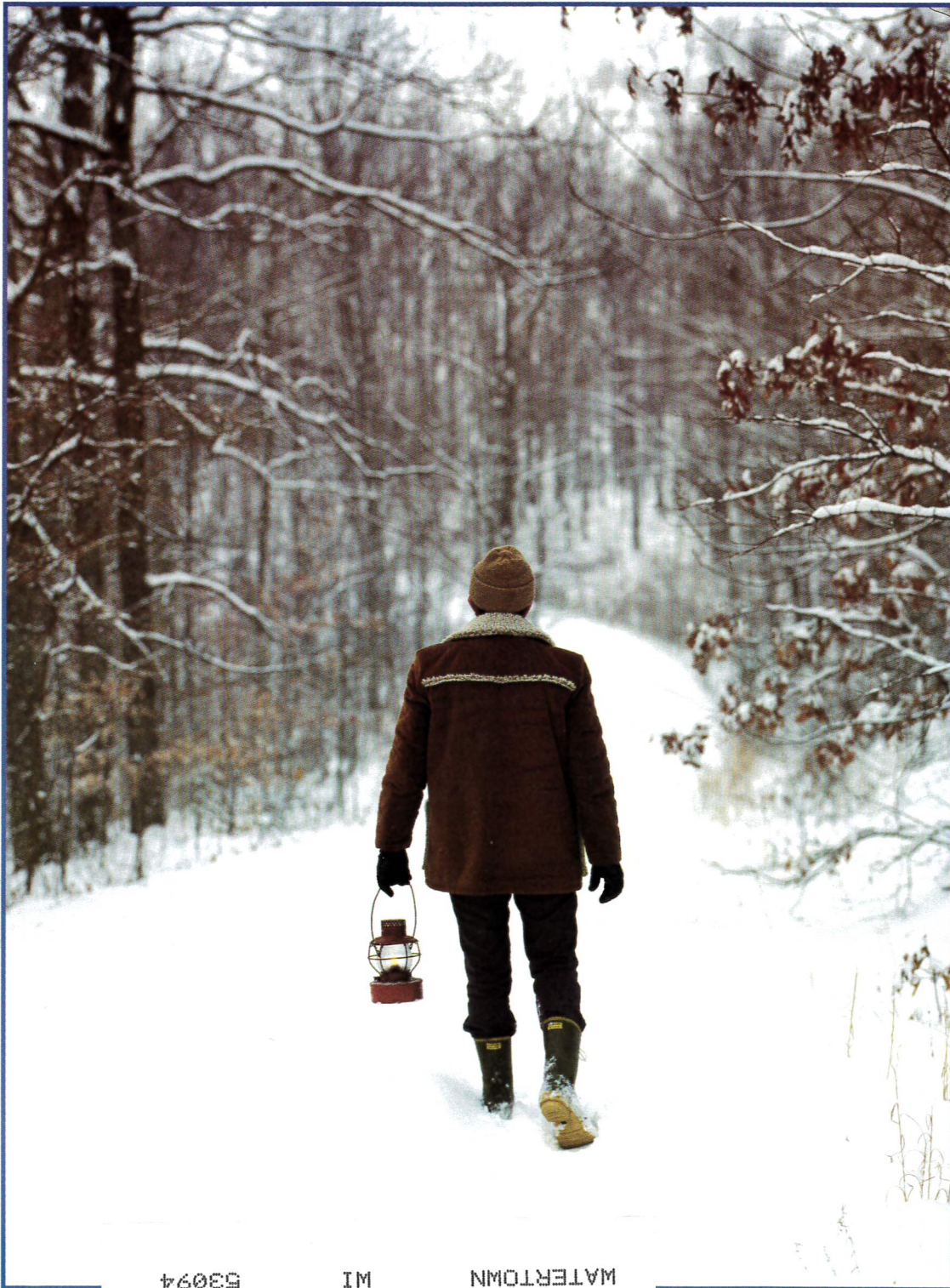


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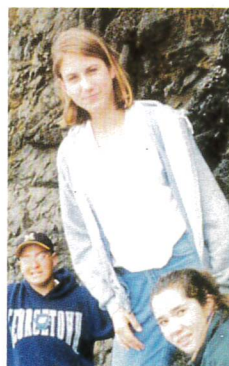
page 6

1996 and counting

page 3

What's so funny?

page 29



The lost generation

page 8

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# 1996 and counting

*Teach us to number our days aright. Psalm 90:12*

**Robert H. Hochmuth**

**A**s the swinging pendulum incessantly ratchets the 1990s into history, a host of voices is ballyhooing mankind's entry into the next millennium.

## Counting up

Politicians with promises, designers of time capsules, prophets of technology, beckon us to stand on tiptoe awaiting great times they assure are in store for us one of these years.

In spite of mankind's alienation from God, evident in turmoil rampant on every continent, it's apparent people want to be beguiled with prospects of imminent progress toward a golden age. Finally getting old ways behind us is one of the marks of progress, they say.

On this note, Las Vegas promoters are gearing up for colossal New Year's Eve revelry. In four years, the mother of all bashes will occur, hailing mankind's entry into the year 2000, the next millennium of the common era.

Those who identify years as AD (Anno Domini) or "year of our Lord" have occasion to enjoy a pinch of irony in all of this. Historical records now demonstrate that when Christian clerics replaced the Roman calendar 1400 years ago, they miscalculated the birth of Christ by at least four years. So the 2000th year from the birth of Christ has already arrived. For what it is worth, we might point out to the festal enumerators:

"You're too late. The new millennium has already started."

But for children of God "numbering our days aright" is a deeper issue than numerical designation; it's an outlook that recognizes time is getting shorter.

## Counting down

Meanwhile in Hong Kong, residents are not yet counting so far ahead, apprehensive for the uncertainties that loom in fateful 1997.

In some places, a major concern is counting down to "The Big One" seismologists say is sure to hit. It's just a matter of time. For some people, anticipation is geared to: How long until the mortgage is paid off? Or how long to retirement? Or even:

It won't be long until I get my driver's license. Counting down involves some specific foreseen event.

For children of God it includes reckoning with our mortality. David voiced it in Psalm 39: "Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life." But counting down to death is not the end for those who number their days aright.

Eclipsing all else for us is anticipation of our Lord's return, counting down the days and hours with joy. In Luke 21, when describing the awesome events signaling his triumph, Jesus exhorted: "Lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

His promise lets us await the year when printing next year's calendar will be a waste of time. For Christians experiencing grief and affliction in a sin-cursed world and praying, "How long, O Lord?" there is the prospect of relief.

But what about friends, neighbors, and family members at odds with God? "How long, O Lord?" prompts our recommitment. It's not only a matter of counting our days, but making our days count to find ways to reach out to a few more.

*Robert Hochmuth is interim pastor at Good Shepherd, Livermore, California.*





- Welcome to 1996. Did you ring out the old and ring in the new? Or is the old still hanging on, weighing you down? In part two of "Christmas is for grown-ups, too!" on p. 10, Paul Wendland reminds us that the birth of Christ—not the new year—offers new hope and new life.
- Ever had a day when you don't know if you can go on? Bonnie Wasser has. On p. 14, she shares how God's strength gave her strength to continue.
- We all know a couple of Lutheran jokes. But when we start joking around about Christianity cultivating guilt, instead of setting us free from guilt, it's no laughing matter. See page 29.
- Fredric Piepenbrink takes over our Bible study series this issue. He'll be leading us through a series of God's "old-fashioned" values. You'll find his article on p. 30.

—LRB

Cover photo by H. Abernathy/H. Armstrong Roberts.

## NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

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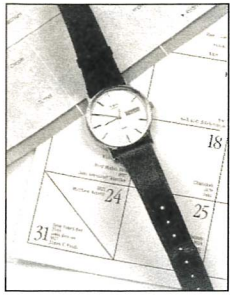
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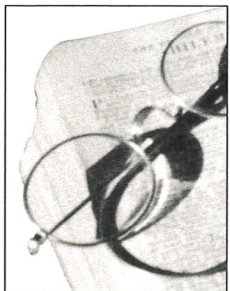




1996 and counting  
page 3



How, Lord?  
How can I go on?  
page 14



Good old godly  
guidelines  
page 30

- 3 **THOUGHT FOR TODAY**  
**1996 and counting**  
*Robert H. Hochmuth*  
It's not only a matter of counting our days, but making our days count to find ways to reach out to a few more.
- 6 **INSIGHTS**  
**The word of God you never hear**  
*Paul E. Kelm*  
You've heard the Word of God, but you've never heard the word of God that sustains, preserves, and protects your life.
- 8 **SHARE THE PROMISE: LET THE CHILDREN COME**  
**The lost generation**  
*Laurie Biedenbender*  
To reach teens, churches are serving them and letting them serve.
- 10 **CHRISTMAS**  
**Christmas is for grown-ups, too!**  
*Paul Wendland*  
To lost, lonely, and frightened sinners, the birth of the Savior offers a fresh start and lasting hope.
- 12 **WELS AT WORK**  
**Big enough to serve, small enough to care**  
*Linda R. Baacke*  
Members of Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., serve the Lord by caring for his people.
- 14 **PART OF GOD'S FAMILY**  
**How, Lord? How can I go on?**  
*Bonnie Wasser*  
The Lord's strength was all I needed. We would work through the practical things day by day, hour by hour, even minute by minute.
- 16 **MISSIONS AROUND THE WORLD**  
**Teaching workers in Cameroon**  
*Julie K. Tessmer*  
WELS missionaries didn't come to Cameroon to start a mission, but to prepare for the future by training nationals for the ministry.
- 18 **BY FAITH THEY LED**  
**E. Arnold Sitz: reaching the West**  
*Morton A. Schroeder*  
With a passion for railroad, he extended the gospel roadbed into California and Arizona.
- 20 **WELS NEWS**
  - Congregation says "thank you"
  - Mission work through artwork
  - It's not just a Bible camp, it's an adventure
  - Seniors serve students
  - WELS calendar of events available
  - Church body declares fellowship with WELS
  - Lutherans for Life holds annual convention
  - Synod restructuring planning continues
  - Pension plan celebrates anniversary
- 26 **WORLD NEWS**
  - Lutherans prefer traditional services and casual dress
  - Campus ministries struggle financially
  - Polish church's image suffers
  - Genetic counseling poses challenges for clergy
  - Jewish groups denounce Hebrew Christians
  - Marriage policy plays in Peoria
  - Jehovah's Witnesses abandon end-of-world prediction
  - Salvation Army receives most donated dollars
  - Malaysian city silences church bells and hymns
- 28 **BULLETIN BOARD**
- 29 **SPEAKING MY MIND**  
**What's so funny?**  
*Kenneth A. Cherney*  
Christianity is all about removing guilt, not cultivating it.
- 30 **GOOD OLD GODLY GUIDELINES**  
**Good old godly guidelines**  
*Fredric E. Piepenbrink*  
If following God's Word gets you labeled "old-fashioned," consider yourself blessed.
- 31 **EDITORIAL COMMENT**  
**The current state of the abortion debate**  
*Joel C. Gerlach*  
The willingness of some presidential aspirants to back away from their pro-life position is disconcerting.
- 32 **YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE**  
**Religious principles of Boy Scouts**  
*John F. Brug*
- 33 **READERS FORUM**
- 34 **THE EDITOR'S PEN**  
**Shifting the focus in marriage**  
*Gary P. Baumler*  
"It is time to rebuild a family culture based on enduring marital relationships."
- 36 **REFLECTIONS**  
**So I press on**  
*Jon Buchholz*  
Our hike up the mountain parallels our walk through life.



# The word of God you never hear

You've heard the Word of God, but you've never heard the word of God that sustains, preserves, and protects your life.

Paul E. Kelm

You've heard the Word of God. You've heard it preached and lectured, discussed and debated, interpreted and sung. And because you're a Christian, you've grown in your understanding and appreciation of God's Word, discovering in its repetition new insights and old comforts.

But there is a word of God you never hear.

## The word that sustains you

You never hear God speak to a meteor hurtling through space and by that word deflect it from a collision course with planet Earth. You never hear God tell the solar system to continue in its orbits, the winds to blow, the birds to return, and the seeds to sprout, so that winter is not a permanent condition. You know from Scripture that Jesus told a storm to silence on Galilee, that God stopped the sun in its tracks for Joshua and parted the Red Sea for Israel. But you have never heard the word of God that controls nature.

Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus "sustains all things by his powerful word." We speak of "laws of nature" to describe the recurring forces that sustain life and preserve the cosmos. "Laws of nature"—that's a rather pagan term. Does nature make laws to govern itself? And if these are laws, doesn't someone need to issue them, enforce them, and—if necessary—suspend them?





You have heard the Word of God we know as moral law. You have never heard the word of God we know as natural law. But that is how your universe is preserved. You can call Jesus prescientific, but he says God “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain.” When Jesus no longer speaks that sustaining word you never hear, the end will come.

It’s so easy to take for granted so-called laws of nature, to lose our wonder at the power, the beauty, the intricacy of creation. Perhaps Hebrews 1:3 is urging us to listen for the word of God we never hear in the sound of the wind in the trees or thunder in the clouds or crickets in the grass.

### **The word that preserves you**

When you know that the Father, who adopted you at the cost of his only-begotten Son, preserves your world with his word of power—when you know that the Savior, who died for you, ascended to sustain all things in your interest—not only will you appreciate your world more, you will fear it less.

You never hear God command food to discharge proteins and carbohydrates and vitamins into your blood stream to sustain your life. You never hear God tell your immune system to fight a virus or your blood to clot or any of the million things that explain your continuing life. But that word of God you never hear sustains you.

In Deuteronomy 8, Moses told Israel, “God humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

You recall how God fed Elijah by a raven, a miraculous jar of flour, and an angel; and you know that Jesus went 40 days without eating, yet was sustained by God.

But do you know the lesson of Deuteronomy 8? You are alive not simply because you eat a semi-balanced diet and breathe only moderately polluted air, but because God said so. You never hear that word; but when he withdraws it, you will die.

Listen to nutritional advice, but listen more closely still for the word of God that keeps you alive—in the burp that settles a baby’s tummy or the deep breathing of a loved one asleep. And be encouraged that you are taking nourishment because God has spoken your continuing role as Jesus’ disciple. He wants you here. He keeps you here. Even though you never hear the word of God that preserves you.

---

*The more you hear the Word,  
the less vulnerable you are to  
Satan’s distortions of the  
word you never hear.*

---

### **The word that protects you**

You never hear God speak to an angel, sending him to deflect the falling object that narrowly missed your head. You never hear the command that works all things together for your good. You may sense only an intuition when God speaks the word of providence that keeps you out of harm’s way. But the word you never hear is God’s providential power.

Psalm 91 assures: “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways; they

will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

You’ve read how God sent an angel to shut the mouths of lions that threatened Daniel, how God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant to see the heavenly host that out-gunned Aram’s army. You know how angels tended to Jesus in the wilderness and in Gethsemane.

But do you comprehend that God commands angels to sustain and protect you? You may not hear the word or see the angel; but listen, will you? Maybe that was an angel’s sigh, not yours, when you narrowly escaped harm. Maybe the warning sound you heard was really the word of God you never hear—the word of his preserving power. He’d love for you to worry less, trust him more, enjoy the life he preserves for you.

Satan, you remember, quoted the Psalm 91 passage in his temptation of Jesus. Satan twists the word of God you never hear into an excuse for irresponsible living. Or he mystifies the word of God you never hear into New Age pantheism. Or he rationalizes the word of God you never hear into evolutionary humanism.

That’s why God inspired the Word of God you do hear. The more you hear that Word, the less vulnerable you are to Satan’s distortions—with physics and metaphysics—of the word you never hear. Search that Word, and you will find comfort in the word of God you never hear.

NL

*Paul Kelm is campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.*



# The lost generation

To reach teens, churches are serving them and letting them serve.

Laurie Biedenbender

You remember Amy. She was the eighth-grader who served coffee at Easter brunch. Always at church with her parents. Knew her catechism backwards and forwards on Examination Sunday.

Now, only a few months later, Amy's nowhere to be seen. Won't get out of bed Sunday morning. Refuses to go to Bible class. Has no time for youth group.

Somehow, Amy decided confirmation was the last chapter, and Christianity could not address her issues. She slipped from her pew and slammed the door behind her.

Unfortunately, Amy's not an exception. Pick almost any WELS church, and you'll find only 20-50 percent of those age 14-19 in the pew regularly. Where are the rest? Lost. Like a whole generation of prodigal sons, they're lost in a world of friends, jobs, and high school. Lost during some tough years when they need the guidance of their Lord and church.

