news of your teen activities. For now, we have an ample supply of poetry.

Send to *TeenTalk*, Karen Spencer, 2297 E 25th Place, Yuma AZ 85365. Please include your name, address, school, church, and a self addressed stamped envelope for return.

The all-sufficiency of Christ

by Fredric E. Piepenbrink

The primary goal of every Christian in this life, young and old, is to grow in the faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. With patience, lots of prayer, mentors in the faith, and by the Holy Spirit's power, that process continues, oftentimes in spite of ourselves, from the time we are born to the time we die, at times barely noticeable. Sometimes it isn't until the very end of our life that we can look back and say, "The Lord has brought me this far."

The disciples' journey

Oftentimes we can see the process working better in others than in ourselves. Take, for example, the disciples of the gospels. Here were simple men in ordinary positions with perhaps average consciousness of God in their life, until Jesus entered it. They became his followers and embarked upon a journey that would transcend all expectations.

That journey was marked early by enthusiasm and excitement, later by perplexity and confusion, and, just after the crucifixion, by sorrow and discouragement. But the resurrection brought ecstatic joy and conviction, and finally, devotion and sacrifice as evidenced by their mission work. Through it all, we can see the maturing process of the disciples working toward one overriding conclusion that made even martyrdom tolerable — the all-sufficiency of Christ.

The question of sufficiency today

As a parish pastor I struggle both personally and with my congregational members over this challenging truth — the all-sufficiency of Christ. The eighth grader in confirmation class wonders if Christ is really the all-sufficient wisdom he needs to understand God. The adult confirmand wonders if faith in Christ is the all-sufficient element for salvation. The young couple receiving pre-marriage counseling wonders if Christ is the all-sufficient third party in the triangle of a happy marriage.

The pastor wonders if Christ is the all-sufficient



head of the church to lead it through a hostile world. The Moslem next door to whom we are witnessing wonders if Christ is the all-sufficient God to worship at the exclusion of others. The guilty wonder if Christ is the all-sufficient redeemer to forgive their sins.

The retired wonder if Christ is the all-sufficient provider to supply their needs. Teenagers wonder if Christ is the all-sufficient model to guide them through their lives. The divorced, the heart-broken, the dying, wonder if Christ is the all-sufficient comforter to heal their hurt.

Christ Jesus, of course, is all these things, and more. But while we can say with our lips that he is,

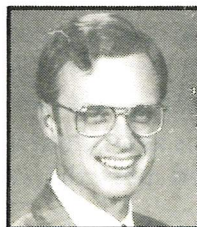
the mark of true Christian maturity is to believe it with our hearts and act it in our lives, even when all evidence at the time may point to the contrary.

A Biblical help

Paul wrote a letter from prison in Rome to a group of people in his day who were struggling with this truth concerning the all-sufficiency of Christ. They were being confronted by heresy which questioned the legitimacy of looking to Christ alone when it came to religious knowledge, faith, and practice.

The year was 60 AD, but it could just as easily have been 1991 AD. The congregation to whom he wrote was the congregation at Colossae, but it could just as easily have been your congregation. The letter was shared with other congregations, but let's share it together as readers of the Northwestern Lutheran in the next six issues. In doing so, may God grant that

our hearts and minds be strengthened in faith and knowledge of Christ Jesus, as the disciples were, to see him as our all-sufficient Lord.



Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor of Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.

Whatever happened to lust?

On the one hand our nation has become more aware of the shame and brutality of rape. On the other hand it has become more ignorant of the root of this shameful sin.

The public is continually being told that rape is the expression of a male's desire to overpower, to dominate, to humiliate a woman. Forcing a woman to have sex with him is considered to be essentially an act of violence. Many social commentators flatly deny that sexual desire is the primary motivation for rape.

It is indeed an act of violence. But is violence the real impulse for rape? Whatever happened to what the Bible calls lust?

"Do not lust in your heart" after the immoral woman, Solomon warns. Paul charges the Thessalonians not to yield their bodies to "passionate lust like the heathen." In his sermon on the mount our Lord plainly says, "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Scripture clearly states that there is such a craving as lust, a sexual desire that has become a degrading passion. It clearly states that lust is sinful and spawns acts of lust. It leaves no doubt that God's judgment rests on both lust and its evil brood. That same lust is active and rampant in the human heart today. But do Americans recognize lust today?

