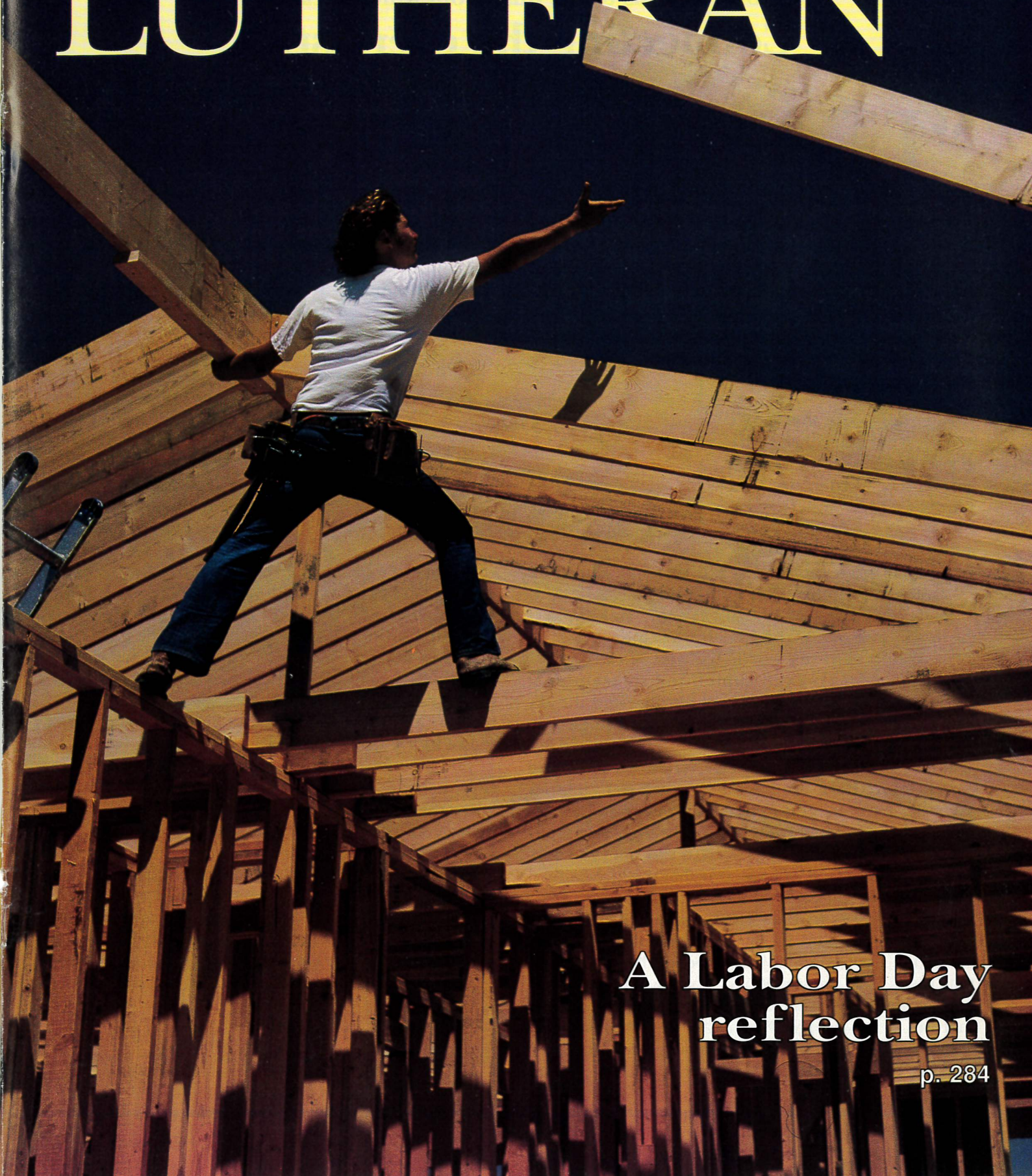


September 1, 1992

The rural church
p. 286

The prodigal son
p. 296

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN



A Labor Day
reflection

p. 284

**Man is no biodegradable item which
only returns to the dust from which it came**

Connecting the everlasting

by Richard E. Lauersdorf

“Use before 7-15-92,” said the small print on the barbecue bottle label. Even with all the additives, the shelf life of that sauce was limited. “Good until 8-1-92,” said the coupon for that pizza special. After that date, don’t try and use it to lower the price.

Ever stop to think that there are really only two things in this world which have no end: God’s word and each human being. There’s no shelf life or expiration date for either one. But there had better be a connecting of the two. And that’s what Christian education is all about.

The everlasting word

Need we prove that God’s word is everlasting? “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever” was the way Isaiah put it (40:7,8). A few more short weeks and another season’s grass and flowers will be gone. But there never is a season when God’s word disappears.

Jesus, the living word, said it too. “Heaven and earth will pass away,” he told his disciples that first Holy Week, “but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35). Even something so seemingly enduring as the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads will have an end, but not a single one of his words.

What a thought for us. The verses we read, the Scriptures we hear, the lessons we teach our children are what parents, grandparents, great-grandparents have heard and taught. Even if we through some folly or failure throw away God’s word, it still will not disappear. Somehow God will see to it that it is proclaimed somewhere to someone until the end of time.

The promises in that word also are everlasting. When God says that he has covered sin’s debt, canceled hell’s power, completely opened heaven’s door, that holds true forever. When God says that whoever believes in his Son will not perish, but have eternal life, that will never change. When God says that everyone who does not believe in his Son will be damned, no passing of time or pleading of circumstances can

change that either. When God says those who hear and keep his word can expect his blessings, that will prove as true in the century ahead as in all the ones past.

Everlasting people

Mankind also is everlasting. God did not create us to die, but to live forever. And so we shall. The big question is, where?

Some dispute hell’s existence. They would rather close their eyes and wish away a hell where unbelievers will spend eternity. But Scripture says too much about endless suffering, about the dwelling place of the devil and all his followers, about being cast away from God’s presence forever into darkness, to deny hell’s reality.

Others wrinkle up their noses with skepticism at the news of an eternity in heaven. But again Scripture is very clear about being forever with the Lord, seeing him face to face, sharing his kingdom. Scripture is just as clear that only those who die in faith in Jesus as their only Savior will enjoy eternity with the Lord.

Man is no cardboard carton to be used for a while and then tossed aside into some landfill. He is no biodegradable item which only returns to the dust from which it came. God made him a body and soul to live forever.

The big question is, where? The even bigger question is, how? We know the answers. Thank God we know that believers in Christ Jesus will live forever in heaven. Thank God we know that such belief or faith is worked by the Spirit through the word of Christ.

What greater incentive do we need as we begin another year of Christian education in our circles? What greater encouragement for rolling up our sleeves and getting to work at connecting the everlasting word with everlasting people?

*Faith comes from
hearing the message,
and the message is heard
through the word of Christ
(Romans 10:17).*



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

FEATURES

- A Labor Day reflection: the Protestant work ethic**
by Joel C. Gerlach284
- THE RURAL CHURCH
The rural church in the 1990s by Paul T. Otto286
- "We want Jesus to be a part of their lives"** by LeDell D. Plath288
- WHAT LUTHERANS BELIEVE
The Augsburg Confession by Wayne A. Laitinen290
- PLANTING A MISSION
Surprises from above by LeRoy A. Martin291

NEWS

- WELS districts meet in convention: Arizona-California, Dakota-Montana, Michigan, Minnesota, Northern Wisconsin, and Pacific Northwest Districts • "I want to be as tall as Pastor Hoenecke" • Dedication at Wisconsin Lutheran College • Dakota-Montana, Minnesota, and Nebraska Districts news292

DEPARTMENTS

- THOUGHT FOR TODAY
Connecting the everlasting by Richard E. Lauersdorf282
- EDITORIAL COMMENT
The way Lutherans worship by Victor H. Prange295
- PARABLES OF GRACE
The lost son by Mark E. Braun296
- FROM THIS CORNER299
- TEENTALK edited by Karen Spencer300

FORWARD

- Those out of place initials—JPS—will be under this column again. On one sleepless early morning our assistant editor, who has resumed her place in the office, jotted down a few thoughts about Hezekiah and his illness. I pried it out of her the next day and decided to share her reflections with our readers, some of whom may have had a similar experience. For this issue I was happy to surrender my space at the corner to her.
- Labor Day, September 7, invites us to review the Christian work ethic. We asked Pastor Joel Gerlach to conduct the review. You will not want to miss his thoughtful article on

page 284. It reminds us again that our life is a "calling"—as Luther would say—to be lived as an expression of our love for the Savior God.