## Keep them in the Word

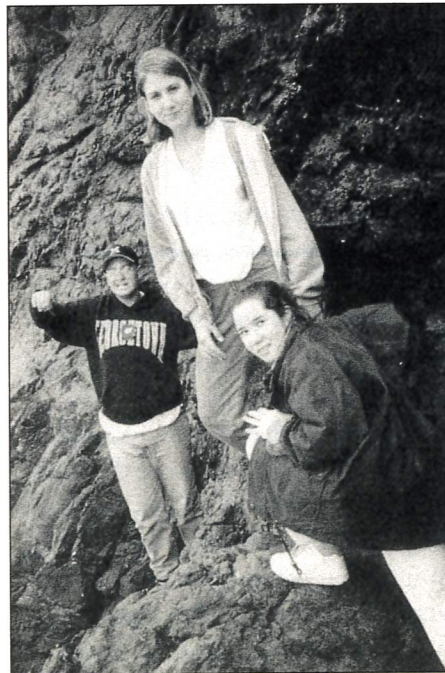
Ask Mike Pfeifer where the lost generation is, and he'll tell you they're not lost at all. They're in the pews at Bloomington Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Pfeifer, youth and family minister, credits "the Lord's hand, supportive families, and the whole congregation working together." Seventy percent of Bloomington's youth attend church three to four times per month, and another 20 percent attend one to two times per month.

What's the secret? "There's no one \$50 answer," says Pfeifer. "There are fifty \$1 answers. The Lord is blessing us through a lot of little things."

Keeping kids in the Word is key. After worship, education hour provides Bible study for all, including classes for teens. Although we all need the same promise, the problems teens face, the questions they ask, the guidance they need, are different from those of adults.

Pfeifer adds that teens will be more apt to attend Bible class if they realize confirmation isn't the end; it's just another step in a lifetime of worshipping God.



Teens from St. Mark, Citrus Heights, climb ocean cliffs along a highway in Sonoma County. Social events aren't the only events for teens. Youth actively serve the congregation through babysitting, yard work, singing in choirs, and teaching Sunday school.

## Pay attention to them

These young people are knocking on the door to the adult world. They want to be admitted but aren't quite ready to step in. They wonder who they'll be, what their gifts are, where they'll fit in. Because of the fragility of these years, Pfeifer encourages a relational ministry.

He gives personal attention to each young person. Drops a note to the boy who won the big wrestling tournament. Calls the girl whose parents are getting a divorce. Has lunch with teens at their schools.

Pfeifer genuinely likes them, so the teens trust him. That gives him the opportunity to guide their Christian lives. Once he got a call at two in the morning because one of their friends was in trouble: "The situation provided a 'touch point,'" says Pfeifer. "Over the next few weeks, we talked about the nuts and bolts of life as a young Christian."

## Let them serve

Jim Holman, minister of family and youth at St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif., not only ministers to youth, but encourages them to minister to others. "Teenagers want to serve," he says. "Getting them involved in service is one way they feel ownership for the church."

Jennifer Dilgard, vice president of St. Mark's youth group, helps organize some projects. They serve meals before Lent and Advent services. They do yard work on Lend-a-Hand Day. They sponsor Parents' Night Out: supper and free babysit-



ting during the Christmas season.

“When an event is coming, we make calls,” says Dilgard. “We encourage them to come. It’s important they’re involved in more than coming to church on Sundays.”

Even Sundays are filled with opportunities to serve—greeting, ushering, singing, teaching Sunday school, supervising the nursery.

Other WELS teens visit shut-ins, canvass in neighborhoods, volunteer at pantries and shelters, raise money for pregnancy counseling centers, and visit children in hospitals.

### Mentor them

Project Timothy is another way that St. Mark builds up its youth. Adults are anonymously paired with teenagers. As a teen’s “secret pal,” the adult sends cards, notes, and gifts on holidays and special days in the teen’s life. At the end of the year the congregation holds a banquet, and secret pals are revealed.

“It’s a mentor program really,” says Holman. “It’s a way to encourage the teen in his faith and make him feel part of the congregation.”

“So often we put adults first, little children second, teenagers last,” Pfeifer adds. “We need to make teens feel they’re part of the body, they count. They don’t come third.”

The teens at these churches—and many others—feel they have a real place and a real purpose in the body of believers. They are sustained by the Word. They are encouraged by fellow Christians. And they grow through service to others.

Some, like Amy, may still be lost. But these teens are prodigals come home—if they ever left at all. Through the promise of Jesus, these teens have been found.

Laurie Biedenbender is a member of Epiphany, Racine, Wisconsin.



## How your congregation can develop an active youth ministry

### ✓ Study God’s Word.

The Word speaks to teens about peer pressure, temptations to drink and engage in sexual activity, identity questions, the lure of other philosophies and religions. It offers eternal solutions and is the only way for them to grow spiritually.

Dive into gritty issues. Teens don’t want you to tiptoe around problems they have to meet head-on.

Allow teens to lead peer discussions. Help them prepare with the Word and other appropriate resources.

Examine teens’ music, TV, and movie choices. Using the Word as their guide, they can be discerning media consumers.

Encourage honesty. Tolerate questions and expressions of doubt. You can’t address problems unless you know they exist.

### ✓ Open worship opportunities.

Hold a service created for and by teenagers.

Allow youth to participate in worship—singing solos, playing instruments, or reading Scripture lessons.

Have youth make banners, write prayers, or create bulletin inserts.

Consider flexibility in the music/worship format to reach all ages.

### ✓ Serve others.

Canvass in your neighborhoods. Teach witnessing skills before and share experiences after. Demonstrate the joy of sharing the promise.

Find service opportunities in the church and community.

### ✓ Build a safe haven.

The church should be viewed as a place of comfort and safety, a circle of fellowship, for youth and adults.

### ✓ Have fun.

Movies, lock-ins, hiking, volleyball—activities are endless. And they’re not just fun. Friendships developed among young Christians support them when times get tough.

Go to youth rallies.

### ✓ Involve the whole congregation.

Assist teens’ parents by holding Bible classes just for them. Address their unique parenting problems.

Mentor teens through Project Timothy, like the one at Citrus Heights.

Recognize youth are not just tomorrow’s resource. They’re today’s church. Their creativity and fresh ideas bring valuable contributions to your congregation.

Share ideas with other congregations.



St. Mark’s game night: “We play wacky and off-the-wall games. Combining high school and church helps teens develop lasting Christian friendships,” says Jim Holman.



# Christmas is for grown-ups, too!

To lost, lonely, and frightened sinners, the birth of the Savior offers a fresh start and lasting hope.

Paul Wendland

**N**ew life begets new hope. The birth of a child tells us our Maker hasn't given up on this world yet. New life holds the promise of new beginnings, a fresh start.

Even though a baby says nothing, one look at a sleeping infant speaks volumes to the soul. The sight reminds us of innocence, of life unspoiled. A newborn gives us joy.

It doesn't last, though, does it? Joy like that. Children grow up, and long before they reach adulthood, we see the marks our sin has etched upon their characters. You'd have thought experience would have taught us to be more cynical. Instead of greeting birth with a sense of renewal, we should sigh, "Here comes another one, just like all the other ones." We're locked into a deadly pattern, a self-defeating loop.

But Christmas changes all that. Finally, here is a truly fresh start: child of Mary, child of Adam, but untouched by Adam's sin. Believers

who look at him lying in a manger will find real reason for lasting hope and joy eternal.

## Ends our awful isolation

How lonely it is to live in a world gone wrong, underneath an impassive, uncaring sky. Am I a blip on the screen? A face in the crowd? Even when life contains no obvious trouble, I sometimes feel so cut off: rattling around interior walls, lost inside my own house.

It becomes more difficult when isolation is compounded by the pain of hard circumstance. Grief, illness, family troubles—are there any so lonely as those whom pain has cut off from the flow of life? Trapped in an eddy of ever-tightening circles, they suffer while the rest of life streams by uncaring.

If you've ever been lost in that place, listen carefully to the decree of Caesar Augustus. Behind it, God was at work—in love—to fulfill his

ancient Word. Listen again to God's prophetic clock as it counts down the centuries until the striking of the hour. This was not Caesar's moment; Joseph and Mary might have wished for a better time. This was God's golden moment for sending his Son.

He is to be, the prophets say, despised and rejected of men, yet born the mighty God. He will sit on the throne of his father David, yet lays his head in a manger. The worst evil of which man is capable and the greatest good our loving God can do—both stand there together, set side by side in one account. How could the Lord make it more clear that nothing remains detached from the gift of his Son? In him, all is gift or must serve the gift.

How can anyone look at that baby and still feel cut off? The great God joins himself to us in this child. Now he is bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, and pleased





to call us brother, sister. He is not lost from view among a thousand stars. Simeon can gaze at his face and hold him in his arms.