The air we breathe is rank with enticements to illicit sex, to fornication and adultery. Our sinful flesh is continually being stroked to indulge our sexual desires. Stock in trade of numerous comedians are the knowing leer, the suggestive asides, the risque remarks that cater to lust. Rock singers belt out sex with their lyrics and with their pulsing bodily gestures; and the libidos of vibrating and shrieking teenagers respond. Pornography takes dead aim on the lust in the human heart and makes its raw appeal to sex. TV soap operas pass off fornication and adultery as daily fun and games. Golden Girls make sexual patter and play sound smart and amusing.

We are being overwhelmed by a tidal wave of sexual self-indulgence, but how many recognize it as lust?

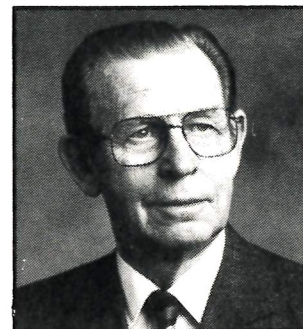
Meanwhile, commercials mask the depravity of lust as they din into our ears and flicker and flash before our eyes the message that the goal of life is pleasure: pleasures of wealth and luxury, prestige and popularity, feasting and frolicking — and sex of your choice.

Is it any wonder that in such a self-indulgent atmosphere many Christians don't recognize what lust is, even though it is being kindled on all sides? In our sex-sodden and pleasure-craving age, what was once recognized as sinful lust has come to be regarded merely as natural self-expression.

It is a sad day for purity and decency and chastity when lust has become so familiar and so acceptable that it is not recognized or acknowledged in the shameful sin of rape. No wonder there are Christians who find it difficult to see the immorality of other "less flagrant" sexual practices of our day.

Whatever happened to lust? It is as virulent and destructive as it ever was, but in our nation it is being denied more than ever before.

Carleton Toppe



Carleton Toppe, retired president of Northwestern College, lives in Watertown, Wisconsin.

The sign of the cross

by Michael J. Albrecht

“**M**aybe Christians ought to paint crosses on their mirrors,” suggests Paul Kelm (Rediscovering our spiritual roots, Sept 1). As I read those words I could not help but be reminded of the suggestion Martin Luther incorporated into his small catechism under the heading of daily prayers.

Luther says, “In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say: ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’” Luther then encourages the recitation of the creed, the Lord’s prayer, and his own morning prayer.

Likewise Luther says, “In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say: ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’” The creed and the Lord’s prayer are then to be followed by Luther’s evening prayer.

I believe the daily practice suggested by Luther could help all of us gain a deeper appreciation for

our baptism. To many of us, it seems, the connection between the invocation and baptism has been lost.

The only place where the invocation occurs in the Bible is in the baptismal formula of the great commission. So there is obvious devotional benefit to be had by making the sign of the cross and invoking the triune name each morning as we rise and each evening as we retire. (And this might also help us to realize that the divine service on Sunday morning begins with the invocation because it is baptism which initiates us into Christ’s church.)

I applaud the fact that Pastor Kelm begins a series of articles on spiritual renewal by emphasizing the blessings of baptism. And I like to think more and more Lutherans can get back to doing as Luther did on a daily basis, regarding the sign of the holy cross as a precious reminder of baptism, rather than an expendable vestige of Roman Catholicism.

Michael Albrecht is pastor of St. James, West St. Paul, Minn.

LETTERS

Destiny

I am concerned about a word choice in “The Weeds” (August). Professor Braun writes, “Every person is destined either eventually to surrender to Jesus or perpetually to be divorced from him.” The choice of the word “destined” is uncomfortably close to Calvinism.

To quote Dr. Siegbert Becker in *The Foolishness of God*: “All men are totally depraved and there is no difference in man. God is equally gracious to all and there is no difference in God’s will. Yet A is lost and B is saved, and there is no conceivable reason why this should be so.” It is true that there will be both the wheat and the weeds, but “destiny” doesn’t explain it. It cannot be reasoned. It is wholly amazing grace.

*Lois Kluender
Trumbull, Connecticut*

Mark Braun replies:

The American College Dictionary lists three meanings for “destined”: (1) bound for a certain destination; (2) designed, intended; (3) foreordained, predetermined. I meant the first meaning, not the third. I’m not trying to explain why people are going to be saved or lost by using the word destiny. I’m only saying that’s what’s going to happen.

Not a sure thing

In your account (Sept. 15) of the synod convention recently held in New Ulm, there were two omissions which change drastically the meaning of the resolutions passed as submitted by the committee on worker training, of which I was a member.

First, resolution number 14 called not only for the merging of Martin Luther Preparatory School (MLPS)

with Northwestern Preparatory School, but also for a study that would involve the moving of Northwestern College (NWC) to New Ulm at the same time.