- Since 1850 when the Wisconsin Synod was organized, there have been vast demographic changes in the US. The shift from an agrarian to an urban society has impacted the social and moral fabric of this country. In a series of articles on the rural church, we will look at some of the consequences of the shift. The series, planned by Robert Hartmann, administrator for evangelism, kicks off on page 286.

JPS

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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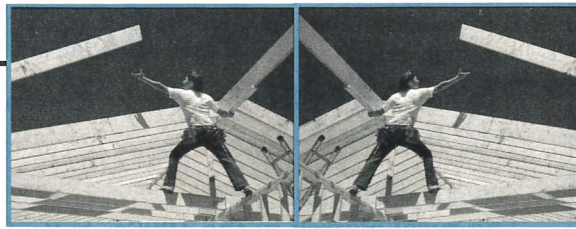
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A Labor Day reflection: the Protestant work ethic

by Joel C. Gerlach

Somebody asked a recent college grad if he was looking for work. He thought a moment and then he said, "Not necessarily, but I would like a job." His answer was meant to be funny, but if it reflects a growing attitude in our society, then it's more serious than funny. And there are disturbing signs that this attitude is growing in the workplace. Robert Frost once said, "The world is full of willing people; some of them willing to work, and the rest willing to let them."

An article on the business page of the Milwaukee Journal confirms Frost's observation. The headline read, "Work force is No. 1 concern, survey finds." The subtitle said, "Quality of employees replaces taxes as top problem among area firms for first time in 13 years." Employers are increasingly concerned about employees like the college grad who said he wanted a job, but didn't necessarily want to work.

If that attitude has become the number one concern of employers, it ought to be a concern among Christians as well. That's because what we are talking about is what traditionally has been called the Protestant work ethic. What we call the Protestant work ethic is actually a biblical work ethic. It has its basis in the Seventh Commandment: "You shall not steal."

The work ethic is an ethical principle endorsed by Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians. In the fourth chapter he speaks about the components and about the purpose of the Christian work ethic.

The components of the Christian work ethic

If employers in Thessalonica had sponsored a survey like the one conducted in Milwaukee recently, it probably would have revealed that the attitude of the work force was the number one concern. Some of the Christians in Thessalonica were drawing wrong conclusions from what Paul had taught them about the Lord's second coming. Some concluded, "Why should we knock ourselves out working our fingers to the bone if Jesus is coming again soon to put an end to

this world?"

That attitude was undermining their work ethic and putting strain on the brotherly love that had once characterized this congregation. So Paul told them, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, just as we told you."

There you have three parts of a Christian work ethic. The first component is the ambition to lead a quiet life. People who want a paycheck without really working for it have a different ambition. Their ambition is to live the good life, a fun life. Often they don't see work as rewarding and fulfilling because it's a contribution to a healthy society. It's just a means to an end, a means to achieve their real ambition.

The second component Paul mentions is to "mind your own business." He doesn't mean that in the pejorative way in which we often use those words. In the context of a Christian work ethic those words mean that we should concern ourselves with how well we are doing our job before we worry about how someone else is doing his job. I don't have to answer to God for how others do their jobs. I only have to answer to him for the way in which I do mine.

The third component Paul mentions is "to work with your hands, just as we told you." Paul isn't saying that manual labor is the only honest labor. Whether you work with your head or with your hands or with both, Paul is saying, "Do it just as we told you." It's the fellow who thinks of work negatively as something only menial that Paul is concerned about, or the person who thinks of work mainly as something he has to do to be able to do the things he wants to do, or the person who sloughs off on the job because his heart isn't really in it. He's the person who's willing to carry the stool when the piano needs to be moved.

Passing it on

Now, it's one thing to list the accomplishments of a Christian work ethic. It is another thing to acquire that ethic and pass it on to the next generation. It's

*Employers are increasingly concerned about employees
like the college grad who said he wanted a job,
but didn't necessarily want to work.*

been said that the best security any parent can give his child is an insatiable thirst for hard work. If we don't teach that to our kids, they aren't likely to learn it anywhere else. But as Christians, how do we teach that? What's the motivation for hard work? Why should we take Labor Day seriously the way it used to be taken?

Here's Paul's answer: "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other." An honest day's work for an honest day's wage is an integral part of showing brotherly love for one another. It's something a Christian does because "we have been taught by God to love each other."

Notice that, "taught by God to love." How did he teach that? He did it by loving us in Christ. He didn't stint or spare or slough off when it came to the task of getting rid of our sins and restoring his perfection to us in Christ. He went all out to redeem us and to reclaim us as his own. That's what motivates us to exhibit a Christian work ethic in our lives. We've been taught by God to love each other. We want our lives to be a reflection and a demonstration of his love and his new life for us.

The purpose behind the work ethic

"Work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." There, simply stated, are Paul's two reasons for honoring the work ethic. One is that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.

When we take our work seriously we show that we take our God seriously. Conversely, an unhealthy attitude about work, whether it is housework, school work, job work, is an indication that we don't take the word of God seriously. That sends a wrong signal to those outside the church.

As Christians we must be different from the world if we are going to make any kind of impression on the world and win respect. The way we perform in the workplace has something to do with that. If we want

people on the outside to think the church has something worthwhile to offer, we'll have to demonstrate that clearly and convincingly also when we work. (I don't think it's just a coincidence that the decline of Christianity in the western world has gone hand in hand with the erosion of the Christian work ethic.)

The second reason Paul gives for taking the Christian work ethic seriously is "so that you will not be dependent on anybody." That doesn't mean Paul is opposed to welfare. He himself headed up a welfare program when he took up an offering from the congregations in Europe and Asia to help Christians in need in Judea. It's not the system, but the abuse of the system that has become a disgrace today. It's not a sin to be dependent on others. It's a sin to be dependent on others because of laziness.

Paul's words are reminiscent of what President Kennedy said in his inaugural address. "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." The attitude that somebody owes you a living is undermining our way of life in this country today. That attitude is a denial of the Christian work ethic.

We all need to take a careful look at our own work ethic. God's love for us gives us the motive for doing so. Our concern for the impression our life makes on those outside the church gives us a compelling reason for doing so. Your work habits tell others what God means to you.

Use some time on Labor Day weekend to think about your God and your work and the connection between the two. Resolve that you are going to let God's enhancement of work enhance your work, too.

Then thank God for the opportunity to live in a country where you are still free to advocate a biblical work ethic.



Joel Gerlach is pastor of St. John, Milwaukee.

The rural church in the 1990s

Farms that are passed down from generation to generation are becoming a rare commodity

by Paul T. Otto

“How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree?” The words of this song were written at the close of World War I and referred to the servicemen who had visited Paris during and after that conflict.

The songwriter foresaw that the soldiers and sailors who had experienced the excitement and glamour of Paris would never again be happy back home on the farm. They would want bigger and better things.

A similar and very real concern is present in many of our rural and small town congregations. Though there are exceptions, many such congregations are experiencing a decrease in membership as their young

people are moving to urban areas for career and job opportunities.