More than our support in sorrow, Jesus will remove sorrow forever. He will make his way alone through the valley of shadows, driven on by the sheer force of love. This is our great comfort as we walk in his company through those same shadowlands. His love will grasp us ever, leave us never.

### Reveals a savior of sinners

Modern man tries to hide his sin under the fig leaves of a thousand different metaphors. He strains to find a vocabulary neutral enough to let him hold onto some shred of dignity before God (whom he fears little) and his fellow man (whom he fears much).

The cause for my bad behavior—no, my “problem”—is genetic. Can you count someone’s birth against him? Or maybe I can say this sinful habit is like a sickness holding me captive. You don’t condemn people for cancer, do you? Or perhaps I am the victim of someone else’s malice, I’m damaged goods and not to blame. Blame those who hurt me instead. Or maybe I can say I live in an age where pressures are greater

than they once were. Surely, God, you don’t expect the same kind of faith from someone who lives in the epoch of existential anxiety?

---

*Am I a blip on the screen?  
A face in the crowd?  
Even when life contains  
no obvious trouble, I  
sometimes feel so cut off.*

---

God knows about genetics, spiritual as well as physical. He says we were conceived and born in sin. He knows about people trapped by their own character flaws. Didn’t he in judgment abandon Pharaoh to one sinful obsession and in love rescue David from another? If any human not born of Mary had a right to claim he was victimized, it was Job. God still called him to account.

All the pain I feel—my misplaced priorities, apathy, despair, and sense of isolation—merely point to my true situation: I was born with a nature unwilling to be reconciled to my Creator. I was a broken being, not rightly human. I was beyond hope of helping myself, because I did not know the good God who made me.

However old I become, I can never find him by my own will or in my own way. Let me pronounce the word in all its stark and damning resonance: I was—still am—a sinner. Misery was my birthright, God’s eternal wrath my inheritance.

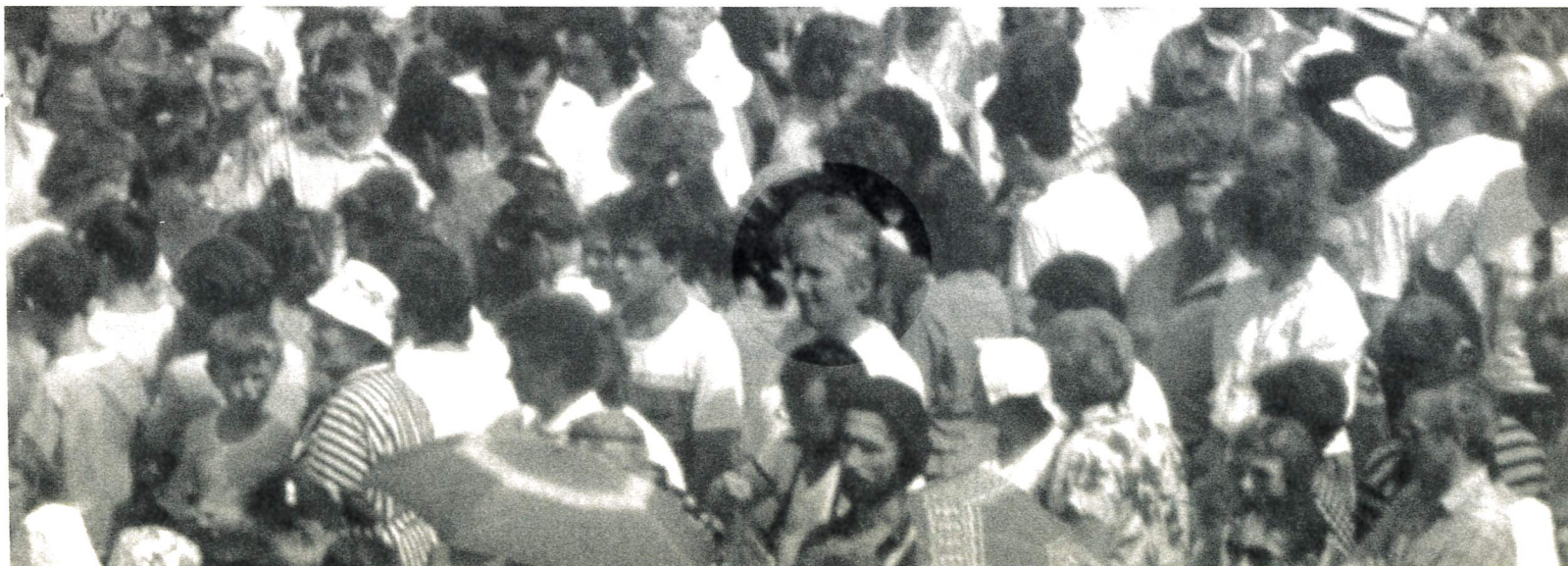
But in Jesus, God came for me, and for a world of sinners no better than me. In the shadows of his nursery, a cross stands waiting. It will loom over him all his days. On it he will lay down his life for the sins of all who sit in darkness, and he will take that life up again to put an end to night.

Despairing of any other hope, we have laid our hearts before him this Christmas, “Come from on high to me, I cannot rise to thee. Cheer my wearied spirit, O pure and holy Child.” Once again, the angels sang God’s song into our hearts: “To you”—the lost, the lonely, the frightened, the sad, the dying, the guilty, the young, the old—“To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior. He is Christ, the Lord.”

God’s love—a mystery too great for any mind to contain—will keep us safe forever.

NL

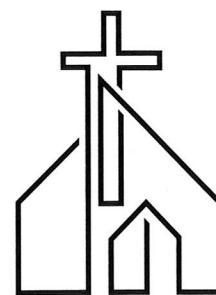
*Paul Wendland is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.*





# Big enough to serve, small enough to care

Members of Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., serve the Lord by caring for his people.



Linda R. Baacke

“Sometimes it’s like being a traffic cop, trying to keep everything moving,” says Pastor Michael Hatzung.

From the time Christ Lutheran’s lights are turned on until they go off at night, cars come and go, meetings are held, choirs rehearse, children are taught. All in this otherwise quiet residential area of North St. Paul, Minn.

This active congregation “is progressive, Christ-centered, evangelical. Some say we are warm and friendly and open to all. We try really hard to work on that,” says David Ponath, senior pastor.

Nancy Zell, a member for three years, agrees. “There are so many opportunities for so many people—

young and old and in between. And they reach out to the community. It’s not just a church for members, it’s a church for everyone.”

## Serving youth

“We place an emphasis on the excellence of education,” says Ponath. It shows. Started in 1975 as a nursery school, the school now enrolls 250 children.

Education doesn’t end there. High school age members attend Saint Croix LHS in West St. Paul.

In addition, the Sunday school serves 110 children. Two vacation Bible schools, one at church and the other in rented facilities; Bible studies; and three organizations for teens reach the youth.

## Serving families

Ministry to youth provides a natural opening to reach families.

Bible studies are geared for single and traditional parents and families. Retreats and marriage enrichment classes are offered.

Pre-marriage classes are also available. Steve Bilitz, director of family ministry, says, “We cover 120 questions ranging from financial management to children—topics that need to be covered”—topics that help better prepare them for marriage and family commitments.

## Serving everyone

And though family ministry is vital, the entire family of Christians needs to be served. So the congregation keeps reaching out to everyone.

They reach out to older members and shut-ins—a group that doubled in the past two years.

They also reach singles. “We’re going to spend a bunch of energy reaching singles,” says Bilitz. A congregational survey shows that of members 18 and older, 25-30 percent are single. “They are a large population that needs to be cared for.”

## Serving a large congregation

Keeping everyone cared for is a tall order for this congregation of 1,260 members. Says Bilitz, “We’re bringing a mass of humanity together. We’re not cliquish, but by



Second graders learn more about God’s creation at Maplewood Nature Center. “The school is a strong ministry. A tremendous amount of members came from the school,” says Steve Bilitz.



our very size, we can become that way if we're not careful."

Nancy Zell says, "Though Christ Lutheran might be large, it feels small to me. There's a closeness that comes from our fellowship."

"Fellowship is so important," stresses Deb Mayer, a member for 30 years. "If people don't get into groups they fall out the back door but, can these groups become cliques? I think our new-member assimilation overcomes that."

### Serving new members

In the new-member assimilation program, trained individuals sponsor new members for six months. "We're conscious that new members in a larger congregation can get lost," says Ponath. "Our program attempts to get them involved in our mission and ministry."

Nancy Zell agrees that the program is good for everyone. "We were sponsored when we first joined. It was helpful in getting to know people." The next year, Nancy and her husband, Les, sponsored two families. "To make sure

these people became active was a big responsibility."