Second, the same resolution stated that MLPS be moved only in conjunction with the moving of NWC.

Your report also says that “when the plan is adopted, the MLPS campus is to be sold.” Please note that the resolution states “if and when.”

The account in the Northwestern Lutheran makes it appear as if the close and sale of MLPS is a sure and certain thing. However, this is for the next convention to decide. Hopefully, we will not have to close our most productive prep school.

*W. H. Allwardt
Winner, South Dakota*

(Continued on next page)

Scriptural principles

A recent NL (Sept. 15) reported that synod convention delegates felt "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles" needs only minor, finish polishing. I disagree. The paper does deal correctly with the essential issue; however, I see three significant flaws:

The paper should be more balanced. The paper appears too one-sided.

It lacks positive statements on women (e.g., Proverbs 31:10-31; John 20:10-18; 2 Timothy 1:5). It must also be clear in the condemnation of the abuse of women and of non-biblical ideas, such as the view that women are the property of men.

It should make clear male headship is not universally absolute. Men and women share authority over procreation and the environment (Gen. 1:28). This point, by the way, refutes some women's absurd claim of a "right over my body" in choosing to abort a child. The headship of man in no way diminishes a mother's authority, nor in any way discriminates in the level or quality of the obedience a male child owes both parents.

It needs to expand and clarify its definition of headship. An early version wrongly claimed headship and authority are synonymous. While the revision states "headship involves the exercise of authority," it should go on to explain other aspects of the term (Ephesians 5:25-30), and differentiate headship from the world's idea of authority (e.g., Matthew 20:25-28). I suggest we refer to this principle by its Greek name, *cephale*, to underscore its unique scriptural meaning.

These changes should improve "Scriptural Principles" and make them more understandable — if not acceptable — to those within and outside our fellowship.

Bob Diener
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Prep school support

The letter calling for the closing of the prep schools (Oct. 1) said the prep schools are "subsidized regional high schools" for congregations in Wisconsin. The congregations of Wisconsin support many area high schools. The prep schools, in fact, offer the best opportunity for congregations which have no area Lutheran high schools to provide Christian high school for at least some of their young people.

It is a half truth to say that nearly half of WELS pastors and teachers come from area schools. In the last four years the three prep schools sent almost twice as many students to Northwestern College as the area schools.

If we support only the things we use, then midwestern congregations should quit supporting home missions since they don't get their fair share of them, all of us should stop supporting world missions since we don't use them, members without school-age children should forget about supporting Christian day schools, all of us should stop supporting any synod administrators whose services we feel no need for. In fact, if this is our approach we could just as well not have a synod at all.

John F. Brug
Mequon, Wisconsin

Contributing editors

As you represent the official voice of the WELS, I would strongly recommend that the Northwestern Lutheran solicit editorial contributions from a more dynamic and contemporary group of ministerial authors than is currently the practice.

Most of us would be far more motivated by a "live" article written by "make happen" people who are apt to produce a larger number of faithful followers.

Robert E. Seefeld
Prescott Valley, Arizona

Emphasize the right things

An article in the July 15 *Minneapolis Star/Tribune*, which includes extensive quotes from the Reverends Schaefer and Mischke, goes on at length to explain our reasons for our conservative doctrinal position. A total of three sentences is devoted to our work of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

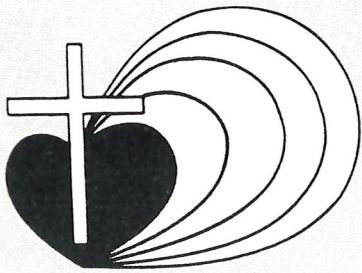
While I completely support adherence to all of God's word, I think we need to proclaim our mission to make disciples rather than highlight our strict doctrinal positions. Pure doctrine is important but should never be emphasized in a way that clouds the gospel.

A football team that devotes its practices to avoiding offside and holding penalties in all likelihood won't have many of them. It won't win many games, either, because its mission is to win games, not to avoid penalties. In the same way, a church body that emphasizes preserving its teachings and avoiding any hint of error will have pure doctrine but won't win many souls. Let's not compromise our doctrine one bit, but let's concentrate on what is most important, sharing the gospel and applying it in our lives.

Lately our synodical contributions are declining. Perhaps there's a connection with the image we project. By viewing ourselves as maintainers of the word rather than as saints compelled to share it, we will be less willing to make the sacrifices of time and money necessary to be truly effective evangelists. It's time we examine our personal and synodical programs to see if we are emphasizing the right things.