The rural community for the better part of almost two decades now has also had difficulties and concerns about interest rates, prices for its produce, government support (or lack of it) for those prices, fluc-

The rural church in the WELS

In 1850 only one (Grace, Milwaukee) of the five founding congregations of the WELS was an urban church. The population in the country was 85 percent rural. By 1900 it had decreased to 60 percent, by 1950 to 36 percent. Today less than one-fourth of our country's population is rural. In the WELS today, while one of every three churches is located in small towns and rural areas, our rural membership corresponds with the U.S. average.

In our early years congregations were begun in the countryside long before a daughter congregation was begun in the city. St. John, Newville

(rural Lake Mills, Wis.) was begun 35 years before its sister congregation, St. Paul, Lake Mills. Many of today's suburban congregations (Salem, Granville, and St. John, Root Creek—both in the Milwaukee area; and St. Paul, Livonia, and St. Peter, Plymouth—both in the Detroit area) were begun as rural congregations.

The rural and small town church remains a vital part of our synod's strength and tradition. In many cases, it faces the challenge of welcoming a “new” population. In all cases, its message and task remain the same—to share the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.



Through the years two views of St. John, Town of Center, Wisconsin.

tuating land values, and rising overhead and operating costs. These factors have contributed to the sons and daughters of yesterday's and today's farm families leaving that farm for greener pastures.

Farms that are passed down from generation to generation in one family are becoming a rare commodity. Indeed, in many areas, for all practical purposes, they are a thing of the past. Consolidation of two, three, or more farms into one has become the trend. And as owners sell out or retire, they move to other communities.

It isn't difficult to foresee the consequence to all of this. A rural congregation's very existence can be threatened with diminishing membership and church attendance, and the resultant financial crunch because of the reduction in offerings.

“How long will it be before we will have to make some drastic changes? Will we be able to go on if we continue to lose families, members, all those young people?” These are just a few of the serious questions often asked in today's rural congregations.

And they are important questions for all of us, since one out of every three congregations in our synod is a rural or small town congregation. Besides, for many of us they are the home congregations, that country or small town parish in which we grew up,

and from which we glean so many fond memories.

But what a beautiful thing it is that although the numbers may change, the outlook appear gloomy or bright, new members move in or old ones move away, there are some things that never change. God's word remains our hope and confidence. The message that brings us peace of mind and heart is still the gospel in word and sacrament. “Beneath the Cross of Jesus” we can always find a resting place.

And to preach and teach the message of that cross of Jesus to one generation following another, and to share that message with a neighbor, or with a whole world dying in unbelief without it—that hasn't changed either. It remains the task our Savior has given all of us.

And we can be confident we will continue to have his blessing, his love and forgiveness, and his presence with us, though we may number but two or three gathered together in his name. When you think about it, whether you're out in the country or in the suburbs, living in “small town USA” or in one of the world's great metropolitan areas, that's really all you need to know, isn't it?



Paul Otto is pastor of Immanuel, Frontenac, Minnesota.

“We want Jesus to be a part of their lives”

by LeDell D. Plath

(In the fall of 1991, two congregations established Lutheran elementary schools: St. John, Newark, Delaware, and St. Luke, Vassar, Michigan. Dr. LeDell Plath tells us about them.)

St. John, Newark, Delaware

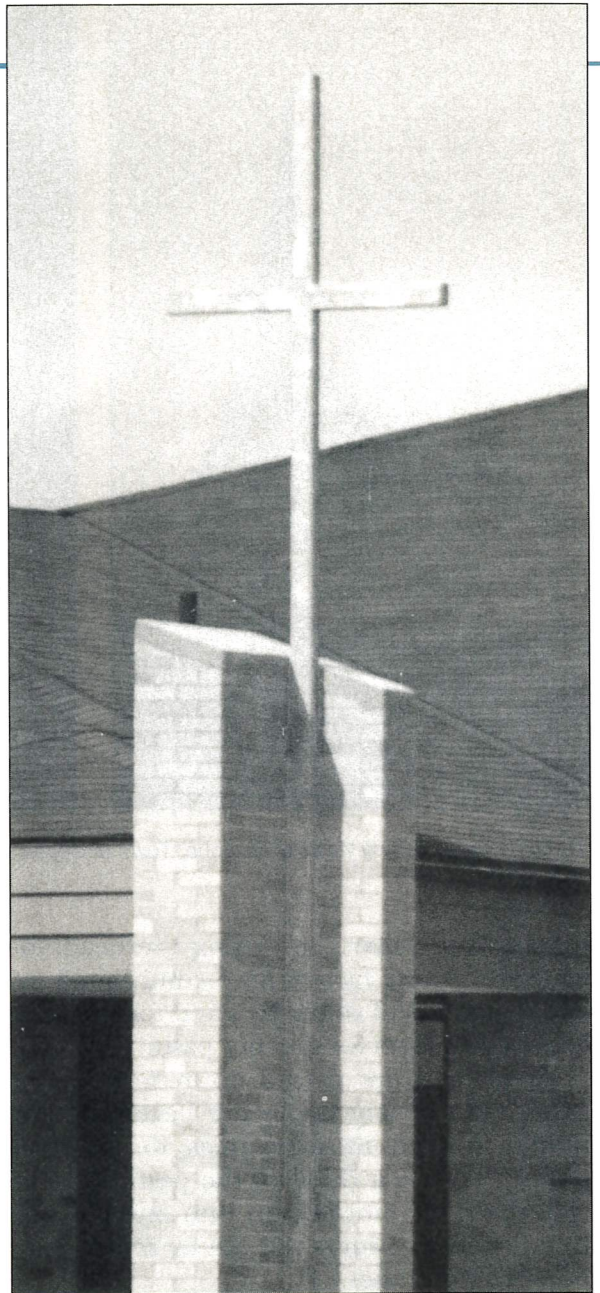
“We want Jesus to be a part of their lives.” Bob and Debra Wilder believe they can best carry out that goal by sending their children to their school, St. John in Newark, Delaware.

Bob attended a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod school, so he is familiar with Lutheran schools, but they were foreign to Debra. Bob, a member of St. John’s board of education, pointed out that under the US constitution public schools are forbidden to teach

the existence of a spiritual kingdom. And yet, he said, “that spiritual kingdom is the foundation of our school, and Jesus, our king, is the focal point of all that takes place, from lessons to recess, from lunch to friendships.”

A school was in St. John’s plans from the early days of the congregation. They began with an early childhood school for children ages three and four. After that program was well established, they added kindergarten. Last year they started grade one and this year they have added grades two and three. Anne Kohler and Jacqueline Schulz teach the preschoolers and Jan Kurth teaches grades 1 to 3. The congregation is also considering a five-year plan that will help them decide the facilities and staff they will need in the future.

The members of St. John believe their school is an





St. Luke School, Vassar, Michigan



important part of their congregation's efforts to reach out with the word in their area. Their preschool has proved to be an especially effective outreach tool.

St. Luke, Vassar, Michigan

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Mecham enrolled Dustin in the sixth grade at their new school, St. Luke, Vassar, with some apprehension. Would Dustin make new friends? Would he adjust to a new teacher?

Dustin answered the Mechams' concerns. "Tomorrow is Monday. I can't wait to go to school." That coming from a boy who didn't like school last year.

Mrs. Mecham and her husband are grateful Dustin is receiving daily instruction in God's word, is being assured that his sins are forgiven, and has the support of Christian teachers and friends. "Steve and I learn new Bible stories and review old ones right along with Dustin," she said. "Now we think of God's word daily. It's in our life more, and the word is right there with us."

Mrs. Mecham shares her enthusiasm about their school with her friends and acquaintances. That enthusiasm must be catching, because the congregation has called a third teacher and added a preschool.

Last year, more parents than originally anticipated enrolled their children, so St. Luke called Mrs. Corin Einhardt to teach the 21 students in grades K-3. Principal John Lange teaches 23 children in grades 4-8. This year Miss Heidi Schmidt will teach preschool

and kindergarten.

