

February 1, 1992

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Christian aid p.46

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# NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

**SASCA,  
ROMANIA:**

**An  
experience  
that  
changed  
a life**

p. 44



# Isn't this the carpenter?

by Robert H. Hochmuth

*Isn't this the carpenter?* (Mark 6:3).

Would it have been out of place for an uncle or aunt to have asked the boy Jesus, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" As a 12-year-old he was already committed to his heavenly Father's assignment, yet for 15 or so years before his public ministry his role was to be one of a workman. And for some of those years Jesus' role in the family very likely was that of elder brother and breadwinner. The neighbors, after all, regarded him as "the carpenter."

Usually in referring to this facet of the Biblical record we rightfully note that Jesus dignified the role of manual labor, of ordinary working people. But there's more.

Ponder and then marvel that the one who together with the Father and the Spirit framed the universe and trimmed the sky with stars is the one whose hands could become calloused shaping wood of which he himself was the creator.

## No token appearance

Furthermore, this was no mere token appearance, like that of a governor descending to spend half a day with coal miners.

Investing 15 years as a carpenter before his three years in public ministry was an integral aspect of fulfilling his role as Messiah. During these preparatory years there was no resorting to miracle solutions. He evidently faced our kind of life and became a partner with us in earning a living and learning to make ends meet. And all this was consistent with anticipated divine accomplishment.

For he had come to obey and serve as our brother to refit us for a place with our creator. "Born under the law so that by his perfect obedience he could provide righteousness for us" is the way the Scriptures picture it. That included carrying out his responsibilities conscientiously. That he did all of this faithfully is testified by the record: "He grew in favor with God and men," indicating too that this carpenter pleased his customers with good work and fair deals.

*With Jesus as partner  
in our work  
there is no such thing  
as a secular job.  
Every career has  
a spiritual dimension.*

## No token partnership

Understandably, Christians expending their talents in the mundane hassle of what are called secular occupations ask themselves, "What am I accomplishing that will be of value and meaning for people in the light of eternity?"

From time to time every child of God would likewise do well to assess: What does my career have

to do with what counts forever? It's encouraging to recognize that whatever our job, our first occupation is that of a servant of God. Whether white collar, blue collar, or no collar, his files designate us as his noble representatives, a royal priesthood.

As Jesus' carpentry was significant, not just symbolically, but as a phase of carrying out the necessary role for fulfilling all righteousness for us, so Christians' secular occupations take on significance today.

Our secular jobs do not, of course, institute the kingdom of God among mankind, but carrying them out conscientiously can represent the kingship of Jesus in our lives. With him as partner in our work there is no such thing as a secular job. Every career has a spiritual dimension. Talking about work, the apostle encourages, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord."

There are, to be sure, special responsibilities and satisfactions connected with the full time public ministry, and we want to emphasize recruiting candidates for that career.

But the divine dimension of Jesus' carpenter years encourages all of us to bear in mind we are full time disciples no matter what other career we also pursue. Furthermore, bearing witness on the job to his truth and his promises can lead another soul to know him as Savior, and that is just as significant as if you were

in a clergy collar.

Just let it be evident we are serving as apprentices with the carpenter who fashioned our universe and our salvation.



Robert Hochmuth is pastor of St. Andrew, Sacramento, California.

May the Lord our God be with us  
as he was with our fathers;  
may he never leave us  
nor forsake us. 1 Kings 8:57

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## Editorial office

Rev. James P. Schaefer, Editor  
Dorothy J. Sonntag, Assistant Editor  
Paul E. Baumler, Intern  
Northwestern Lutheran  
2929 N. Mayfair Road  
Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398  
Phone 414/771-9357 FAX 414/771-3708

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Prof. Richard D. Balge, Mr. John Barber, Prof.  
John A. Braun, Mr. Mark C. Brunner, Rev. Victor  
H. Prange.

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Gerlach, R. H. Hochmuth, P. E. Kelm, R. E.  
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(Pacific Northwest), J. C. Voss (South Atlantic),  
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(Southeastern Wisconsin), E. C. Stroh (Western  
Wisconsin).

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Arndt.

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## FORWARD

■ How would you react if a person with  
AIDS asked you to befriend him?  
Your natural reaction, says David  
Rosenbaum, may be to express  
revulsion. A man reaps what he  
sows, you might be tempted to tell  
him. Rosenbaum, a pastor in  
Manhattan, overcame his initial  
reaction. "After all," he says, "Jesus  
died for sinners. Period. There was  
no qualification as to what type of  
sinner."

Since Magic Johnson made his dra-  
matic announcement, virtually  
everyone in America is aware that  
the AIDS epidemic continues to  
grow and no longer can be  
ignored. "If you live in or near a  
city of any size," says Rosenbaum,  
"people within your reach are  
dying." Don't miss "AIDS and  
Christian aid" on p. 46.

DJS

# SASCA, ROMANIA: An experience that changed a life

by Dorothy J. Sonntag

**G**ail Oestricher couldn't sleep after watching ABC's *20/20*. The television news program had reported on the appalling conditions of orphanages in Romania.

"I couldn't stop thinking about the kids," she said. "I couldn't forget them."

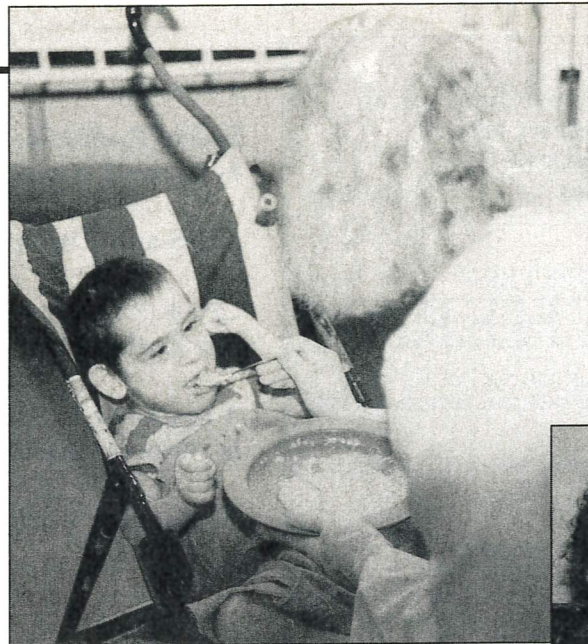
She contacted ABC. The network sent her a list of organizations which were seeking to help the Romanians. She and her husband, Dave, began sending donations to the Free Romania Foundation (FRF).

But sending money wasn't enough. "Money alone is not going to solve problems," she said. "So I joined the FRF Touch program." Oestricher, a homemaker who is a member of Trinity in Watertown, Wis., spent three weeks in July at a Romanian orphanage for disabled children.

The Touch program sends teams of medical professionals and lay people for three-week stints in the orphanages. The volunteers care for the children, seek to improve conditions at the orphanages, and distribute relief supplies. They also try to evaluate the developmental levels of the children and assess their physical needs in order to recommend patients to US medical teams.

Romania has more than 125,000 orphaned or abandoned children in institutions. The country, emerging from the dictatorship of President Nicholas Ceausescu, faces grinding poverty. There are no social welfare programs or foster homes.

"At age three the children are tested," said Oestricher. "If they're judged to be retarded, they're put in the homes for the 'irrecoverable.'" She served



At left, Gail Oestricher (pictured below) feeds Petrenella, age 10, in the orphanage at Sasca, Romania.



at one such orphanage in Sasca.

Oestricher's voice broke as she described conditions in the orphanage. Food was in short supply. Because adequate laundry supplies and equipment were lacking, clothing and bedding were not kept clean. Children who were not toilet trained wore no diapers and lay in wet, soiled bedding.

The children wore rags, she said. "They were very dirty. The children looked malnourished and neglected. They're faced with a life that is hopeless." Unless they are adopted, they will spend their entire lives in institutions.