Philip Schwarz
Burnsville, Minnesota

Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. In the interest of conciseness, letters are subject to editing. Full name, address and daytime phone number should accompany each letter. Names will be withheld only under unusual circumstances. Letters cannot be acknowledged, nor can all letters be used. Address your letters to *LETTERS, The Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53222-4398.*



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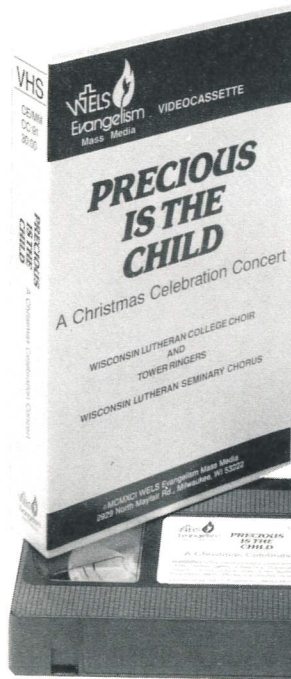
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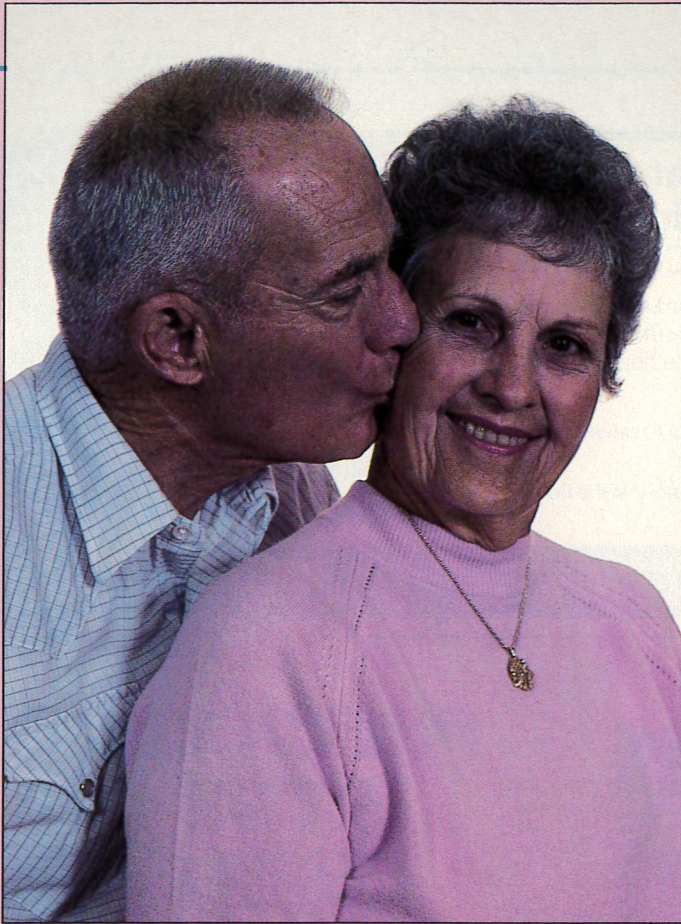
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Let me take time

by John Engelmann

**Time is a gift to me from God.
Let me use it to give honor
and glory to his name.**

Let me take time — to see the sky and the stars and the moon at night, and a lazy cloud slowly drifting by. Let me see the ray of the sun as it lights the day and gives warmth to the earth.

Let me take time — to see the rain as it hits my window pane, or rests on a petal of a rose. Let me see a snowflake gently falling to the ground. Let me see a field of grass bowing low at the brush of your hand.

Let me take time — to see the trees as they sway to the rhythm of the breeze and lift their branches to the sky in praise to the Lord, and let me also take time to be humble and attune my life to the will of God.

Let me take time — to see the smile of a baby, and the love in the eyes of a mother caressing her child. Let me see the love in the eyes of two lovers as they walk hand-in-hand, and let me also see the trust and devotion of an aged couple who have weathered life's storms, now arm-in-arm for support to each other as they continue on their journey through life.

Let me take time — to reach out my hand to someone to give praise for a task well done, and to give aid and comfort to the lonely burdened with care. Let me be ready to help a neighbor in need of a friend, and give hope and cheer to someone who has suffered a loss.

Let me take time — to give thanks and praise to the Lord who has sustained me to this day and has promised to be with me all the days of my life, and

Let me take time — to stand still and listen when he speaks to me, "Fear not, I am your shield and exceeding great reward," and again, "Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

Time is a gift to me from God. Let me use it to give honor and glory to his name.

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