Pastor Orville Maasch has noticed that the daily teaching of the gospel has a positive effect on the attitudes and actions of the students. "They have greater respect for God and his word."

He is also pleased with the reaction of people in the congregation. "Many members volunteer their time and expertise. Volunteer secretarial help covers the whole day."

St. Luke worked for two years planning for the school. Numerous individuals worked on several committees that did the necessary planning and promotion. They used *A Plan: Beginning a Lutheran Elementary School*, a series of four booklets available from the Commission on Parish Schools.

The school gives the parents of St. Paul, Mayville, a neighboring congregation, the option of Christian education. Nine students are from Mayville.

St. Luke looks forward to continued growth. The 32 students from their congregation are 33 percent of the school-age children in the congregation.

We rejoice with our fellow Christians in Vassar and Newark and ask the Lord's continued blessings on their schools, which help parents make Jesus a part of their children's lives.



LeDell Plath is associate administrator for parish schools.

The Augsburg Confession

by Wayne A. Laitinen

The sixth banner under which Lutherans rally is the Augsburg Confession. It inherited its name from the German city where, in 1530, Emperor Charles V had convened a diet, or formal assembly, of the Lutheran princes and estates. The emperor desperately needed to unify his subjects against the Turkish invaders.

One obstacle to a unified empire was the tension between Roman Catholic and Lutheran territories. In 1521, Charles V declared Luther an outlaw for his teachings. Nine years later, the emperor realized he could not stop the popular reformation movement with threats and force. Charles now hoped that kindness might coax the Lutherans into compromise. Charles' tone was more conciliatory toward Lutherans when he called this diet. He said the meeting with the Lutheran princes was "to allay divisions, to cease hostility, to surrender past errors to our Savior . . . so that we may adopt and hold one single and true religion." In Charles' mind, that "one single and true religion" was still Roman Catholicism.

Elector John the Steadfast of Saxony commissioned Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, and Bugenhagen to write a document which would be a confession of Lutheran beliefs with special emphasis on the differences between Lutheran and Catholic beliefs.

The diet was scheduled for April 8, 1530. Luther and his friends began writing in mid-March. Their initial statement was ready by March 27th and was presented at the elector's residence in Torgau, Germany. The Torgau Articles formed the basis for the last seven articles of the Augsburg Confession. These articles addressed the following Roman Catholic abuses: the laypeople received bread, but not wine in the sacrament; priests were not allowed to marry; masses were bought and sold; enumeration of sins at confession was commanded; eating meat at certain times was prohibited; it was taught that monastic vows earned God's favor; church leaders claimed to have authority in civil affairs as well as church matters.

Elector John and his clergy set out from Torgau for Augsburg. Luther, however, was still under the emperor's ban and considered an outlaw. At Augsburg he could be arrested or killed. On the way to Augsburg, Luther remained at the elector's castle in Coburg where he was safe. Now Luther had to watch and

encourage from the sidelines as Philip Melanchthon represented the Lutherans at Augsburg.

Any hopes that writing a confession of faith would be easy were soon dashed. Melanchthon was handed a refutation of the Lutherans, written by the Catholic theologian, Dr. Eck. In it, Eck attempted to associate Lutherans with many heresies and heretics throughout the ages. This drove Master Melanchthon to review what the Lutherans had written in the Torgau Articles and to measure those words more carefully.

The result was one of the most beautifully framed statements of Christian faith. The first part of the Augsburg Confession was based upon Luther's own Schwabach Articles. Melanchthon used firm yet gentle language to show that Lutherans held to the three ancient creeds and condemned all of the heresies which those creeds condemned. He affirmed the scriptural doctrines of faith, good works, grace, righteousness, and the sacraments. In the second part of the Augsburg Confession, Philip dealt with the Roman Catholic abuses mentioned in the Torgau Articles. The golden thread of salvation by grace alone was woven throughout the entire fabric of the Augsburg Confession. Just as St. Paul overcame the Judaizers by magnifying Christ, so Melanchthon exposed the errors of Rome by the pure proclamation of God's free grace in Christ. On June 25, 1530, the Augsburg Confession was finally presented to the emperor.

From the seclusion of the Coburg castle, Luther wrote this reaction to an early draft of the Augsburg Confession: "I have read over Master Philip's Apologia. It pleases me well, and I know of nothing therein to improve or change; nor would it be proper, for I cannot tread so gently and softly. Christ, our Lord, grant that it may bear much and great fruit as we hope and pray."

The Augsburg Confession speaks to the human condition today. People still prefer self-righteousness to Christ's righteousness. Showy piety is exalted above a contrite and believing heart.

You may purchase a copy of the Augsburg Confession from Northwestern Publishing House or borrow one from your church library.

Next: The Apology (Defense) of the Augsburg Confession.

Wayne Laitinen is pastor of Palos, Palos Heights, Illinois.

Surprises from above

Some surprises come from
underestimating God

by LeRoy A. Martin

Working with people provides an unending series of surprises. Some have to do with miscommunication. One happened when phoning people in our neighborhood in our search for the unchurched. One boy, perhaps age 6 or 7, answered the phone.

I said "Hi. I'm LeRoy Martin from Christ the King Lutheran. May I speak with one of your parents?" He put the phone down and I heard him holler to his mother, "Hey, Ma, it's for you. It's Leo from Chrysler."

Some surprises come from underestimating God. There was the first time a young man and I went door-to-door canvassing. We had prepared for our work with a prayer before we went, a prayer answered in an astonishing manner. At the first home we approached that day, we met probably one of the best prospects I'd seen in a long time.

Walking away from the home I told Jim how unusual that was to find such a positive response at the first door. "That was probably the only good one we'll find today." Wrong. In that brief hour we were out, we found two other unchurched people, who wish to remain on our mailing list. A lesson for us both.

Many surprises came during our phone canvassing. The procedure suggested by our mission counselor and used by six of us from our nucleus was to get the phone numbers of people from a cross-reference phone book at the library.

After we dialed, the conversation was something like this: "Hi, I'm Stephanie from Christ the King Lutheran, a new church just getting started in the area. We're just calling to find out if you are actively involved in some church at this time."

Several times people said: "Yes, I am, thank you. But I have this friend who is searching. Let me give you his name and number."

Two other times a number was misdialled, leading us to a person we never intended to call, but both times someone was interested. Could we say it was "wrong number, right person?"

I suppose you could say there shouldn't be any surprises, knowing how powerful our God is.

Then again you could say all of life is one surprise after another with the gracious God we have.

LeRoy Martin is pastor of Christ the King, an exploratory mission in Port Charlotte, Florida.



A Travel Canvass Witness Team from University of Wisconsin—Stout Campus Ministry, of Menomonie, Wisconsin and their hosts helped out at Christ the King mission church in March.



WELS districts meet in convention

Every other year each of the twelve districts of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod convenes in the month of June. Following are reports from six of our district correspondents. The reports of the other six district conventions appeared in the August issue.



President Nitz
Arizona-California



President Pope
Dakota-Montana

Arizona-California District

The Arizona-California District convention met June 15-17.

Delegates reaffirmed the 1990 recommendation to close Martin Luther Preparatory School and encouraged the synod to subsidize Arizona Lutheran Academy and Michigan Lutheran Seminary as dual-purpose schools for ministerial and general Christian education. They also recommended deferral of the decision to amalgamate Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College.

Also passed was a resolution that delegates for the synod convention be selected from those who were delegates at the preceding district convention.

Reelected were Marcus Nitz, Garden Grove, Calif., president; Steven Degner, Santa Maria, Calif., first vice-president; Philip Koelpin, Tucson, Ariz., second vice-president; and Allen Schroeder, Mesa, Ariz., secretary.