The children at Sasca received no formal education; those functioning at the lowest levels were not toilet trained or taught to feed themselves. Not all may have been retarded, Oestricher said, "but after a short time they become environmentally retarded."

Those who could walk went to the dining hall for meals, usually bread, noodles, or vegetables. Crib children received bottles with bread crumbs in milk; bottles took less time and effort than spoon feeding.

Besides feeding and bathing the children, the volunteers held the children, gave them attention, played with them. "We played football, jump rope, frisbee. The children were always very happy when we played with them."

Oestricher also worked with the lowest functioning children. "Nobody paid attention to them. Sometimes they didn't even feed them," she said. "We worked with them on a low level. We played with beach balls and blocks. We took them outside, one at a time — they were too



*Counterclockwise, beginning at left:* • The orphanage of the Home Hospital for the Chronically Mentally Ill at Sasca. • Florida, age 14, is protected by restraints. • Children often spend the entire day sitting on benches. The child on the right was restrained so he would not wander. • Volunteer Janie Thompson brushes Steluta's teeth. • Mariutsa and Onka, 8-year-old girls, are bottle fed. Many of the children have not learned to feed themselves.

wild to take out in a group.”

A mental hospital for adults adjoined the orphanage. The adults ate with the children and “roamed around the place,” she said, and sometimes abused the children.

The volunteers observed children with a number of health problems. Besides malnutrition and rickets, children suffered from tuberculosis, hepatitis, and AIDS.

Oestricher also observed abuse by orphanage employees. “I witnessed several beatings and stopped a few of them,” she said. She doesn’t believe the abuse was always intentional, however, noting that the staff had no training and little education. “Some seemed abusive, yet others were gentle and caring,” she said. “They need to be educated. They’re coping the best they know how.”

During Oestricher’s three weeks at Sasca, a young girl had become noticeably weaker and finally appeared to lapse into a coma. She received little

medical attention. Believing the child was dying, Oestricher baptized her. Later she learned the child lived.

Oestricher spent about three months preparing for her trip and raising funds. “It was a big step to decide to go,” she said. “I’ve never done anything like this before. It took a lot of planning, and I had to raise the money.”

The volunteers pay their own expenses. Oestricher estimates it cost about \$3000. “I wrote letters to companies and organizations,” she said. “But most of it came from the synod’s Committee on Relief.” In addition she received donations for gifts for the children.

She also had to make arrangements for the care of her sons, Nicholas, 9, and Codi, 2. Her husband scheduled his vacation during the time she was gone, and her sister and parents helped with the children. “It was a family affair,” she says. “I couldn’t have gone without their help.”

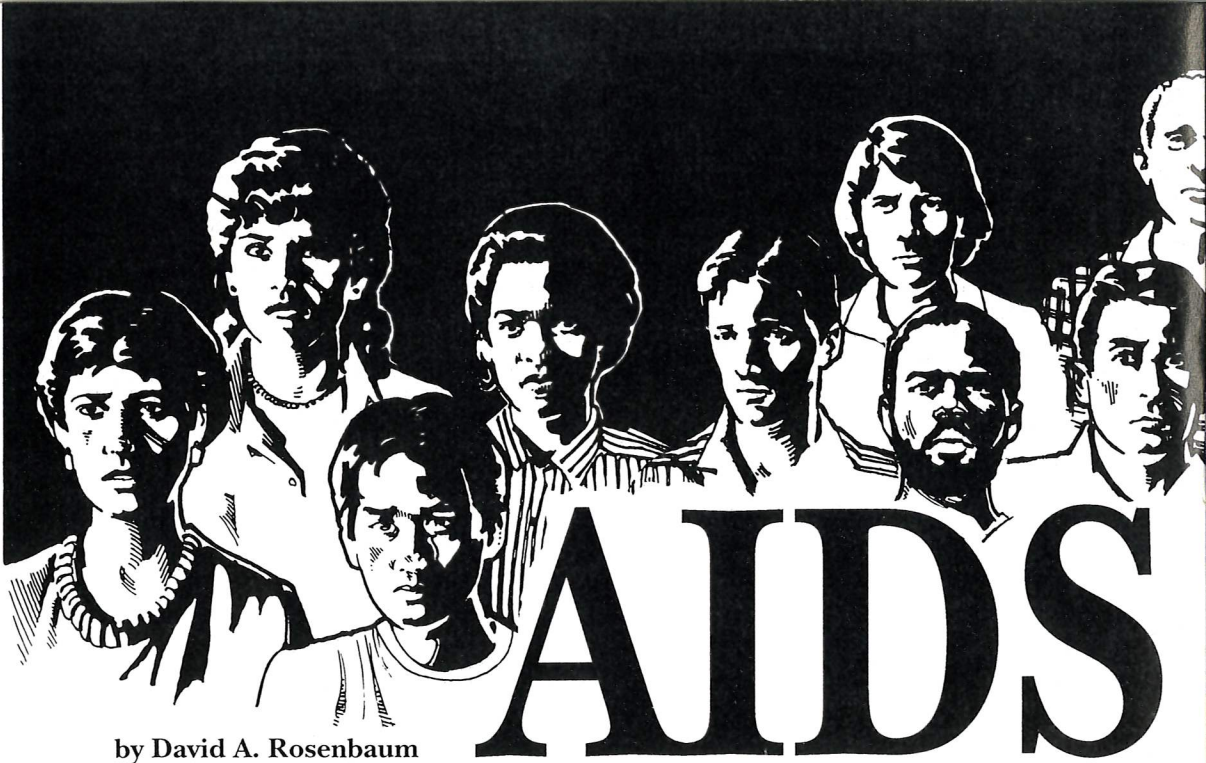
The Romanian orphans are adoptable. “We’ve talked about it,” said Gail. “There’s one little girl I’d love to adopt.” A few Touch volunteers have adopted children.

“I’m glad I went,” said Oestricher, “and I’d like to go back. I thought I’d go do my part and that would be it — but it isn’t. This experience has changed my life.”

## Foreign adoptions halted

In the first half of 1991, thousands of Romanian babies were adopted by US families, but adoptions of Romanian children by foreigners stopped in July, says *Forbes* magazine. Reacting to accusations of baby-selling, the Romanian government created a central agency to clear each foreign adoption. The new bureaucracy has put a virtual halt to foreign adoptions of Romanian children.

*Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor of Northwestern Lutheran.*



by David A. Rosenbaum

“Will you please buy me something to eat?”

That was my introduction to Charles, a man in his mid-30s. But he looked much older. I would have added at least 20 years. His cheeks and eyes were sunken. What protruded from the sleeves of his shirt resembled sticks more than limbs, and his ribs could be numbered as easily as those of a skeleton. Charles reminded me of those emaciated figures who stare out from photos taken in World War II concentration camps.

But Charles could not point at any cruel captor for his plight. Charles was in the advanced stages of AIDS.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV). The disease is contagious, but cannot be caught through casual contact, such as touching, kissing, or using the same dishes. It is transferred from one person to another through the exchange of body fluids, and the virus is most commonly contracted through intravenous drug injection (when the needle has been previously used by an infected person) or sexual activity with a person who carries the virus.

Once the virus has entered the bloodstream, it may remain dormant for several years. When activated, the virus attacks the immune system. The body becomes increasingly vulnerable to infections which it had previously been able to fight off. Tuberculosis,

pneumonia, a skin cancer known as Kaposi's sarcoma, an eye infection known as cytomegalovirus, and a noxious mouth fungus called thrush are just a few of the afflictions which commonly attack the person with a weakened immune system.

Drugs such as AZT and DDI have been developed to slow the deterioration of the body, but no cure for AIDS has yet been found. Scientists predict it will be at least five more years until a vaccine is developed, and until that time AIDS will remain fatal.