### Serving the community

Along with welcoming new members, Christ Lutheran also reaches potential members. "We're in an area that is more strongly church-ed than most," says Hatzung. "We need to reach those who are unchurched."

A mailing to new residents reaches the growing northeast area. "We are attempting to reach as many new families as possible," says Ponath. "It is a challenge. People are no longer receptive to mailings or phone calls. This makes friendship evangelism even more important."

That is fairly easy in this congregation. "The spirit of the people is wonderful. They have a heart for ministry," says Hatzung.

### Serving Christ's church

"The greatest challenge, next to outreach, is to keep everyone focused on the mission and ministry of Christ's church and to keep them moving and pulling in the

same direction," says Ponath.

To stay focused, the congregation grows together through the Word. "You're hearing God's Word in truth and purity," says Deb Mayer. "You keep going there, because that's where you're going to get it."

Though the Word doesn't change, "this isn't the same church members had 10 years ago," says Hatzung.

Gordy Oliver, a member since 1926, says, "So much has changed. The church is much more involved. There are better programs, more outreach, more Bible classes."

### Joy in serving

Hearing that, Ponath says, "What a joy to watch people respond as they receive the Lord's Supper, and as they give, work, and serve.

"And what a joy to know all of the prayers, preaching, teaching, and encouraging is not in vain. To know the fellowship we have here will continue in the mansions our Savior has prepared for us."

*Linda Baacke is communications assistant for Communication Services and Northwestern Lutheran.*

NL

## CHRIST

North St. Paul, Minnesota  
organized 1887  
members: 1,260 souls

### Pastors:

Dave Ponath  
Michael Hatzung

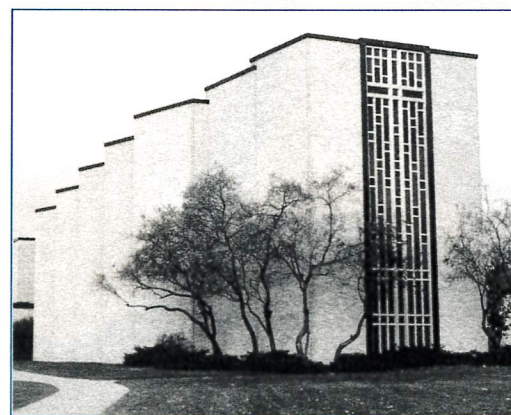
### Director of Family Ministries:

Steve Bilitz

### Teachers:

Michael Butzow  
Cynthia Christianson  
Eric Brown  
Mark Dobberstein  
Jennifer Bullens  
Kelly Green  
Sandra Dobberstein  
Dianne Gernes  
Jayne Tarr  
Ann Ponath  
enrollment: 250

## MINNESOTA



Christ, North St. Paul, was founded in 1887 as a daughter congregation of Trinity, St. Paul. This building, built in 1964, is unique. The gold-framed cross on the front of the building is the focal point. The stained glass symbols in the cross represent Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.



# How, Lord? How can I go on?

The Lord's strength was all I needed. We would work through the practical things day by day, hour by hour, even minute by minute.

Bonnie Wasser





He lunged at me with the long barbecue fork—trying to stab me—trying to kill me. Bob and I took our 12-year-old son to the psychiatric hospital that afternoon.

During the hour-long drive, he alternated between vulgar and hateful, detached and uncaring (a relief from vulgar and hateful), and—the hardest to bear—a little boy afraid he'd done something so bad this time we'd never bring him home again.

I went through my own roller coaster of emotions, wanting to wrap him in my love and heal him, and wanting to leave him in the doctor's care so I would never have to cope with his psychotic behavior again.

Endlessly I questioned, "How, Lord? How can I go on?"

#### **"How can I go on?"**

This was our son's seventh hospital admission in two years. Before that, we had struggled for 26 months to sort out his sometimes bizarre, sometimes charming, behavior. We'd endured his setting fires, stealing, running away, as well as less serious episodes like putting small stones in the gas tanks of our cars, and leaving obscene messages on school tape recorders.

We knew why he did those things. Before he had come to us at age eight, he'd been horribly abused, and witnessed horrible abuses. Yet understanding and living with the results were two different things.

Had we known how hurt he was, would we have adopted him? I don't know.

But now? "Lord, how can I go on?"

And though my struggle wasn't the same, all I could think of were Jesus' words in the Garden of

Gethsemane: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me."

Was I asking God to take my son from me? Yes, I was.

Again my thoughts were in the Garden. How many times had I heard Jesus' words, "yet not my will, but yours be done." Right then I didn't want to remember those words.

The Lord had made this struggling young man my son. I was—I am—his mother. Yet being willing wasn't enough. I had no strength left.

#### **"My strength is sufficient"**

"My strength is sufficient for you." The Lord's strength was all I needed. We would work through the practical things day by day, hour by hour, even minute by minute.

A week later Bob and I returned to the hospital. The doctors described his violence and anger toward me as misplaced anger. He was striking out at the birth mother who'd hurt him so badly. The year before, our son had gone through the same emotions with his birth father and adoptive father. Now it was my turn.

How violent would he become? No one could guess. Was I in physical danger? Probably. How much? No one could say.

What now? Did we want to bring him home again?

I struggled as I considered the question. Bob waited for me to answer, because the danger was mine.

"My strength is sufficient for you." Slowly I nodded my head. "We want to bring him home as soon as we can."

Six weeks later, after evaluations, therapy, and medication, we brought our son home. Some days it felt like we were a normal family;

other days I wondered if we would make it through the next hour. The doctors said the day would likely come when he'd have to go back to the hospital again.

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*What now?*

*Did we want to bring  
him home again?*

*I struggled as I  
considered the question.*

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#### **"Thank you for one more day"**

Finally after eight months at home—the longest continuous time he'd spent with us in the past two and a half years—the day arrived. The violence this time was minimal. The issues were quickly identified, and in less than three weeks our son was home.

Three months later we readmitted him for acting out behaviors in school that had nothing to do with violence. He spent the next eight weeks sorting through those issues before coming back home.

Today he's doing the best he's ever done. Yes, we all know he may need a hospital setting again someday. But it doesn't look so close right now. Meanwhile we live day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute, getting our son help when he needs it and showing him our love and the Lord's love.

The Lord has given us the strength to keep going, and each night I pray, "Remember us tomorrow, Lord. And thank you for today. Thank you for one more day."

NL

*Bonnie Wasser is a member at First, Elkhorn, Wisconsin.*



# Training workers in Cameroon

WELS missionaries didn't come to Cameroon to start a mission, but to prepare for the future by training nationals for the ministry.

Julie K. Tessmer

WELS first resident missionaries to Cameroon arrived in 1994—but not to start a mission. The Lutheran Church of Cameroon (LCC) already had 24 congregations with 1,350 baptized members.

Instead they came to establish a seminary program to spread the Word even more in this country of over 13 million people.

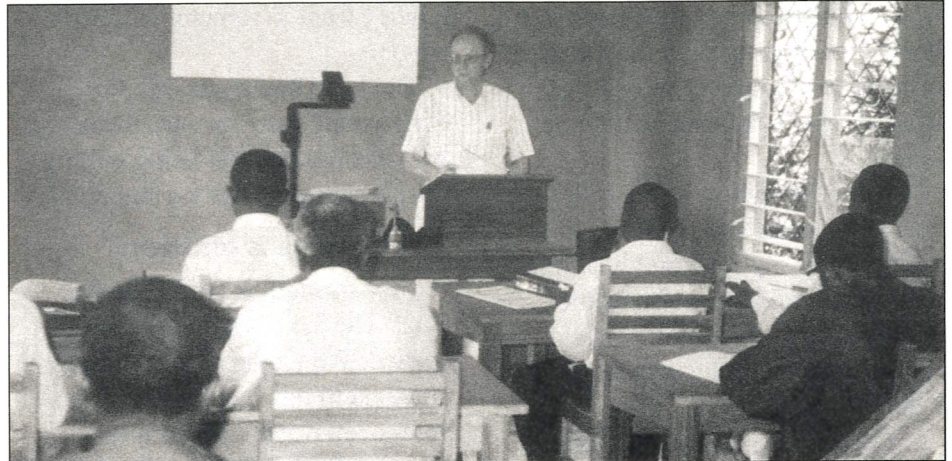
## Beginnings

The seminary began classes in May 1995 at a preaching station called Barombi Kang. The missionaries' work began before that. Settling into new homes and a different culture, Raymond Cox, arriving in Nov. 1994, and Norbert Meier, in Jan. 1995, had to plan immediately. "We needed students, facilities, a curriculum, books. The list went on and on," said Cox.