—Hermann K. John

Dakota-Montana District

The 36th biennial convention of the Dakota-Montana District was held at St. Martin, Watertown, S. Dak., June 23-25. Delegates reelected Pastor Reginald Pope of Mitchell, S. Dak., as president. Elected first vice-president was Pastor Peter Naumann of Mobridge, Pastor Douglas Free of Rapid City was elected second vice-president, and Pastor Wayne Rouse of Elgin, N. Dak., was reelected secretary.

Much of the convention time was spent debating the Feasibility Study Committee Report, authorized by the 1991 Synod Convention, which reviewed a plan to merge Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College and merge Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie du Chien, Wis., with Northwestern Preparatory School,

Watertown, Wis. The synodical committee concluded that the plan was feasible.

The convention committee which studied the feasibility study report recommended that the convention reject the report. The convention in turn voted to reject the recommendation of the convention committee. After further debate the convention passed a resolution affirming the report of the feasibility committee, agreeing that the "plan is feasible."

President Carl Mischke addressed the convention, urging delegates to "walk together to build up God's kingdom."

The convention also honored President Pope on his fortieth anniversary of service in the ministry.

—Ronald L. Kruse

Michigan District

Assembled June 9-11 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, the delegates reelected Robert Mueller, Salem, Owosso, to his fifth two-year term as district president. Also reelected were first vice-president Paul Kuske, Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio; second vice-president Gerald Schroer, St. Paul, Stevensville; and secretary David Grundmeier, Abiding Word, Mainesville, Ohio.

A request of the Ohio Conference, asking for mission district status, was recommended for adoption by the 1993 synod convention.

The convention defeated the floor committee resolutions stating that combining the prep schools in Watertown and the colleges in New Ulm was feasible, but not advisable. In their place the delegates passed two new resolutions stating that combining the schools was not feasible, and called on the district president to appoint a committee within the Michigan district to study other options before the 1993 synod convention.

The convention noted that the Committee for Program Review is on a good course in seeking input from all over the synod, and looked forward to its final recommendations.

—James L. Langebartels



President Mueller
Michigan



President Cross
Minnesota



President Voss
Northern Wisconsin



President Widmann
Pacific Northwest

Minnesota District

Three hundred eighty delegates gathered at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, June 23-25 for the thirty-eighth biennial convention of the Minnesota District.

The delegates elected Larry Cross as president. Cross, 50, a native of Grand Island, Neb., is pastor at Resurrection in Rochester. He is married to Kathy and they have four children.

Also elected were first vice president Ronald Uhlhorn, 55, of St. Paul in New Ulm and second vice president Charles Degner, 40, of St. Peter in St. Peter. James D. Liggett, 46, of St. John in Sleepy Eye was reelected secretary.

The district noted with thanks

Northern Wisconsin District

The Northern Wisconsin District convention was held June 15 -17 at Manitowoc Lutheran High School.

Pastor Carl Voss of Green Bay was reelected to his tenth successive term as president. Also reelected were Pastor Douglas Engelbrecht of Neenah, first vice-president; Pastor Gerald Free of Hortonville, second vice-president; and Pastor Paul Kolander of Montello, secretary.

Pastor William Bernhardt, representing the synod's Board for World Missions, presented to Pastor Theodore Sauer a premier copy of the book *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People*, a centennial

retiring officers president Gerhard Birkholz of St. Paul in Litchfield, first vice president David Ponath of Christ in North St. Paul, and second vice president Warren Henrich of St. John in Redwood Falls. Birkholz was honored for 14 years of service as the district president with a program and reception.

The convention did not specifically respond to the Feasibility Study Committee's recommendation to consolidate schools, but in a close vote endorsed the maintenance of the current five synod school campuses with a call for increased offerings, recruitment, and development.

—Robert M. Edwards

history of WELS world missions. Pastor Sauer served as a project director for the book.

The convention considered the report of the Feasibility Study Committee regarding the restructuring of the ministerial education system, downsizing it from three preparatory schools to two and from two colleges to one. The report was not approved by a standing vote of 168 to 156.

Delegates viewed the newly-produced video, "The Promise," depicting the mission God has given us in our walking together as a synod.

—Jan C. Eggert

Pacific Northwest District

The convention of the Pacific Northwest District was held June 14-16. The delegates gathered in Kent, Washington, the home of Holy Trinity church and Evergreen Lutheran High School.

The convention elected as president 55 year-old Warren Widmann. President Widmann, who serves Grace, Portland, begins his fourth consecutive term.

Other officers elected were Ted Lambert, first vice-president; Doug Weiser, second vice-president; and Gordon Peters, secretary.

Delegates reviewed the report concerning the consolidation of our synod schools prepared by the Feasibility Study Committee. They passed two resolutions regarding that report. The first was their agreement with the findings of the Study Committee as to the feasibility of combining the two Wisconsin-based preparatory schools and combining the two ministerial education colleges.

The second was their request that the Feasibility Study Committee provide additional information to support its alternative plan for the location of the colleges prior to the time when the synod must make a final decision.

—Jay S. Blum



**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.

“I want to be as tall as Pastor Hoenecke”

On May 31, at Reformation Church, San Diego, Cal., Pastor and Mrs. Edgar Hoenecke were the recipients of the first copy of the new WELS world mission centennial history *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People*.

On the same Sunday nine young people spoke their confirmation vows. At the conclusion of the service, Reformation's pastor, Lowell Smith, invited Pastor William Meier of Phoenix, Ariz., chairman of the Board for World Missions, to make the presentation. After reading a letter from Pastor Theodore A. Sauer, retired administrator of the world mission board, Meier greeted the confirmands and congregation with the words: “When I grow up I want to be as tall as Pastor Hoenecke.”

“First,” Meier continued, “I want to be as tall as Pastor Hoenecke in my love of Scripture. When Pastor Hoenecke visited our home on the Apache reservation during my childhood, it was as though the Bible was talking.”

“Second, I want to be as tall as Pastor Hoenecke in my love for the Savior and his gracious promises.”

“Finally, I want to be as tall as Pastor Hoenecke in my concern



Left to right: Pastor Meier, Pastor and Mrs. Hoenecke.

and compassion for all those in God's world who have not yet heard the good news of salvation through Christ as it is revealed only in the Holy Scriptures.”

From 1945 and for the next 30 years the name Hoenecke and world missions were inseparable. According to the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, Hoenecke at the 1945 convention “prodded the synod to embark on some overseas mission project.” An exploratory expedition to Africa in 1949 by Pastor Hoenecke and the late Pastor Arthur Wacker, according to the *Journal*, “signaled a new era in the history of missions in the Wisconsin Synod.” From 1955 to 1977 Hoenecke served as chairman and later administrator for the world mission board.

The words of the current world mission board chairman were not rhetorical overstretch. They spoke the truth.

—James P. Schaefer

Dedication at Wisconsin Lutheran College

The new recreation complex of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, will be dedicated Sept. 12 at 10:30 a.m. Following the dedication service, building and campus

tours as well as other activities will be available for guest participation. Call Wisconsin Lutheran at 414/774-8620 for more information on the day's schedule of events.

Dakota-Montana District news

A meeting was held at Trinity, Sturgis, S. Dak., to organize a new circuit of the **Lutheran Women's Missionary Society**. There were 49 people representing eight congregations at the first rally on May 2. The constitution was approved, officers were elected, and the name chosen was the Black Hills Circuit. Pastor Dan Myers of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, spoke on the theme “Praying hands—open doors.”

—Ronald L. Kruse

Minnesota District news

Members of the Minnesota Valley LHS conference gathered to praise God for **Jerome Birkholz's** 40 years in ministry. His son Mark was the guest speaker. . . . **Bloomington Lutheran** of Bloomington celebrated its 40th anniversary May 17. Bloomington is served by Pastors Mark Liesener and Scott Spaulding and youth minister Michael Pfeiffer. . . . **St. Mark, Mankato**, celebrated its golden anniversary June 28. . . . **Resurrection, Rochester**, dedicated its new sanctuary and organ June 29. The congregation had been worshiping in a portion of its school gymnasium.