The infections mount and become increasingly debilitating and painful. The HIV-infected person may live anywhere from a few months to several years. Death finally results, not from the AIDS virus itself, but from the many diseases which have been able to assault the body in the absence of a strong immune system.

Charles' immune system, by this time, was in near-total failure. He suffered from tuberculosis, thrush, headaches, and a general wasting away of his muscles and body tone. This very ill man freely admitted his history of drug abuse.

What would you do with someone like Charles? Your natural reaction may be to express revulsion at a lifestyle whose consequences were now evident. A man reaps what he sows, you might be tempted to tell him.

But here was a chance to help a man with food for his stomach and for his soul. After all, Jesus died for sinners. Period. There was no qualification as to



*Yesterday's lepers are the AIDS victims of today*

## and Christian aid

what type of sinner. Charles had rebelled against God, but so had I. And if God's grace and mercy extended to me, then certainly they extended to Charles, too.

Ill as he was, Charles sat through our church service that day, and I promised him a meal afterwards. Having purchased the dinner, we walked back to the welfare hotel where he lived. I told the hotel deskman that Charles had been in church. "Charles?" he exclaimed. "The only reason Charles would be in church is if they were giving something away." He did get his free meal, but he also received the free gospel.

Charles returned to church several times, but it was difficult to determine whether he was coming merely for food. He professed repentance and faith in Christ. Yet I also learned that the assistance check he received each month would be consumed in a few days, with nearly all of it going to feed his drug habit.

Finally Charles entered the hospital for the last time. He would cling to life for several weeks, during which I visited him frequently, each time sharing the truths of sin and grace and saying a prayer with him.

Did the faith he expressed truly live in his heart? I cannot say. But I believe Charles did look to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, and that he is in heaven now.

There is abundant opportunity for bringing the gospel to AIDS sufferers in New York. Current estimates place the number of HIV-infected persons at more than 200,000 just in our city.

Among them are people like Joyce, a drug addict

who supported her habit through prostitution. The last time I saw her, Joyce was reduced to little more than skin and bones, curled into a fetal position and moaning in intense pain. But she died with the knowledge and, I pray, the faith that Jesus had paid for her sins.

Among the most recent deaths was that of Dennis, a homosexual and an alcoholic, who confessed he had made a mess of his life. He, too, looked to the cross where the atoning sacrifice for sin was made.

**A**IDS is a horrible way to die. Yet the death sentence which the disease carries with it can also be seen as a final warning. It cries out: Repent and believe. Forgiveness is found through faith in the Lamb of God.

The AIDS epidemic continues to grow. If you live in or near a city of any size, people within your reach are dying. What a perfect chance to offer hope; to tell a dying woman or man that heaven is not lost, that no sin is too great to be forgiven.

Our Savior associated with prostitutes and lepers. Prostitutes are still around, and yesterday's lepers are the AIDS victims of today. We have the spiritual food they need. Let us feed them until they hunger no more.



*David Rosenbaum is pastor of Peace, Manhattan, New York.*

How  
climate  
and  
culture  
shape us  
Lutherans

# Are Lutherans cold only in winter?

by Paul E. Kelm

**I** have a theory that descendants of Northern European immigrants bring to their life and church several outlooks not necessarily Christian. Consider these theses:

- A cold climate tends to inhibit personal warmth.
- A hard life tends to lower expectations.
- A demanding culture tends to produce critics.



### Are Lutherans cold?

Are Lutherans cold? Only in winter. But a climate that forces people indoors isolates them from “outsiders,” and makes personal space important. Northern Lutherans, therefore, tend to be reserved. They may even be suspicious of “huggers” and cynical about displays of emotion.

New Englanders have been caricatured, like Lutherans, as cold. My experience with both is that it's just frost, beneath which beats a warm heart. Evidence suggests that many “snowbirds” thaw when they move south, and first generation Lutherans of a warmer climate express their convictions with overt warmth.

Don't judge a northern Lutheran or his church as “cold” when a cautious greeting or a stolid liturgy reflect a reserved nature. A few more generations and a little global warming will soften us. The personality and style have nothing to do with Lutheran theology, and that's what bonds us in love — Christ's love.

### Are Lutherans pessimistic?

Are Lutherans pessimistic? Actually, Murphy was an Irish Catholic. German Lutherans have their own version of Murphy's Law: Expect the worst and you'll never be disappointed. In fact, Americans have a distressing leaning toward pessimism. Today's litany of economic, educational, and environmental woes doesn't match my experience. Bashing America for its immorality and materialism ignores a Christian countertrend. Why do we fixate on bad news? I suspect it's a fear of losing what we treasure, rooted in the realization that we don't really deserve what we have.

God can work with that. Grace is undeserved, a greater treasure secured in the sacrifice of God's Son. That'll lift your spirits and change your outlook. “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

Lutheran theology comprehends “taking up your cross” and “in this world you will have tribulation,” but the focus is on grace. God's power and promise here, God's presence and perfection hereafter — that ought to make us optimists.

It isn't really Lutheran to pinch pennies, forecast

failure, and gather gripes. Yes, I know Luther wrote: “Take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife,” but that was hypothetical. “The kingdom ours remaineth” — that's Lutheran!

### Are Lutherans hypercritical?

Are Lutherans hypercritical? Confessionally we are, and we should be. “Little error” in the realm of theology is a contradiction in terms. But nit-picking perfectionism is no way to treat friends, raise children, or see self. Expect the best from God; accept a good deal less from mortals.

It may be a cultural insistence on *Alles in Ordnung* (everything in order) or a subtle transfer from biblical absolutes to a black-and-white world view that robs us of our patience, humor, and perspective. Sarcasm is social criticism, not humor. Negative criticism is debilitating, to the critic as well as his victim. Appreciation, like thankfulness, is a Christian virtue, not a sell-out to humanism or a cave-in to mediocrity.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Those aren't character traits associated with the Teutonic stereotype; but then, the apostle wasn't describing human nature of any ethnic stripe. He was describing the Spirit's work in the new nature of Christians, of Lutherans.

Love, in 1 Corinthians 13, isn't sentimental solicitude. “It is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” A tough-minded German Lutheran can appreciate that.

Philippians 4 was written by an apostle who spent his life in a Mediterranean climate, but his inspired world view resonates with us “frozen chosen” as well. “Rejoice in the Lord always. . . . Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. . . . Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.”

Life is looking up!



Paul E. Kelm is administrator for the Commission on Adult Discipleship.

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# A response to “saving souls” vs. “new programs”

by Wayne D. Mueller

*In the letter section of the October 15, 1991 issue, a letter appeared critical of the synod's allocation of its resources. Special mention was made of the funding of the Mass Media Ministry and the church growth movement. When the letter was printed, we also printed a brief response by Rev. Robert Hartman, administrator for evangelism. Because of the nature of the critical letter, Rev. Wayne Mueller, administrator for the Board for Parish Services, sent a letter to its author. With the knowledge of the recipient, we are reprinting Rev. Mueller's response. We feel it will be of interest to our readers.*

I read your letter of concern about our lack of support for Apache Indian missions in the *Northwestern Lutheran*. Your concern might properly extend to all the mission efforts of our church body. Within the last ten years, only one new overseas missionary was added to our budget. Although in 1978 we opened 24 new home missions, we began this year with no budget monies for home mission expansion.

My heart is with yours when it comes to the priority work of the church in spreading the gospel. Yet I am also painfully aware of the difficult decisions our synodical leaders must make when deciding how to allocate an increasingly smaller amount of offerings. Contributions from our congregations for synod mission work has not even kept pace with inflation for the last five years. Today, less than 75 percent of our total synod budget is supported by congregational contributions. The rest comes from special gifts.