News went out to LCC congregations. For many, attending the semi-

Can you imagine not watching TV? Or not being able to phone friends or relatives? Or waiting two weeks for an important letter?

Most people can't imagine living with such poor communications. Yet the missionaries had to adjust to this. Neither has a television, or plans to have one. They don't have telephones—the township only has one international line and 200 lines for residences. Mail takes 15 to 21 days and disappears frequently. This makes communicating with their



Missionary Raymond Cox teaches seminary students. Seminary facilities are limited and humble. But, said Cox, there is "firm educational potential."

nary was a decision not taken lightly. Cox writes:

For John Esibe it was a big decision. John is 47, married, and has nine children. He wondered "Is it possible for an old man like me to go to school again? Who will take care of my wife and children while I'm at school? They need

grown children difficult.

Yet the missionaries keep busy. The Meiers communicate through computer e-mail. Margaret Meier and Raymond Cox enjoy music and playing their keyboards. Lois Cox set up an art studio for painting.

"Social life is simplistic. We give private dinners, frequent local restaurants, and occasionally travel to the ocean. The country is beautiful, lush, and well worth investigation," said Cox.

food, clothes, school fees. What will happen to my farm?" Finally he said, "I'll try, and God will help me become a fisher of men."

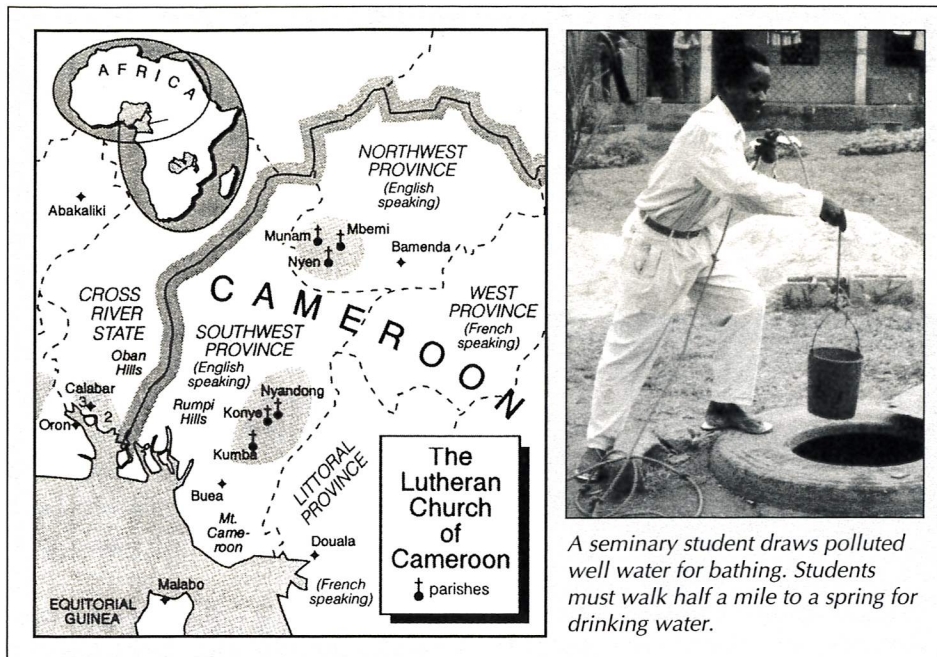
God led 35 men to apply. Over half were turned down because of space. "At most 16 men could be jammed into four small dormitory rooms," said Cox. Students ranged in age from 20 to mid-40s. Nine were married, and most were farmers of cocoa and cassava.

## Challenges

The initial decision to attend wasn't the only challenge students faced. Language presented difficulties. Although the students understood it, teaching in English created occasions for misunderstanding.

"Initially the use of English was a great assistance," said Cox. "But we began to realize that a given word may not be used the same in two cultures."





Missionaries also discovered that government programs may have helped people in Cameroon too much and caused adverse feelings toward “self help.” “There are few people in the world that believe an American when the subject is support, money, and gifts,” said Cox.

Time is also a factor. The missionaries received residential permits valid until August 2000. Lift High the Cross offerings will support their work for five years.

### Responsibilities

The missionaries, therefore, must budget their time wisely. Besides teaching at the seminary, the missionaries serve on its board of control, mostly composed of Cameroon pastors and laity.

The seminary isn't the missionaries' only concern. Consulting with Rev. Bruno Njume, president of LCC, and teaching four national pastors, adds to their responsibilities.

Perhaps their most important tasks are helping nurture existing congregations and developing a mission outreach program.

Cameroon has two English speaking and eight French speaking provinces. Work is concentrated in English speaking areas. But not all members speak English—many speak dialects or Pidgin English.

This makes outreach difficult. With limited resources and personnel, the missionaries want to let the nationals head these efforts.

“We want mission outreach to become a natural outgrowth of the sanctified lives of the people and hope students will lead the way for evangelistic outreach,” said Cox.

Cox again writes of John Esibe:

John is a good student. He struggles with English. He's much more at home in his mother tongue of Meta. One day, God-willing, John will return home to his village of Mbemi in the Northwest province. With God's help, John will proclaim the gospel to his people, in their language, in all truth.

*Julie Tessmer is communications assistant for Communication Services and Northwestern Lutheran.*

NL

“God used a war to give birth to the Lutheran Church of Cameroon (LCC),” said Cox.

It started when refugees fled Nigeria during the Biafran War in the 1960s. Two Lutheran pastors, R. Udofia and I. Eduok, their families, and many Nigerians settled in Kumba, Cameroon. Udofia and Eduok had attended synod Bible schools in Nigeria.

Since Cameroon didn't have a Lutheran church, Udofia and Eduok worshiped in their homes. When Nigerian refugees and natives began attending, the services became too big and were moved into rented facilities.

“Their witness is like a page out of the early Christian church. ‘Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went,’ ” said Cox.

Correspondence between LCC and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa in Zambia began in the late 1960s; they asked WELS for spiritual and financial assistance in 1970. For the next five years, the synod sent people on fact-finding missions to Cameroon. As a result, in 1975 WELS decided to provide guidance, support, and missionaries to LCC.

Although the synod aided LCC through field visits and seminars, missionaries weren't sent until 1994. Because of Cameroon law, missionaries couldn't be residents until the government recognized the church.

**Serving in Cameroon:**  
Raymond and Lois Cox  
Norbert and Margaret Meier



# E. Arnold Sitz: reaching the West

With a passion for railroad, he extended the gospel roadbed into California and Arizona.

Morton A. Schroeder

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, its rails firmly laid across the American heartland, was slow to reach the west coast.

WELS had begun working among Native Americans in the Southwest as early as 1892. Soon thereafter, it agreed with the Missouri Synod that it would conduct services regularly as soon as possible in the Phoenix and Tucson areas.

WELS had also penetrated the Northwest. An independent Lutheran congregation in Tacoma, Wash., joined the synod in 1898. In 1918, synod's seventh district, the Pacific Northwest, was organized.

Then, concentrating on its work among the Apaches, troubled by worker turnover in Arizona, beset by money woes, and told by some that debt was dangerous, the synod got sidetracked. It would not be able to send missionaries to California until 1950—a century after the Golden State had entered the Union.

E. Arnold Sitz, one of synod's gandy dancers who extended the gospel roadbed south and west, was not part of the delay. Poor health removed him from the Midwest and offloaded him in the desert. There, his health restored, he became a force for good in the synod's ninth and, at that time, newest district.

## From train crew to mission crew

One part of Sitz's background is prosaic. He was born to a hard-



*E. Arnold Sitz and his wife, Frieda. Married in 1925, the Sitzes were constantly busy with the ministry. E. Arnold also loved telling and hearing stories, so the couple welcomed many snowbirds and congregation members into their home and treated them with uncommon grace.*

ware/farm implement dealer and his wife, baptized and named Erdman Arnold two days later, reared in a Minnesota village—the kind railroads spawned at six-mile intervals as they crossed the plains—educated in Wisconsin Synod ministerial schools, and assigned to a new congregation in Oshkosh, Wis.

The other part is unique. When ill health forced Sitz from the ministry, he went west in search of an elixir. And when he needed change in his pocket, he turned to railroad-ing for help.

Trains were a great love in Sitz's life. Northern Pacific tracks lay across the highway from his childhood home, and his first job was that of gofer for train crews. The romance of the great engines, with their mysterious cargoes and destinations, never left him.