—Robert M. Edwards

Nebraska District news

The members of **St. Paul, Broken Bow, Nebraska**, dedicated a new organ on June 21. Guest organist was Prof. Eldon Hirsch of Martin Luther Prep School, a son of the congregation who also helped dedicate the congregation's previous organ 31 years ago. . . . The members of **Redeemer, Norton, Kansas**, celebrated the tenth anniversary of their church building August 9.

—Theodore L. Wendt

The way Lutherans worship

Mail call at our house sometimes includes an unexpected item. Like the day Volume 1, Number 1 of a new worship leaders' resource showed up in our mailbox. Why this new publication? The executive editor supplies at least part of the answer with his first sentence: "In the last year I have heard more concern, interest, and discussion regarding the church's worship than I ever have in recent memory."

The reason for this "concern, interest, and discussion" results from what is happening with worship in churches everywhere. The publisher of this new resource observes: "The church is experiencing more changes in worship and music forms than ever before. We have not seen such radical changes since switching to English."

A man who has authored a number of books on worship, Robert Webber, contributed an article titled *Worship: Old and new*. He points out how much more mobile people are today. "The day of remaining in the same worship community from birth to death is increasingly a phenomenon of the past." As a result people are likely to have a more varied worship experience—"we didn't do it like this in the church where I grew up."

Because of people's varied experiences, Webber notes that "there seems to be a great deal of anxiety among pastors and other worship leaders. What kind of worship could possibly meet the needs and expectations of such a variety of people?" Answers to that question will vary.

What's happening in churches nationwide is also happening in the churches of our synod. There is much "concern, interest, and discussion" about worship. And this situation is going to accelerate in the coming year as we look forward to the release of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* in August 1993.

It's important that this "concern, interest, and discussion" also be informed. That's why a 12-week Bible class study course titled *The way Lutherans worship* has been prepared. Each session includes a video presentation with follow-up class discussion. *The way Lutherans worship* can be ordered from Northwestern Publishing House.

A couple of years ago I came across a survey of Lutheran lay and clergy persons which asked the question: "What are the top six functions of the congregation?" In other words, what's the most important work of the church. It should not be a surprise that both lay people and clergy ranked Sunday morning worship as the top function of the congregation. What does surprise one a bit is that the percentage of lay and clergy persons who gave this number one rating was identical: 92 percent.

Sunday morning worship is a most important function of your congregation. The better one understands the way Lutherans worship, the better our worship will be. When your congregation schedules the Bible class study, *The way Lutherans worship*, be sure not to miss the opportunity to become better informed about a subject which will continue to be of "concern, interest, and discussion."

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.

Now the truth came clear: this man had two lost sons. Though the older brother had remained physically within his father's house, emotionally he was as much in a distant country as his younger brother had ever been.

The lost son

Luke 15:11-32

by Mark E. Braun

Have you ever watched a little child in front of a mirror? Bright eyes gaze at the glass, studying shapes and colors, till she stares straight ahead, examines the new image for a long, curious moment, then shouts, "Hey, that's me!" As you read again this famous parable, this gospel within the gospel, how much do you see yourself in this story?

People often call it the parable of "the prodigal son," though they may not even know what "prodigal" means (it means wasteful). The story is a shocker from the start. Jewish law would not let a man give his inheritance to his family until "the hour of death." Even if a man transferred his property to his sons, they couldn't sell it until after he died. This younger son not only demanded (demanded!) his share of the estate while his father was in evident good health, he insisted on the right to dispose of it as soon as he could. In effect, he told his father, "Drop dead!"

Any son who said this to his father could expect to be driven out of the house with a stick, yet remarkably this father let his son go. It took only a few days for the son to convert his inheritance to cash and leave. Though the NIV says he squandered his wealth in "wild living," it's better to say he threw his money away on "luxurious" or "extravagant" living. When it was all gone, hard times hit. Desperate to stay alive, and with no family to turn to, he forced himself onto a citizen of that distant country, who sent him to tend his pigs. He was so hungry he wanted to steal the pigs' food, but the bitter carob berries they ate would only make him sick, and no one else would give him anything to eat.

He'd told his father to drop dead; he'd left home wealthy and haughty; now he was lonely, broke, starv-

ing, herding a Gentile's pigs. Jesus' audience must have listened in stunned silence. If anyone thought him soft on sin, what more devastating picture could he paint of sin and its truth?

What to do

What could this young man do? Life in the Middle East is governed by honor and shame. He had humiliated his father by insisting on his inheritance; the rest of the estate belonged to his older brother; the whole community heard how he sold off his share so he could do his own thing.

"He came to his senses," Jesus said. Often that's been taken to mean he repented. Yet what he decided to do sounds more sensible than repentant. My father had skilled craftsmen, he reasoned; they are well paid. He resolved to go back, not to be his father's son again—that was impossible—and not to be his father's servant either, because servants aren't paid. He would ask to become a hired craftsman. He could work and live independently; in time, he might even be able to pay his father back.

As he made his way home, he rehearsed his appeal: "Make me like one of your hired men." But he never got to say it. His father saw him when he was still on the edge of the city. Anyone in the Middle East with an ounce of dignity does not run, yet the father went

running down the narrow, crowded city streets, running to reach his son before his son reached the village, to shield him publicly from townspeople who hadn't forgotten what he'd done. The father hugged him and kissed him for everyone to see. No talk now about becoming a hired man. There was nothing the son could do to earn his father's love, and in this great outpouring of compassion and forgiveness, finally he could see he didn't need to try.

Spoiled bratty children

How much do you see yourself in the younger son? In a sense we are all younger sons, spoiled and bratty children, who've told our Father, "I want things my way! Why don't you drop dead?" And in the estrangement of our own distant countries we have often foolishly assumed we could perform some sort of hired labor to reinstate ourselves in his good graces. But the Father never stopped loving us; he found us and forgave us. The past is the past. Let the party begin.

Just as we're about to put "The End" on the story, however, we're reminded that Jesus began, "There was a man who had two sons." This story isn't only about the "prodigal" son; it's about both sons. The climax comes on the tale of the older brother.

He had not spoken with his younger brother since the day his brother left home, but when the older son realized the dancing, music and the fattened calf were for his younger brother, he went ballistic. He refused to join the party, bitterly defended his flawless performance as the firstborn, and accused his brother of blowing the family fortune on hookers. "You always loved him best," he charged his father, as the music and dancing died. "He may be your son, but he's no brother of mine."

Two lost sons

Now the truth came clear: this man had two lost sons. Though the older brother had remained physically within his father's house, emotionally he was as much in a distant country as his younger brother had ever been. He viewed life with his father as slavery and assumed his share of the inheritance was awarded him for good behavior. Yet this very day he'd failed every duty of an eldest son. He had not assisted his father in his celebration; he had grieved his father publicly by refusing to join him in welcoming his brother; he'd shamed his father in front of all his invited guests.

But for the second time that day, this father did something unheard of among men in the Middle East. He went out to his older son and kept pleading

with him to share his joy. "You've never stopped being my son. Everything I have is yours." The father forgave both his sons. The older brother's self-righteousness had not annulled his sonship any more than the younger brother's excesses. "You've always been alive to me," his father assured him. "But now your younger brother is alive again too."

Jesus told this story because the Pharisees and the teachers of the law complained that he welcomed "sinners." Jesus' answer to them is in the story of the older brother: "If I do not welcome sinners, how can I welcome you?"

A bargain struck with God

How much do you see yourself in the older brother? Do you see your service in the kingdom as an enslavement, a gloomy but obligatory bargain you've struck with God? You agree to do this and give up that, and in return he promises to reward you after you die? Have you ever grumbled that forgiveness flows too freely? Does it irk you that after you've "borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day" (to borrow a phrase from another of Jesus' parables), some loafer gets to slink in right before quitting time? There may be more of the older brother in a lot of us than we're comfortable admitting.