Neither of the cuts you suggested in your letter would release any money for the Apache mission. The “Precious is the Child” program was funded entirely by people who wanted this ministry and were willing to pay for it.

The other cut you suggest is “the controversial Church Growth Movement Program.” There is no Church Growth Movement Program in our synod. Our church body is opposed to the false theology of the Church Growth Movement. We have no programs inside or outside the budget with that name. Nor do we have any programs with a different name which utilize Church Growth theology.

I am speaking only of the formal budgeted programs of WELS which are funded by congregational

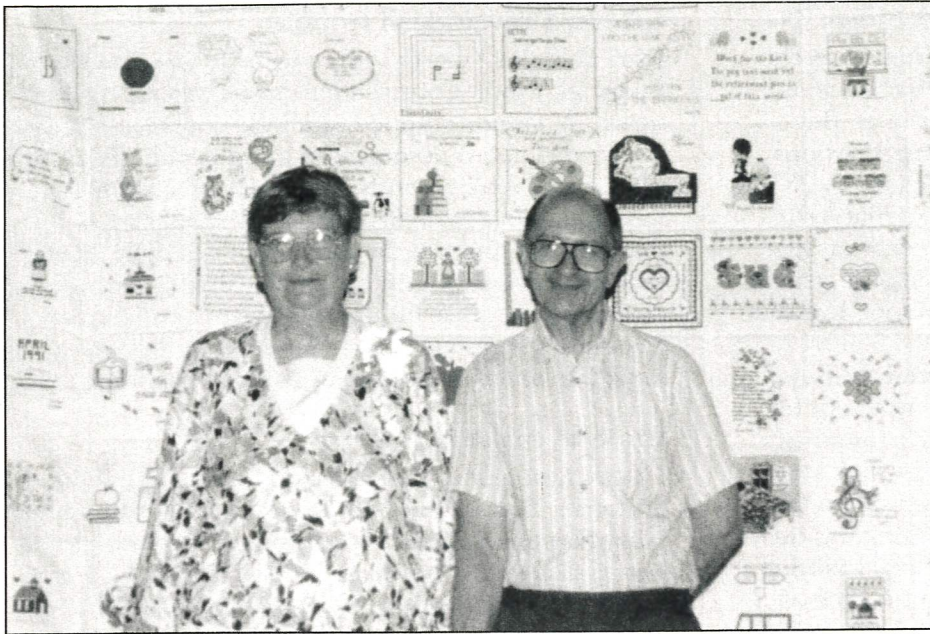
mission offerings. I cannot, of course, speak for the individual pastors and congregations in our synod. There may be pastors or congregations which use methodology which church growth people use. This does not mean they have adopted the theology of the Church Growth Movement. Our Lutheran Confessions allow complete freedom among our churches in methodology that does not conflict with the gospel.

You and I can agree the lack of money is never the real problem in God's church. The lack of money to do all the Lord's work (Apache missions included) is only a symptom of a deeper, spiritual problem. The shortage of money is due to our lack of commitment, which in turn is due to weakness of faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes through the word of God. When there is more Bible reading and study in our homes and churches, there will be more faith, more commitment, more money, and more ministry.

Until then, I ask you to join me in praying for your church and its leaders. Daily they pray and agonize over decisions of where to cut ministry from a budget that is too small. Regularly they wrestle with setting priorities among equally important and vital programs. The Coordinating Council invites Bible scholars to come in to review Scripture teachings and warn of false doctrines (including Church Growth) which affect our church.

Thank you for your concern about your church. In an external way your optimism can be rooted in the obvious blessings God has given to the WELS. We continue to carry on an outreach ministry to our country and to the world in spite of budget shortfalls. We were the only Lutheran body to grow in numbers last year. Membership in our churches' Bible classes is increasing. We continue by God's grace to produce solid, Bible-based literature and annually train men and women committed to ministry. In spite of legitimate disappointments and disagreements about where budget cuts have to be made, the Lord of the church is still in control.

You and I can share an even more safely based optimism about the church. That lies in Jesus' promises that he is always with us and that the gates of hell will never prevail against his church.



**Mrs. Bette Feiock** was honored Oct. 13 for 25 years of teaching and sharing her musical talents at King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif. She was presented with a handmade quilt with 120 squares designed by present and former pastors, teachers, students, and friends. Bette and her husband are standing in front of the quilt.

## Estate willed to church

The late Leona Wischstadt left the majority of her \$263,000 estate to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn., Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School of New Ulm, Dr. Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

The share of the estate going to the college and seminary will be used to endow a fund to assist needy students. Each of the funds will receive a minimum of \$80,000.

"Even though the Lord did not give Leona and her sainted husband John their own children," said district reporter Bob Edwards, "he did give them the will to help out many young people with their estates."

## New executive director at social welfare agency

Pastor Robert H. Michel has accepted a call as executive director of Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, Milwaukee. The position has been vacant since

the retirement of Pastor Ernst Lehninger last year.

Michel, 56, was public relations manager for the agency from 1975 to 1991. In 1991 he was appointed vice-president and director of public relations for the agency and two subsidiary corporations: WLCFS Investment Corporation, which is responsible for the agency's resources; and Wisconsin Lutheran Retirement Community of 236 units.

The 26-year-old agency offers a full range of social services: adoption, unwed parent counseling, foster care, family counseling, alcoholism awareness groups, school services, and educational programs through a midwest network of area offices and field staff counselors. The agency also maintains a health care division providing skilled nursing and custodial care in a 161-bed facility in Milwaukee and home health care to residents of southeastern Wisconsin.



Michel

A 1961 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Michel previously served parishes in Newton, Iowa, and Oak Creek and Burlington, Wis. He is also a graduate of Northwestern Preparatory School and College.

Michel, a native of Milwaukee, is married to the former Marlyn Joy Siegel of Milwaukee. There are two children, Beth, 28, and Bradley, 23.

## Chaplain Stern receives award

Several months ago Chaplain Steven Stern of the Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry received a CARE award from the Milwaukee County Medical Complex. The award is given to people working in the medical complex who demonstrate exceptional courtesy, attitude, respect, and enthusiasm.

Stern was nominated for his work with the "Resolve Through Sharing" program, designed to help bereaved parents when they have lost an infant through miscarriage, stillbirth, or death soon after birth.

### Why Christmas is celebrated on December 25 . . .

According to tradition, the date of Christmas was chosen by the church as a way to "Christianize" ancient pagan festivals celebrating the onset of winter. But another theory gaining popularity among American religion scholars asserts the choice of December 25 was made on quite a different basis: the belief that Jesus was conceived on March 25. The new theory was first advanced in 1897 by a French Roman Catholic scholar. It got increased attention in the 1950s among German scholars and was introduced in the United States in 1982. Prof. Thomas Talley, who introduced the new date in the US, said that early church sources put the date of Jesus' crucifixion on March 25. He found an anonymous writing of the fourth century which set forth the belief that "Our Lord was conceived on the same date that he was crucified." The writing was quoted by St. John Chrysostom (374-407). Jewish tradition held that the Hebrew patriarchs died on the date of their birth. According to this new dating, Jesus died on the date of his conception.

### Top ten religion stories of 1991 . . .

*The Christian Century* has picked the top ten religion stories of 1991. In first place is the *war in the gulf*. 2. *Sexual ethics*. Differences on issues of sexuality confronted virtually every mainline denomination; in some cases divisions threatened the unity of the denominations. 3. *Religious ferment in Eastern Europe*. 4. *Right to die*. It was stimulated by the best-seller status of Derek Humphry's *Final Exit*. 5. *Mideast breakthrough*. The mideast peace talks drew Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and a partnership of Palestinians and Jordanians to the conference table. 6. *Orthodox suspend membership in National Council of Churches*. Five Orthodox denominations, including the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, suspended membership in the NCC. At issue was the ordination of women and homosexuals. 7. *Southern Baptist Convention conflicts*. Tensions continue between fundamentalists and moderates (liberals). 8. *The ouster of Aristide*. Haiti got its first freely elected president, priest-scholar Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In September Haiti's seven-month-old experiment with democracy was terminated by a military coup that forced Aristide into exile. 9. *Dead Sea Scrolls furor*. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, have been withheld from the scholarly world since their discovery. The Huntington Library in California created a breakthrough by announcing it will make public its photographs of the scrolls. 10. *"A god dies."* Soviet communism, the god that was said to have failed over four decades ago, finally met its end in 1991.