The Southern Pacific hired Sitz as machinist helper and brakeman. In 1963 he said, "I was No. 408 [in seniority] when I went on the road as brakeman. And when I left, I was No. 218. Had I stayed, I would have been on some of the best passenger train crews."

The Lord had other plans for the young rover. He gave Sitz a few more months before he called him into his work to stay. When the weather warmed, Sitz toured northern Arizona, traveling primitive roads in a Model-T Ford. He visited Prescott, marveled at the Grand Canyon, and ended on a White Mountain ranch. "It was a real cattle ranch, and I worked on horseback," Sitz said.

The ranch lay-by ended in four months; the semaphore indicated that life's main line was open. Accepting requests to help white and Indian missions, Sitz left the ranch for the robe. In 1918, he was asked to found a church in the Globe-Miami mining camp. A year later, he was called to serve as missionary to the Apaches.

Headquartered in Carrizo Canyon, he also served Whiteriver, East Fork, Cibecue, and Canyon Creek. Then he was called to Grace, Tucson.

## On the go

Sitz was a man on the go. Grace congregation was his primary con-



cern. But he also included in his flock the ill and ailing who sought, as he had done years before, recovery in the pure air of the Southwest. His face was familiar in local hospital rooms.

*His health restored,  
he became a force for good  
in the synod's ninth and, at  
that time, newest district.*

District duties added to his “on the go.” The Arizona mission district was granted district status in 1953, the year in which veteran synod president John Brenner, who declined to stand for election because of age, was succeeded by Oscar J. Naumann. With California added to its name, the district organized on February 22, 1954. It extended over 800 miles from east to west and 450 miles from north to south, covering an area of 365,000 square miles, the size of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and the Dakotas combined. A fervent spokesman for the far-flung district, Sitz determined that it, the youngest of synod’s districts and located at synod’s far end, should not be the synod caboose.

Synodical duties also added to his “on the go.” A member of the conference of presidents, the commission on interchurch relations, and other committees, he was often required to be in Milwaukee. Able vicars, two of whom [Joel Gerlach and Victor Prange] write for this magazine, became Sitz’s extra engines, enabling him to pull his heavy load, especially when the grade steepened.

There was more to his “on the go.” Grace built an impressive church in the late ’40s, its ponderous tower a symbol of the confessional stance Grace took when it joined WELS in 1947.

### Continuing to serve

Sitz was a gregarious soul. He enjoyed people and delighted in telling and hearing stories. Like Kate Luther, Frieda never knew how many table places to set until the noses were counted. With uncommon grace, perhaps the product of home life and education—she was the daughter of seminary president and Mrs. J.P. Koehler, and a registered nurse—she welcomed snowbirds and service people from nearby bases who had worshiped at Grace.

The 37,500 plus miles Sitz traveled yearly in carrying out his duties became a burden with advancing age. At his doctor’s advice, he relinquished the district presidency in September 1963.

When Sitz retired nine years later, he gave a new spin to the concept of retirement. He, the engine that kept on chugging, refused to go to the roundhouse, serving as relief pastor in at least four congregations in the Tucson area.

Death came to Sitz 17 years after he retired. A younger contemporary and friend, James Schaefer, then editor of this magazine, likened Sitz’s passing to closing a door to the past: “Erdman Arnold Sitz—pastor, district president, synodophile and critic, treasury of WELS lore—slipped away to that dear land of rest.”

*Morton Schroeder, a retired professor, lives in Appleton, Wisconsin.*

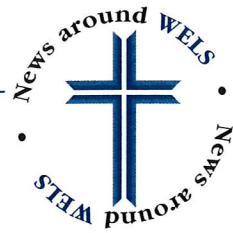
NL



### E. Arnold Sitz

- Born Aug. 27, 1893, New York Mills, Minn.
- Graduated Lutheran Seminary, Wauwatosa, Wis., 1917
- Ordained, Oshkosh, Wis., July 1917
- Served Martin Luther Church, Oshkosh, 1917
- Arrived Tucson, Ariz., Dec. 14, 1917
- Pastor at Globe-Miami and missionary to Apaches, 1918-1923
- Teacher and assistant pastor, Sept. 1923; pastor, Grace, Tucson, Dec., 1924-1963
- Married Frieda Koehler Feb. 6, 1925
- First president, Arizona-California district, 1954-1966
- Given gold medallion by University of Arizona, 1961. Cited as “Arizona pioneer, devoted public servant, and Christian leader”
- Retired May 1972
- Died July 15, 1989





## Congregation says "thank you"

*Brian Keller, pastor at Our Savior, Strongsville, Ohio, writes this open letter to our WELS readers:*

Most likely, you've never heard of Our Savior, Strongsville, Ohio. Yet, we know you. Still more, we want to thank you.

Remember back in 1985, or was it 1993? You gave your offering at church, as you always do. But that Sunday, you gave a little more and marked it, "special offering for missions." Do you know what happened? Your congregation's financial secretary sent that amount to our synod officials. They passed it on to our little mission congregation. That helped to support our mission work.

The Lord blessed us to such an extent that we no longer need an operating subsidy from our synod. Now, your mission offerings, like ours, are going somewhere else. We thank God, who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all. He did not spare blessings, either. He has graciously given us all things.

We thank God for you. You prayed for us and our work at each mission festival, and privately at home too. Weren't you the one who spoke up at the council or ladies' meeting? You said, "Stained glass and gymnasiums are fine, but we can't forget about our missions. Those missionaries go there in our place."

God did it all, and deserves all glory. He gave us faith. He moves some to go and proclaim, and some to give generously. On the cross, Jesus paid for all the times we didn't work hard enough, for the times we were tempted to despair or pride, and for the times we forgot his mission.

We just wanted you to know what happened to your offering. It overflowed "in many expressions of thanks to God."

## Mission work through artwork

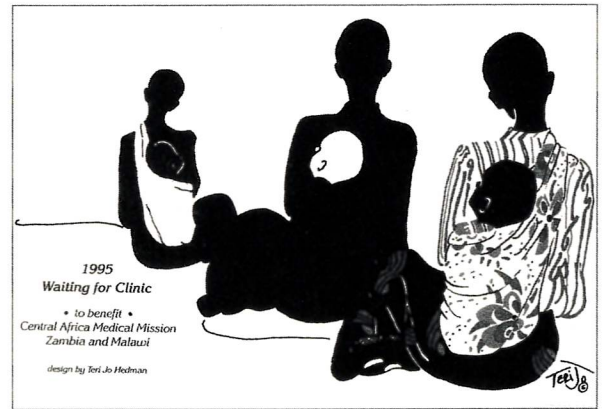
They got the idea in 1991. Darlene Zolldan, a member of Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, was especially interested in our Central Africa Medical Mission; her daughter Gretchen was a nurse in Zambia. Gretchen returned to the U.S. last fall.

Artist Teri Jo Hedman, also a member of Faith, suggested to Darlene that they produce note cards with an original African cover design by Teri Jo. Faith's women's guild paid for production and printing. The cards have spread, by word-of-mouth

and through Darlene's efforts, to friends and WELS churches from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest.

Over \$3000 raised from the cards has been sent to Africa. The women's guild, with occasional help from other sources in the congregation, continues to fund production costs. Teri Jo has produced her fourth design, "Waiting for Clinic." For more information on Teri Jo's designs, contact Darlene Zolldan, 907/345-0589.

*James Oldfield*



Artist Teri Jo Hedman's original designs for note cards support the work of WELS Central Africa Medical Mission.

## Seniors serve students

"We feel there is a need for seniors to become more involved with the younger generation of Lutherans," said Lyle Raduenz. "And the younger generation needs to be involved with seniors."

So the Shoreline OWLS took action.

This chapter of the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors is setting up a program to serve the youth at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Wis.

Members already volunteer their time at the high school—selling tickets, helping with mailings, and mending books. They also tutor students and teach history—events that happened in their lifetimes.

The school is considering ways they can serve the seniors. Possibilities include offering adult education courses or having students visit shut-ins, mow lawns, or change storm windows as part of their home maintenance course.

**rē · li · giōn**  
Defining religion

**sanctify:** the Holy Spirit's work of making us holy. When the Holy Spirit creates faith in us, he renews in us the image of God so that through his power we produce good works. These good works are not meritorious, but show the faith in our hearts (Ephesians 2:8-10, James 2:18).



## It's not just a Bible camp, it's an adventure



Children line up on the deck of Noah's Ark, constructed for St. John's Bible camp. This ark, one of four "hands-on" scenes, gave the children a clear picture of their Bible lessons.