There the story stops. It doesn't end, it stops. The younger son is safe in his father's love. What becomes of the older brother? This much is certain: the father has grace enough for both his sons. If the older brother is lost, it is because he resisted his father's love.

Quite naturally, readers have seen in this father the wondrous compassion and forgiveness of the heavenly Father; rightly so. Yet when we see how this father willingly shamed himself for his sons—willing, in fact, to "die" so both could live—isn't it also easy to see the self-sacrificing love of the Son of God? Ultimately, in this great parable of grace, Jesus wants all of us to see ourselves.

Father of all,
we give you thanks and praise
that when we were still far off
you met us in your son
and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.

Next: The shrewd manager

Mark Braun is director of spiritual programming and instructor of theology at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

NOTICES

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

LANGUAGE EXPERTS NEEDED

The Europe Asia Radio Committee (EARC) of the WELS Board for World Missions is seeking names of people fluent in European and/or Asian languages. Names received will be used to establish a speaker/interpreter list. The list will enable the committee to target areas for future confessional and evangelistic radio broadcasts. Please submit names to EARC, c/o John Barber, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

NURSING HOME ADMINISTRATOR

Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, Milwaukee, is looking for an individual with the necessary qualities to serve as the administrator of its 161-bed nursing home. WELS membership and the willingness and ability to obtain a Wisconsin license as a nursing home administrator are required. For more information, contact Pastor James C. Berger, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, 6800 N 76th Street, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5000.

PASTORS' INSTITUTE

The 1992 Pastors' Institute will be held on five Monday afternoons at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, beginning September 28. Sessions will be held from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Two lectures will be presented:

The Smalcald Articles: Historical Setting and Continuing Significance. This "forgotten" and "undervalued" confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church will be considered as to historical context, doctrinal content, and current relevance. Presented by Richard D. Balge.

The March of Prophecy. From the first page of history God has made himself known with absolute certainty who he is and where we stand with him. The five lectures will chart the development of supernatural prophecy from its beginnings in Eden, through the centuries of the Old Testament, to its climax and fulfillment in Christ. Presented by John C. Jeske.

The registration fee is \$25.00, payable to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and may be sent to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Attn. President Armin J. Panning, 11831 N Seminary Dr, Mequon WI 53092.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY AUXILIARY MEETING

All women of WELS congregations are invited to the twentieth annual WLSA meeting on October 3 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. The day's activities conclude by 4:00 p.m.

Registrations preferred by September 21. A \$7.50 fee, which includes registration and lunch, should be mailed to Northwestern Publishing House-Attn. Joanne Hemker, 1250 N 113th Street, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Please make checks payable to WLS Auxiliary and include your name, address, telephone, church, and pastoral conference.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS

Since God has not restricted the ministry to his church to people of any one race, color, national or ethnic origin; and since one of the stated purposes of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all people; and since the purpose of our synodical schools is to educate students for the preaching and teaching ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, these schools cannot and do not discriminate on the basis of color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

The training schools of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod are:

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Mequon Wisconsin

Northwestern College
Watertown Wisconsin

Dr. Martin Luther College
New Ulm Minnesota

Martin Luther Preparatory School
Prairie du Chien Wisconsin

Michigan Lutheran Seminary
Saginaw Michigan

Northwestern Preparatory School
Watertown Wisconsin

CHURCH LIBRARIANS

The organization of church librarians will meet October 3 at Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis. from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Registration fee is \$10 which includes lunch. For more information, call Joanne Weber 414/425-4225 or Barb Koch 414/922-1097.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH SEMINAR

A one-day seminar entitled, "Equipped to do his will," is being offered to adult members of area WELS congregations. Workshops will cover the following topics: The Christian and Government, Enriching Your Marriage, David—An Example for Our Time, Evaluating Contemporary Christian Music, Raising Responsible Kids, The Relationship Between Fathers and Sons, Developing God Pleasing Self Esteem in Our Children, Comparison of Lutheran Church Bodies, Evangelizing Non-Christian Family Members, Devotions for the Young Child, Caring for Aging Parents, and Current Issues of Death and Dying.

The seminar will be Saturday, October 10 at Luther High School in Onalaska, Wis., from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For further information write: Christian Growth Seminars, PO Box 142, Onalaska WI 54650-0412.

NOTICE NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Northwestern Publishing House is considering expanding its marketing department to include the position of advertising manager. This position will include: ■ Copy writing, ■ Design and layout, ■ Scheduling & job coordination.

For further details interested candidates should contact Mark Brunner at Northwestern Publishing House, phone 414/475-6600 ext. 115, or write to 1250 N 113th St, Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284.

ITEMS NEEDED

RUSSIAN HYMNAL preferably with music and words, otherwise just words. Contact Ron Freier, 404 E Glenlord Rd, St. Joseph MI 49085; 616/429-4905.

CHAIR LIFT. Contact Pastor Paul Fetzer, 1002 McEwan St, Clare MI 48617; 517/386-7216.

EXPLORATORY SERVICES

to determine the potential for establishing a WELS mission in the area. Services are held on Sundays.

FRANKLIN, NORTH CAROLINA—Northern Georgia—Rock of Ages. Services, 7:30 p.m. 2nd and 4th Sundays at Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints building, 102 Wide Horizon Drive. Pastor Fred Archer, 704/857-7494 or 369-5071.

WOODBIDGE, VIRGINIA—Trinity. Worship 9:30 a.m. Sunday school and Bible class 10:45 a.m. Antietam Elementary School, Lake Ridge. Contact Pastor Timothy Unke, 703/491-8080.

ADDRESSES

Pastors

Bentz, Martin, 404 E Glenlord Rd, St Joseph MI 49085
Freier, Ronald F., 92241 Fairview Avenue, Benton Harbor MI 49022

Lehmann, Edwin, 3617 S Walnut Hill, Springfield MO 65807

Lindloff, Mark, 330 Hamilton, PO Box 97, Rising City NE 68658

Lopahs, Martin, 401 7th Ave N, St James MN 56081
Melke, John T., W6852 Main St, Box 98, Van Dyne WI 54979

Nass, Thomas P., 3207 S Logan Ave, Milwaukee WI 53207

Neumann, Karl H., 123 N Adams, St Croix Falls WI 54024

Patterson, Donald W., 11512 Wiginton Dr, Austin TX 78758

Schmeling, Paul, 521 N Apollo Rd, River Falls WI 54022

Sebald, William M., 909 N Southland Rd, River Falls WI 54022

Zindler, Ronald, 1102 Range Line St, Columbia MO 65201

Teachers

Avery, Christopher, 6432 McNichols Ct, Colorado Springs CO 80918

Woldt, Jon, 36 Reid Terrace, Apt 18, Fond du Lac WI 54935

ANNIVERSARIES

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN—Salem Lutheran School (125th). Oct. 18, 10 a.m. Open house following. Special service, 2:30 p.m. Program and dinner following. Contact Anniversary Committee, 2095 Strieter Rd, Ann Arbor MI 48103; 313/665-9034.

PORTAGE, MICHIGAN—St. James (25th). Sep. 13, 4:00 p.m. Dinner and program following. Contact Pastor Mark Gieschen, 616/327-4980.

STURGIS, MICHIGAN—St. John (125th). Reunion Sunday, Oct. 4, 10:30 a.m., potluck dinner following. Christian education Sunday, Oct. 11, 10:30. Song service, Oct. 18, 10:30. Mission Sunday, Oct. 25, 10:30. Contact Pastor Paul Stern, 616/651-5308.

SALEM, OREGON—Immanuel (25th). Sep. 27. 4:00 p.m. Fellowship dinner following. Contact 510 Idylwood Dr SE, Salem OR 97302, or 503/364-8371.