### Liberty University in trouble . . .

Jerry Falwell's Liberty University faces an uncertain financial future. Construction on a cafeteria costing nearly \$2 million stopped when the contractor became concerned about payment, and 50 acres of the university's campus were recently auctioned after creditors foreclosed on a loan. School officials had earlier planned to refinance the institution's debt by issuing tax-exempt state bonds, but the legality of the move was challenged because of Liberty's religious character. The state's Supreme Court (Virginia) ruled Liberty ineligible on grounds of church-state separation.

### Cross in city seal . . .

The inclusion of a Christian cross in the seal of the city of Austin, Texas, does not violate the First Amendment, according to an appeals court ruling handed down in New Orleans. In a 2-1 decision the Fifth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a 1990 ruling by a US District judge rejecting a challenge brought by Jon G. Murray. When Austin adopted the seal in 1916, it chose a design that incorporated the family coat of arms of Stephen F. Austin, for whom the city is named. The coat of arms includes three crosses topped by crosslets, which signifies in heraldry that an ancestor had participated in a crusade. The judges said that although the cross might offend someone unfamiliar with the city's history, its appearance on the seal doesn't necessarily constitute the promotion of religion. Last year a federal appeals court in Chicago ruled against the inclusion of crosses in the municipal seals of Zion, Ill., and Rolling Meadows, Ill.

### Churches get low marks in western Europe . . .

Europeans express little confidence in religious organizations to help solve problems of families or society, according to a recently published opinion poll. In general, the study shows that Europeans give short shrift to religious doctrines when making moral decisions, strongly favoring an independent approach to moral issues. Most respondents said they consider religion less important than family, work, friends, and leisure. Many also said they consider religious organizations to be overly interested in sexual mores. Less than half of respondents in eight European countries expressed overall confidence in the church. In Denmark and Sweden, only 11 percent said churches were able to help with family problems. Larger percentages, between 37 and 53 percent, of respondents in those eight countries said the church was able to meet personal spiritual needs.

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.

## Former treasurer takes new position

Ronald H. Meier, former treasurer of the synod, has accepted a call to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, to serve as the school's first planned giving counselor. Previously he had announced that he was seeking a career change and had resigned as treasurer.

Since that time Calvin A. Patterson, director of finance, has been serving as treasurer as appointed by the Board of Trustees. Since 1982 Patterson has been synod's director of finance.

## North Atlantic District news

**Immanuel, Long Valley, New Jersey**, dedicated its new church Nov. 10. . . . **Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Mass.**, dedicated its new building Nov. 3. . . . **Atonement, Baltimore, Maryland**, celebrated its 25th anniversary Nov. 3.

— *John W. Berg*

### WELS Connection videotapes

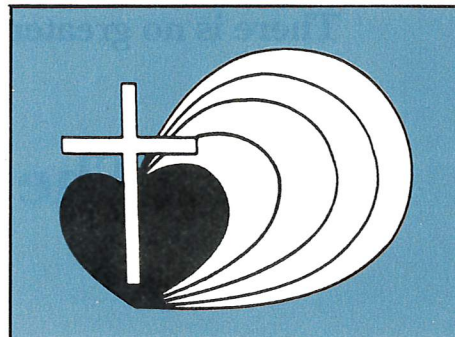
#### February topics:

- Mission Work in Eastern Europe
- Bibles in Russia

#### March topics

- International students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary
- Miss Michigan

For more information, contact CCFS, WELS Administration Building, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd., Milwaukee WI 53222. Cost of a year's subscription is \$48.



## IS A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY FOR YOU?

Are you interested in making a gift to provide for the continuation of the Lord's work after He takes you to your home in heaven?

Do you want a secure investment that will give you income for the rest of your life, or provide income for someone else?

Would you like a portion of this income to be tax exempt?

Would you like to get tax benefits now but defer income until later, possibly after retirement?

If your answer is YES to any of these questions, then a Charitable Gift Annuity may be for you. For further information, contact:

Office of Planned and Special Giving  
WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN SYNOD  
2929 North Mayfair Road  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53222  
(414) 771-6119

## Also in the news

At its fall meeting the Board for World Missions elected Pastor Don Fastenau of Lakeville, Minn., and Dr. Heinz Hoenecke of San Diego, Calif., to the **Committee for Mission Expansion**. They replace A. Tyler Bliss, who resigned for business reasons, and Pastor Leonard Koeninger, who retired from the committee after more than 25 years service with the world mission board. . . . **World board executive committees** have noted 23 potential areas for exploration, 15 of which already involve WELS contacts. . . . According to medical mission treasurer Margaret Kujath, Missionary Mark Rieke's Northwestern Lutheran article on the **mobile dispensary in Malawi** so moved one donor that the Central Africa Medical Mission received a \$10,000 check to support the work. . . . **Missionary Ronald Baerbock** is now Puerto Rico mission coordinator. Former coordinator Ralph Martens accepted a call to a Hispanic congregation in Miami. . . . In Colombia **Missionary Stuart Freese and his wife, Debra**, are now a family of four with the adoption of their second Colombian child. . . . A **Native American Symposium**, funded by a grant, is scheduled for Tucson in April 1992. It will search out what is being done by various church bodies, what Native Americans want, and how best to develop a Native American church. . . . **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary**, Mequon, Wis., has been awarded three grants totaling \$21,300 from Aid Association for Lutherans. The grants will be used for scholarships and faculty development. . . . There are eight **Jesus Cares Schools** operating in four districts, providing part-time Christian education to the mentally retarded. The latest school opened at Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis. The school at Fox Valley Lutheran High School reports an enrollment of 20, 10 of whom are not WELS members. . . . **Former President Reagan's** grandson, Cameron, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Reagan, attends St. Paul Lutheran School, North Hollywood, Calif., where he is a seventh grader.

There is no greater freedom than the absolute freedom found in Christ

## Christ Jesus: The all-sufficient liberator

(Colossians 2: 6-23)

by Fredric E. Piepenbrink

**T**erry Anderson. Alann Steen. Joseph Cicippio. Remember these names? For years they endured physical pain and mental anguish as the last three American hostages to be released by the Islamic Jihad. The ordeal finally ended last year.

Can you imagine the shock and bewilderment that would besiege this country, and especially the family members, if these hostages announced they were going back to Lebanon, look up their former captors, and request to be made prisoners again? "Absurd," we would say. Why would anyone in his right mind prefer captivity to freedom?

In a spiritual way the Christians at Colossae were being tempted to do just that — to exchange the freedom they had in Christ for the captivity being promoted by false teachers. Paul was shocked. And he tells them so in what could be described as the heart of his letter to the Colossians.

### Continue to live in Christ

When the Colossian Christians came to faith in Christ, they began a way of life very different from what they lived before. Now their focus was on Jesus. Their lives revolved around doing those things that strengthened their relationship with Christ, always thankful that they were privileged to be his own.

But their relationship was not one-sided as purely human relationships often are, for it included nothing less than the presence in their body of the "fullness of Christ," who, in turn, houses in his body the fullness of God.

With the presence of Christ in their being came a uniting of his life with theirs and all the wonderful blessings associated with it. For example, as Christ was buried in Joseph's tomb, so their sins were buried in baptism. Likewise, as Christ was raised from the dead, so they were raised from the deadness of unbelief and condemnation of the law to a new life of faith and freedom. In fact, the law that said, "You are guilty!" was nailed to the cross with

Jesus. This gave the Colossian Christians complete liberation in Christ Jesus.

### Don't return to captivity

There is no greater freedom to be enjoyed than the absolute freedom found in Christ. As anything added to gold makes it less than pure, so anything added to Christ's life work of liberation for sinners is a return to captivity. When man tries to impose his wisdom, God's pure freedom is contaminated, and he is left with a hollow and deceptive philosophy, as the liars and frauds were promoting in Colossae.

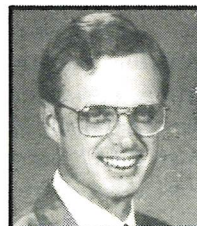
This enslaving Colossian heresy included elements of both Jewish legalism and eastern mysticism. Legalism insists that certain outward acts, having eternal consequences, must be practiced. Jewish legalism consisted of man-made laws stemming from over-active egotism as Jesus encountered with the Pharisees in his day.

In addition, the Old Testament laws that served their purpose in pointing to Christ were only distracting from him and his accomplishments after he came.

Another hostage-taking philosophy was mysticism, or the direct contact with the supernatural resulting in miraculous signs and secret revelation. For the false teachers in Colossae, angel worship was the way to reach God who was unattainable to sinful man.

A third fetter was asceticism, or strict self-denial and self-mortification. All these chains led to false humility and a return to captivity.

Paul's formula for guaranteeing our all-sufficient freedom in Christ was simply a close, deliberate, conscious union with him as our head. This union contains all the wisdom, conveys all the grace and power, exerts all the necessary controls, and provides all the motivation we will ever need to avoid the absurd.



Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor of Atonement, Milwaukee.

## Adiaphora

If you don't know what the word "adiaphora" means, don't feel bad. I went to my 1500 page desk dictionary and did not even find the word listed. I had to go to my unabridged dictionary to check the word out.

"Adiaphora" is the plural form of "adiaphoron," a word which means "a matter of indifference in religion or morals." The dictionary includes a separate theological definition: "a ceremonial or ritualistic observance neither forbidden nor commanded by the Scriptures, and on that account held to be an affair of the individual conscience."

"Adiaphora" is an important word to know and understand when the subject of worship comes up. In worship there are some things which dare never be adiaphora. That the word of God is preached in all its truth is not an adiaphoron; that the sacraments are administered according to Christ's command is not an adiaphoron. But many things in worship are adiaphora, things neither right nor wrong.

Reading the comments of those who participated in the trial use of the new communion service last fall demonstrates how judgments differ about forms of worship. An organist wrote: "I thought, 'Oh no, just what we need, another liturgy to learn.' However, after playing the melodies and singing along during the services, I think it's terrific. . . . Please include this in the new hymnal." An opposite opinion was voiced by the person who wrote: "If services will continue like this, I will find another church."

Many comments were very brief. "Keep it — really new and better. . . . Like this liturgy! . . . A complete negative. . . . Drop it!" Some judged the liturgy to be too Roman Catholic. One respondent questioned why we should "go the way of the world."

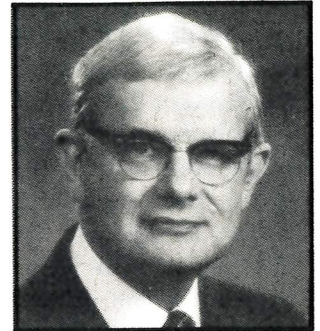
Remember that word "adiaphora" when such varied opinions are expressed about an order of worship. Always keep in mind that the exact wording of our liturgies is not prescribed by God. The melodies for our hymns and chants were not handed down from heaven. These are matters of adiaphora. Individual Christians will differ in their opinions about such matters.

When it comes to matters of adiaphora, one does need to recall the words of the apostle Paul: "Everything is permissible — but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" (1 Corinthians 10:23).

It's important when introducing new words and music in worship to go slowly, to take a little at a time, and furnish as much help as possible to anyone who might be experiencing difficulty in learning the unfamiliar. The reason why our synod resolved to produce a new hymnal was to improve the worship life of our congregations. But it is going to take time — perhaps five or ten years — to become familiar and comfortable with some of the new worship materials.

When our new hymnal is introduced in the summer of 1993, please remember that word "adiaphora." It may come in handy.

Victor H. Prange



*Victor Prange is pastor of Peace, Janesville, Wisconsin, and chairman of the synod's Commission on Worship and the Joint Hymnal Committee.*

# I'm questioning Christian rock

by Jonathan H. Rupprecht

**T**he recent article "Music with a message" (October 15) evoked some misgivings about the particular variety of contemporary Christian music called Christian rock. There are some important considerations that too often seem to be lost sight of.

This issue is often passed off as being simply a matter of personal taste, but it goes deeper. The point is not to question the motives of Christian rock performers, but to take a soul-searching look in the light of Biblical principles.

God says, "Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?" (James 4:4). If rock music is not a worldly item, what is?

Our synod last summer noted that "musical notations and rhythms are neither inherently good nor evil." There is truth to that statement, but applying it to Christian rock ignores some considerations.

Rock music performers have long been associated with drugs, immoral sex, ungodly living and attitudes. It's hard to separate that baggage from that music, especially when some Christian rock groups also imitate the appearance and some of the actions of secular rock groups.

Isn't it naive to think we can somehow sanctify rock music with Christian lyrics? For us to design our church buildings to look like Islamic mosques, but then justify this by proclaiming the gospel in them would be ludicrous. Isn't that similar to what Christian rock attempts to do?

Relating to youth needs to be a high priority item in the church. But what message are we giving by encouraging Christian rock?

Most discussions in our circles about rock music have properly decried the evils connected with it. Yet, "Let's have Christian rock," we say. Doesn't that encourage our youth to hang on to the secular rock we should be weaning them away from?

It is said we can reach the youth of the world with music they can relate to. But do we serve unbelievers

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*There is music written  
in styles that stand out  
from the music of the world,  
music that does not  
have associations with  
rock culture,  
music that can serve  
as a vehicle  
for lifting our spirit.*

---

well by shaping the church to fit their mold? Isn't there often a loss of respect for the church and its message when we try to copy the children of this world?

The church is to transform the world, not be transformed by the world. And while that is done by our Biblical message, style and substance are not easily separated. Since we are to let our light shine, why put the tinted — and tainted — glass of worldliness over our light?

Yes, we can use the things of this world, but "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive" (1 Corinthians 10:23).

What is beneficial and constructive when God's children look and sound like the raucous, godless children of this world?

It can be good to "meet people where they're at," to be "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22). But that has limits, and those limits are defined by other principles of God's word.

There is music written in styles that stand out from the music of the world, music that does not have associations with rock culture, music that can serve as a vehicle for lifting our spirit. Is this music beneath our youth, not good enough for them because it's not "their kind of music"? Do we serve our youth well by catering to that idea? Do we urge them to consider whether their Savior is pleased with their kind of music?

Jesus prayed, "My prayer is not that you take them [his disciples] out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of it" (John 17:15,16). Does "of the world" speak to cultural matters? Does the Rock whom we confess want us to confess him with rock music?

*Jonathan Rupprecht is pastor of Arlington Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.*



### Fully human

This letter is in response to the article which described the hymnal committee's approach to make Jesus Christ "fully human" (Sept. 1, p. 301).

Webster's defines "man" as "a human being; esp. an adult male." Jesus was both "fully human" and of the male gender. Why not confirm both these facts by simply stating in our creed that Christ "was made man"?

To all but a few people, this would mean that he was a fully human male. I see absolutely no reason to change this portion of our creed. In fact, "fully human" gives no clue as to whether we believe that Jesus was male. In this day and age it is becoming extremely important to be precise when describing our beliefs.