WINNER, SOUTH DAKOTA—Trinity (75th). Sep. 27, services 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

BRILLION, WISCONSIN—Trinity (110th). Oct. 24, 7:30 p.m. song service. Oct. 25, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Contact Harold J. Wolf, 350 Wolfschmidt St, Brillion WI 54110; 414/756-2835.

MARATHON, WISCONSIN—Zion (50th). Oct. 11, 10 a.m. Banquet at Rib River Ballroom, 12 p.m. Reservations required for banquet. Contact Anniversary Committee, 713 W Hwy U, Edgar WI 54426; 715/443-2119.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

PASTORS:

Gurgel, Richard L., from Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., to David Star, Jackson, Wis.

Hankwitz, Robert P., from Ascension, Roseville, Mich., to Illinois LHS, Crete Ill.

Liggett, James D., from St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn., to St. Paul, N. Mankato, Minn.

Nommensen, Winfred B., from Salem, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement

Reichel, David D., from Mountain View, Great Falls, Mont., to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Mandan, N. Dak.

Stern, Jonathan D., from Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis., to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.

Zehms, Roger R., from Lutherans for Life, Milwaukee, Wis., to Trinity, Crete, Ill.

TEACHERS:

Bahn, Michael, from Grace, St. Joseph, Mich., to California LHS, Huntington Beach, Cal.

Blauert, Mark, from St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Cal., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Cal.

Duveneck, Pamela, to St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.

Greening, Terrance, from St. John, Fremont, Wis., to Zion, Toledo, Oh.

Greggs, Margret, from Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.

Handy, Kristin, to Christ, West Salem, Wis.

Hartley, Kathy, to Zion, Monroe, Mich.

Henrickson, James, from Zion, Torrance, Cal., to Calvary, Dallas, Tex.

Keller, Kevin, from Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.

Kroening, Jean, from St. John, Baraboo, Wis., to Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Krueger, Danica, to Lord of Life, Friendswood, Tex.

Krueger, Elaine, to Grace, Portland, Ore.

Kurbis, Jeffrey, from East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz., to Evergreen, LHS, Kent, Wash.

Kurth, Jeanne, to St. John, Newark, Del.

Loersch, Kevin, from St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., to St. John, Newburg, Wis.

Mintzlaff, Monica, to Our Savior, Zion, Ill.

Myers, Elisabeth, from Ocean Drive, Pompano Beach, Fla., to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.

Nass, Jonathan, from Trinity, Aberdeen, S. Dak., to North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis.

Neubauer, Carol, to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Niemi, Carrie, to Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.

Noon, Amy, from St. John, Dowagiac, Mich., to Redemption, Milwaukee, Wis.

Rardin, Julie, from California LHS, Huntington Beach, Cal., to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Ring, Nancy, to Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.

Schuh, Timothy, to Apostles, Billings, Mont.

Siegler, Richard, from Shepherd of the Hills, Inver Grove Heights, Minn., to First German, Manitowoc, Wis.

Hezekiah and I

I know just how Hezekiah felt. He's the Old Testament king who was at the point of death. Prayer saved his life, and it saved mine. Hezekiah heard it from Isaiah: "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die."

The doctors gave me the bad news. The tumor was malignant, and it had spread. They would offer no prognosis until after surgery and further tests, but their averted eyes and subdued voices told me what they would not say: Don't make any long-range plans.

Hezekiah and I both had some long, sleepless nights. We both shed tears. We both prayed.

Hezekiah knew just what to say when he prayed. "In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?" And he added, "I am troubled, O Lord, come to my aid!"

My prayers were far less eloquent. They were inarticulate and inadequate, filled with questions and arguments and laced with large doses of self-pity. Sometimes I could not pray at all.

But others were praying for me—family, friends, even strangers. Loving Christians who knew of my need told others, and from New York to California and even across the Atlantic, they prayed for me.

God answered their prayers generously and graciously. The surgery was successful and the tests, amazingly, unexpectedly, showed no further evidence of cancer.

My trials aren't over. The surgery that saved my life disfigured my body. The treatment to make me fully well, paradoxically, makes me ill. For the rest of this life I will have limitations and complications, and there is no guarantee the cancer will not recur.

I'd like to report I'm meeting these trials calmly and cheerfully, but I'm still arguing and complaining to God. I still need the help of faithful Christians to make up for my inadequate prayers.

But I'm grateful for the added time God has given me and, like Hezekiah, I know "surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish."

Hezekiah used his extra years to serve the Lord, and I hope to do the same. Right at the top of my list of things to do is the same plan Hezekiah had: "We will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the Lord."

I wonder if Hezekiah had a guitar too.

Dorothy J. Sonntag



*Dorothy Sonntag
is assistant editor
of Northwestern Lutheran.*

(The assignment for the juniors in Prof. John Ibisch's religion classes at Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, after reading several issues of NL, was to write letters to the editor. Here are excerpts from some of their letters.)

Some like NL, some don't

At first I thought reading NL was a waste of time. But as I read it I found that some of the articles were very meaningful and useful to me.

Brian Nommenson

I commend you on NL. I enjoy learning more about some of the problems God throws our way to bring us closer to him. I like to learn of Christian happenings all over the world.

Shannon Krutz

Everything you do is great. My family looks forward to each issue. To make this short and sweet, I love what you are doing.

Chris Brenn

I am sorry to say that I'm not a fan of NL. None of the articles interested me. I'm sure some will soon.

Richard Schoessow

TeenTalk

I don't think TeenTalk benefits all teens. It should have more applications to real life.

Liz Minor

I enjoy TeenTalk. I like seeing fellow teenagers expressing their faith.

Chad Buelow

I took careful note of TeenTalk. I couldn't find anything I thought most teenagers would enjoy reading. TeenTalk has to appeal to teenagers and make them want to read it.

Rachel Wittig

I especially like TeenTalk. It makes me feel that our thoughts are important.

Douglas Kamin

Touch of laughter

I think "Touch of laughter" is a great section. We need to loosen up a little bit and this is one great way to start.

Mark Wilson

The aren't in parenting

"The aren't in parenting" (3/1) made me appreciate what wonderful parents I have. The Lord has blessed them, and he, through them, blesses me.

Ryan Oertel

N is for Nefertiti

"N is for Nefertiti" (3/1) was wonderful. By showing differences, not inferiorities, Siloah's teachers are allowing for future generations of racial understanding.

Kelly Matthews

"N is for Nefertiti" tells us how Christians should deal with racism.

Michelle Boettcher

The chapel can be a dangerous place

"The chapel can be a dangerous place," (3/15) reminded me of how lucky I am to be able to worship freely.

Jennifer Ward

I can relate to "The chapel can be a dangerous place." I'm a 17-year old Chinese-American. My family and I came to the US in 1980. Two families co-sponsored us. They introduced us to Christianity. I remember my parents being somewhat hesitant towards the idea at first. Not until recently, I think, they've really come to accept the faith.

Sam Chanthaphonh

Adoption

I enjoyed "God's handiwork through adoption" (3/15). It's good to be reminded that God's hand has an effect on everything we do.

Krista Proeber

Grandpa died

Before I read "Grandpa died" (4/15) I don't think I really realized how much influence pastors and teachers have on a person. They touch many people's hearts.

Michelle Copes

I really related to "Grandpa died" because my family went through the same thing. Our pastor helped us during this rough time.

Jennifer Plamann

The unmerciful servant

I appreciated "The unmerciful servant" (4/15). More often than I care to admit, I'm as unforgiving as that unmerciful servant. We all need to be reminded just how forgiving our Lord is.

Lexi Groth

TeenTalk is edited by Karen Spencer. Young people ages 12-18 are invited to send brief articles, artwork, photos, or news on teen activities to *TeenTalk*, Karen Spencer, 2297 E 25th Place, Yuma AZ 85365. Include your name, address, school, church, and a self addressed stamped envelope for return.