When we refer to Christ as "man," we are addressing those who question his gender, and even his sexual orientation. Believe it or not, these are becoming issues which our sinful world is raising questions about. Why not be bold, and simply confess that Christ "was made man"?

*Eric W. Nimmer  
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

### Inspiring contributors

After reading the November 15 NL, I wanted to write with my compliments on the best issue ever. Then in Letters I read that NL's contributors should be replaced with people more "dynamic and contemporary." Dig out some old NLs and see how many relevant, dynamic articles have been written by Paul Kelm.

Contemporary subjects? The NL isn't afraid to tackle them. Just a few days before reading Mr. Toppe's comments, "Rock singers belt out sex with their lyrics and . . . gestures" (Whatever Happened to Lust), I viewed the original version of Michael Jackson's video. It was so offensive that a censored version replaced it.

Thanks also to John Engelman for "Let Me Take Time." It shows you don't have to be ordained to be an insightful contributor.

I regret not having space to thank Mrs. Sonntag, Pastors Ehlke, Lauersdorf, Piepenbrink, Albrecht, and all the other inspiring contributors. Thank you all!

*Dennis Napier  
Coronado, California*

### Teaching adults, not children

In the Dec. issue (Also in the news), a paragraph stated John Chworowsky is instructing "children of government people." You might be interested to know that John and Jo are not teaching children. They are both teaching 120 adults between the ages of 18-50. Most are operational staff of the National Center for Rehabilitation, including doctors and technicians. Beginning in January, John and Jo will be teaching an additional 10 to 15 students from the Ministry for External Economic Relations.

*Gary Schroeder  
Kowloon, Hong Kong*

*(The Chworowskys' evangelism project is a privately undertaken venture. It is under study by the world mission board, which has made no decision as to its future. — Ed.)*

### Counseling takes courage

In response to the comment (Letters, Dec.) that those who write letters to legislators and volunteer at pregnancy counseling centers are less courageous: It does take courage to do these things.

It is not easy to tell unmarried girls they are living a life of sin when the world says it's okay to have sex before marriage. It also takes courage to share the good news of Jesus Christ knowing we may face rejection. Courage is needed to face the world when these girls kill their babies regardless of what we've told them.

I ask that you pray for our centers and those working to fight the good fight, and join us in our pro-life fight.

*Laura Schwantes  
Valders, Wisconsin*

### Giving hearts

This past year at King of Kings, Alexandria, La., our pastor asked if we could afford \$100 per communicant to give to missions. This was only \$2 a week and we realized this was the price of a video rental or a bag of chips.

You may be saying, they have well-off members. Let me introduce a few. We have seven military families, several retired members, and two families whose heads of household were without jobs for at least six months. Even with these obstacles, the Lord blessed our efforts and gave us a mission offering of \$2265 over and above our church mission offering of \$100 per communicant.

We are a small church, but there are many giving hearts here.

*Cathy Wightman and Terri Wallmuth  
Alexandria, Louisiana*

### Schools

I have heard such things as this: I'm not sending my children to WELS schools because:

- I pay taxes for public schools;
- Teachers aren't organized;
- Some of the notes they send home aren't correctly done;
- Not enough follow-through;
- Not enough friends to choose from;
- Too small.

Oh you of little faith. Teachers aren't God, but are sent from him. Trust in the Lord and read his words. Don't trust in the world. The devil sneaks around in sheep's clothing.

*Darlene Ehinger  
Lawndale, California*

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*, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

# When The Crying Stops

## Abortion: The Pain and The Healing

by Kathleen Winkler

The book is the result of in-depth interviews with 19 women who have had abortions and experienced problems afterward. Although this is a frank and often grim experience, the book doesn't stop with the pain. Rather, it carries the reader into the process of healing in Christ. These compelling testimonies, reflecting the stories of 19 women of different ages, races, and diverse backgrounds, is followed by a healing meditation from scriptures skillfully rendered in blank verse by Harold Senkbeil. *When The Crying Stops* is a timely and moving book that you will find hard to put down and difficult to forget. 200 pages. Paperback.

12N1756

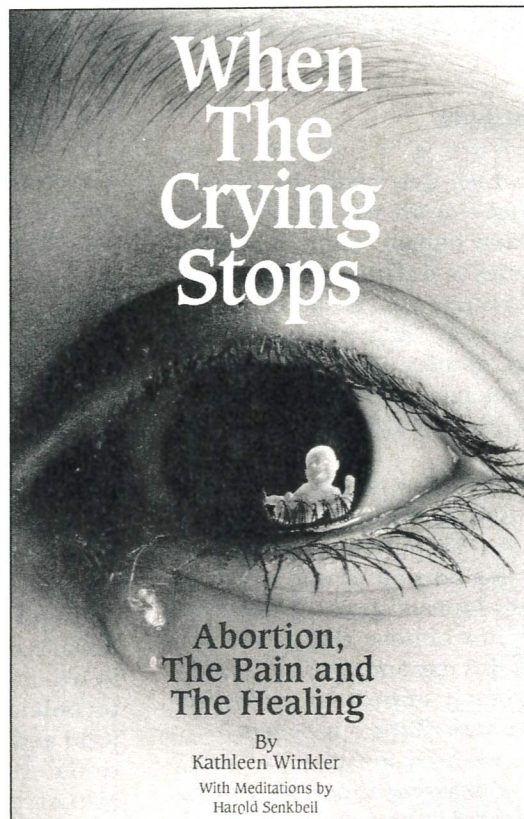
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NL



Abortion,  
The Pain and  
The Healing

By  
Kathleen Winkler  
With Meditations by  
Harold Senkbeil

### NOTICES

Notices are printed in the first issue each month. The deadline for submitting items is five weeks before the date of issue.

#### MISSION SEMINAR 1992 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Theme: **Through the Open Door** (Colossians 4:3)

Dates: Feb. 5, 7:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.:

Session 1: **Opening the door of our hearts**

Session 2: **Unlocking the door of our churches**

Session 3: **God's open door to the world**

Feb. 5, 7:00 p.m.: **World Missions  
Worship Service**  
with reception following

Feb. 6, 7:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.:

Session 4: **Planning for the open door**

Session 5: **Is the door ever closed?**

Session 6: **Through the door to other cultures**

The student body invites everyone to attend any or all of the sessions, especially the worship service. In order to reserve a seat for the sessions, please inform the undersigned.

Seminar booklets may be ordered for \$3.00 each (if picked up at the seminar) or \$3.75 if mailed. Please contact Wayne Oblender, 6717 W Wartburg Circle, Mequon WI 53092.

#### CHURCH LIBRARIANS ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Church librarians will meet to organize formally on March 14, 10 a.m.—4 p.m., at the WELS administration building, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd., Milwaukee. Several workshops will be offered. Registration, including materials and lunch, is \$10. Contact Joanne Weber, S90 W 13322 Boxhorn Dr, Muskego WI 53150; 414/425-4225; or Barb Koch, 152 Hoyt St, Fond du Lac WI 54935.

### ITEMS AVAILABLE

The following are available for the cost of shipping

**ALTAR CLOTH (98"x24") and two Bible markers** — White with gold. Contact St. John Church, Caledonia MN 55921; 507/724-2897.

### ITEMS NEEDED

**USED COAT RACKS** for display of used clothing by Mission to the Economically Deprived. Milwaukee area. Please call 414/933-9700 and leave a message.

### CHANGES IN MINISTRY

#### PASTORS:

**Berg, Peter M.**, from Prince of Peace, Thousand Oaks, Calif., to St. Peter, Plymouth, Mich.

**Kaufeld, Shawn E.**, from Christ, Wilmot, S. Dak., to St. John/St. Matthew, Spring Valley, Wis.

**Nepsund, Randall P.**, to Faith (ELS), San Antonio, Tex.

**Otto, Robert G.**, to Faith, St. Petersburg, Fla.

**Schmeling, Arlyn L.**, from Zion, Springfield, Mo., to Faith, Columbus, Miss.

**Smith, Thomas J.**, from Abiding Love, Cape Coral, Fla., to Emmanuel, Owatonna, Minn.

### WELS VIDEO/FILM RENTAL

#### LET HEAVEN AND NATURE SING

1991 28 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

This video combines the beauty of winter scenery with Christmas music and narration. Its purpose is to provide an atmosphere of quiet meditation on the beauties of nature and the wonders of the Savior's birth.

Rental: \$7.50

#### PARENTING

This series comes highly recommended by those who have used it. It emphasizes important principles of parenting. However, the principles are based more on common sense and experience than on Scripture. The presenter must be prepared to reinforce these good ideas with the word of God. The series includes:

**Improving Your Attitude**  
1991 21 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**How to Love Your Child**  
1991 21 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**The Secret to Discipline**  
1991 23 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**Why Values are Important**  
1991 20 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

Rental: \$7.50 each

#### YESHUA

Dr. Oswald Hoffman, Lutheran Hour speaker, takes us on a tour of archaeological sites in Israel and explains how discoveries there shed light on the life and work of "Yeshua," known to us as Jesus. The scenery and commentary make this another way to learn more about the ministry of Jesus. The series includes:

#### The Land and the Promise

(Messianic prophecies)  
1991 60 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**The Promise Takes Root** (The nativity)  
1991 60 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**The Voice and the Light** (Jesus' ministry)  
1991 60 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**The Bread of Sacrifice** (Holy week)  
1991 60 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

**Ripples of Darkness, Waves of Light**  
(Crucifixion and resurrection)  
1991 60 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

Rental: \$7.50 each

#### TO EVERY PEOPLE

1991 60 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA

The message of Christian missionaries has often been distorted because they tried to teach Western ways along with the gospel. This video stresses that Christians must deliver the gospel so that it has the same meaning in the new culture as in the old. The video demonstrates this principle with four applications: to animists, to Moslems, to Hindus, and to the Chinese.

Rental: \$7.50

#### THE FIRST VALENTINE

1991 25 min. 1/2" VHS color PJSCA

Valentine lost his life defending other Christians. He was beheaded on Feb. 14, 270 AD. This video dramatizes the legend which grew up around the martyr. The story is not true, but serves as a parable for teaching that we should love others as Jesus loved us. The presenter will need to strengthen the weak theology that omits the atoning power of Jesus' sacrifice.

Rental: \$7.50

Send your order for renting the videos to WELS VIDEO/FILM RENTAL SERVICE, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Phone 414/475-6600, extension 127.

Every year our statistical yearbook reports the average percent of baptized members attending Sunday services in each congregation. This particular statistic was first gathered in 1977. The percentage that year was 46.6 percent of the churches' baptized membership. In 1990 the figure was 45.8 percent. The percentage has changed little in the intervening years. Three "snow Sundays" in the upper midwest where 80 percent of our membership lives can skew the figures a percentage point or two.

This is not much different from the average percent of Americans who attend their churches (or synagogues) on Sunday. In 1990, according to Gallup, 43 percent of the American people — 107 million people — attended church. Given the average church attendance of WELS folk, this is not bad for a country where 96 percent of the people believe in God (with no further description of the deity), and 69 percent — 172 million — claim affiliation with a religious denomination.

According to a report by Religion in American Life, an interfaith organization founded in 1949 with about 50 religious church bodies, a lot more Americans are regular worshipers than is the common impression among us. A survey in the nation's four largest cities (a poor place, perhaps, for such a survey) found that a majority thinks the number is less than half that. "People simply have no idea about how many go to church each week," said Nicholas B. van Dyke, president of Religion in American Life. "The reality is double what people think it is."

We delve more deeply into the report. Americans who regularly attend their local church are more productive in the workplace, have a more stable family, and volunteer more time to charitable causes than the non-churchgoer.

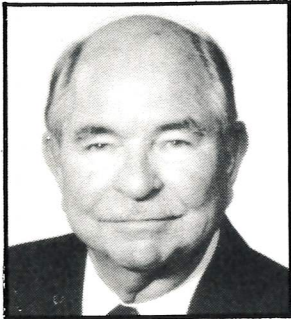
Other items cited in the report:

- Regular worshipers are 50 percent more likely to reject illicit drugs than non-worshipers.
- Churches contribute more to America's social services and to improving the lot of the needy than any other non-governmental institution, including corporations.
- Religious organizations contribute \$19 billion annually to child and elder care, housing for the homeless, and other non-religious work in the public interest.
- The dollar value of volunteer time given by churchgoers to community services that are not church-related amounts to more than \$6 billion annually.
- Church members are more likely than non-worshipers to agree that "duty comes before pleasure" and that "facing daily tasks is a source of pleasure and satisfaction."

As I read this, I was reminded of a word from the Psalms: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Faint echoes of this are found in the hearts of those who know not that God in all his saving, gracious fulness, but so long as the Bible is present in that church, regardless of its absence from the preaching, there is yet, under God, hope for the salvation of those who frequent it.

For me, that is a cheering thought.

*James P. Schaffer*




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*"People simply have no idea about how many go to church each week."*

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Lay evangelist LeAnn Eyerman with Missionary Rob Siirila. The Chinese characters say "Jesus gives life."

## Anyone for world missions?

by Dorothy J. Sonntag

In the spring of 1988, missionaries in Southeast Asia met to discuss ways to reach out with the gospel in countries where missionary visas aren't available. Perhaps lay workers could be used. Missionary Rob Siirila wrote about the idea in "New answers to old questions" (Aug. 1988).

"Many countries are looking for people with special skills such as English teachers, technology experts, social workers, and similar resources," he wrote. "WELS lay people could share the gospel in a country closed to ordained missionaries."

LeAnn Eyerman, a member of Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio, read the article with interest.

Eyerman, who has a master's degree in food science and nutrition, was working for Ohio State University as a county extension agent. Before that, she had taught nutrition in Jamaica for almost two years. The experience gave her an opportunity to share her faith in Jesus with many Jamaicans. She also found she could adapt to living in a different culture. Eyerman offered to go to Taiwan.

She arrived in Taipei in September 1990 and began by helping with a women's Bible study and a young people's group. Studying Mandarin took up much of her time. Living with a Chinese family gave her the opportunity to practice her language skills. She is now teaching at the University of Taipei and also tutors students in English. Her teaching provides opportunities for evangelism.

She describes one incident: "David, my student, had asked about where I live in the US. I took along some pictures of my home, office, the countryside. He was impressed by the space and greenness, then asked, 'Why did you give up all of this to come to

Taiwan?' What an opportunity to share the reason for the hope that is in me!"

"She is a real asset to the mission," says Pastor Kurt Koeplin, chairman of the executive committee for southeast Asian missions. "She is able to build friendships with the nationals. She witnesses to them and brings them to Bible classes. We are more than pleased — we are ecstatic about her service to the church."

After Eyerman's first year, the southeast Asia committee met to evaluate her experience. The committee found her suggestions and insight helpful, said Koeplin. "As a result, we've begun to develop some guidelines. We hope to make more use of this kind of volunteer."

Although her income from teaching is insufficient for her support, no budgetary funds are used, says Koeplin. Her living costs are supplemented through private gifts. The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society has also contributed funds. One congregation, Lola Park, Redford, Michigan, designated its entire anniversary offering for Eyerman's ministry.

Her home congregation has spearheaded fundraising efforts and produces a newsletter about the project. It is available by writing Taiwan Pilot Project, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 2213 White Rd, Grove City OH 43123.



Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor of Northwestern Lutheran.