It wasn't your typical camping trip. For four days and three nights, 90 children from first to sixth grade experienced "Awesome Adventures: God's Amazing Deeds."

For this Bible camp, members of St. John, Lake City, Minn., created an adventure park to teach children their Bible lessons.

A 1,000-bale hay and straw fortress, built on school grounds, housed three of the four scenes used to teach daily lessons. One section contained Daniel in the lions' den,

another depicted the calming of the sea, and the third was Jesus' resurrection. The fourth scene was a specially constructed Noah's Ark.

To make the camp a success, 113 people volunteered their time cooking, chaperoning, teaching, and camping overnight with the kids. "We actually had more volunteers than campers—what a blessing for both the children and adults in our congregation," says Laurie Balow, St. John member.

## WELS calendar of events available

Are you planning an event? Do you want others to know about it?

Communication Services wants to help publicize your event with a synod-wide calendar. "This is still in the beginning stage," said Gary Bauml, director of communications.

"We have a small list of activities right now. We need everyone's help to make this calendar



truly comprehensive for our synod.

- "Let us know about
- church, school, pastor, or teacher anniversaries
  - conferences, workshops, seminars
  - musicals, plays, major sporting events
  - picnics, benefit dinners
  - congregational, circuit, district activities
  - WELS high school and college activities

"Send information on any event where other congregations are invited. Then, people can contact our office and we'll pass along the information. We also plan to put it on WELSNET."

Calendars are available for

- individual districts
- prep schools, high schools, and colleges
- synod administration building
- Lutheran Boy and Girl Pioneers

To submit dates or find out more information, contact WELS Communication Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210; FAX 414/256-3899. Include district, event, date, time, place. If possible, add the contact person's address and phone.



Karen Bauer, new president of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary auxiliary, receives the gavel from out-going president Sharon Lawonn. The election was held at the auxiliary's 23rd annual meeting.





## Adults and youth participate in WELS Lutherans for Life convention

Over 700 people attended the 12th annual WELS Lutherans for Life national convention in Saginaw, Mich., last October. Actor Charlton Heston was the guest speaker.

Worship, displays, and workshops all demonstrated this year's theme—Life: The Gift of Love. Over 280 people attended the evening banquet.

Youth also participated in convention activities. Grade school children spent the day at St. Paul's school in Saginaw, while teenagers heard presentations about pro-life issues.

The 1996 national convention will be Oct. 12, at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee.



On Oct. 4, 1995, Hurricane Opal hit. Our house was damaged, but we were thankful we had a house to repair. Some homes were heaps of trash, and some were simply gone.

We arrived at our church, Risen Savior, Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., the following Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Plehn, from Cutler Ridge, Miami, were there. They drove over 12 hours loaded with anything we would need after a hurricane. Survivors of Hurricane Andrew, they remembered the help they received.

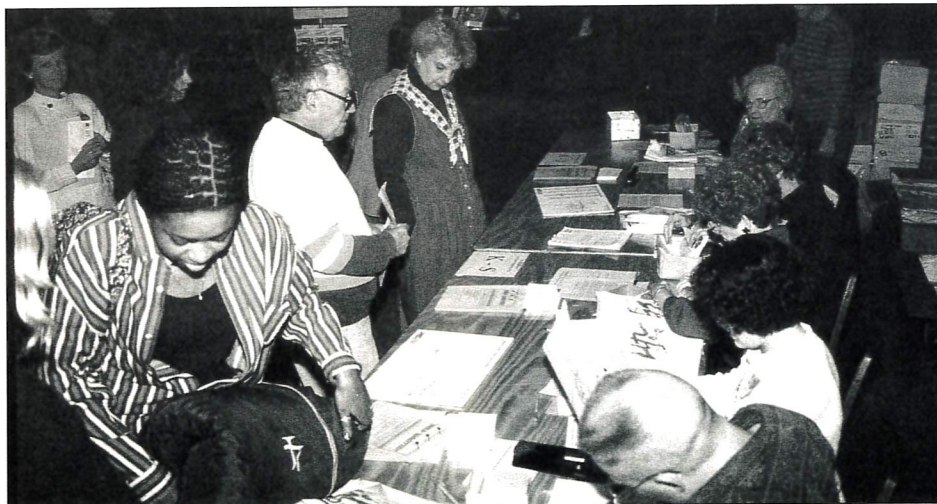
Even though some tears were shed when we saw our home, tears filled our eyes with gratitude to God. Not just for sparing us more damage, but for giving us brothers and sisters in Christ, who are so willing to give of their time, talent, and money. This was a mission of love.

One other thing. . . the road to Ft. Walton Beach is gone, so our trip to church increased to 39 miles each way. This isn't a complaint; we drove 85 miles one way to a storefront church when we lived in Virginia. You who have beautiful churches nearby, remember us who worship in storefront churches. Be thankful for the availability of your churches and how easily you can get to them.

*Frank and Verna Rotter  
Santa Rosa Beach, Florida*



Actor Charlton Heston was the guest speaker at the Lutherans for Life convention. He described the nuclear family as the basic brick of America's foundation, which now is starting to crumble. "One of the basic principles this country was founded on, the pursuit of happiness, has become the pursuit of pleasure," said Heston.



Registration at the convention. Various worship services, exhibits, and workshops acquainted first-time participants with Lutherans for Life, as well as renewed long-time volunteers.



## Synod restructuring planning continues

"People love their synod. They pray for it, work for it, give for it, but they really don't know how it works," said WELS president, Karl R. Gurgel. "To many, the administrative structure looks like a maze."

To clear things up, a synodical restructuring committee is analyzing the administrative structure, looking for ways to streamline programs and processes.

"This will make sure we always focus on our primary mission—working together to win souls for Christ and nurture believers for service," said Gurgel.

The committee, which has met once a month since 1994, has set up a basic corporate structure, approved in principle by the 1995 synod convention. In this structure, the synod in convention is the final decision making body—as it always has been.

Two bodies will report to the convention through the president. The Conference of Presidents, made up of the district presidents, the synod's president, and the first and second vice presidents, will supervise doctrine and practice. The Synodical Council will combine the functions of the Board of Trustees (support services) and the Coordinating Council (mission and ministry).

Having set up this basic structure, members are now outlining the relationships of boards and committees to the Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council. The committee will have a complete report on the proposed structure in time for the district conventions in June.

"In all of this, we are working to set up a system where lay people have more input and can see the effect their input has on how their synod works," said Gurgel.

## District news

### Southeastern Wisconsin

Siloah, Milwaukee, celebrated principal **Timothy McNeill's** 10th anniversary on Sept. 10. McNeill served all 10 years at Siloah.

### Northern Wisconsin

**Dorothy Tashou** retired after 48 years of teaching Sunday school at St. Paul, Algoma.

### Dakota-Montana

On Oct. 22, **St. Paul, Livingston, Mont.**, celebrated the 40th anniversary of its church building.

### Western Wisconsin

**Beautiful Savior, Spooner**, dedicated its new worship and educational facilities on Oct. 1, 1995. Members worked with volunteers from Builders for Christ (BFC) to construct the building. By offering their services, BFC saved the congregation around \$70,000. . . . **St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.**, celebrated its 70th anniversary on Dec. 10.

*Elton Stroh*

### Michigan

On Oct. 12, the **Ladies Aid of St. Paul, Stevensville**, observed its 75th anniversary. . . . **Salem, Ann Arbor**, celebrated its 125th anniversary on Oct. 15. . . . **Memorial, Williamston**, dedicated two classrooms, a pavilion, and an outdoor basketball court on Dec. 10. . . . On Nov. 5, **Zion, Lansing**, observed its 75th anniversary.

*David M. Zahn*



*Daniel Schmeling, administrator for parish schools, presented the certificate of accreditation to Paul Wichmann, principal of Huron Valley LHS, Westland, Mich.*



*Atonement, Milwaukee, razed their original church and school, built in 1931, to make way for a new school. Construction on the new building began in November. Atonement rented facilities this year for their school.*





## Pension plan anniversary celebrated

WELS pension plan for called workers reached its 30th anniversary of service to WELS workers on Jan. 1, 1996. The pension plan for synod-employed lay members began in 1981.

The pension plan's growth is dramatic.

Begun in 1966, the first benefits went to 11 retirees on Feb. 1, 1966. Today, over 1,300 retirees and former workers will either be receiving benefits or eligible to receive benefits at age 65.

In 1966, \$470,000 was held in trust to pay the benefits to retirees. Now, there is \$40 million in trust to pay benefits.

But until 1974, different levels of benefits were provided to men and women. Men received \$4 per month for each year of service—\$160 a month if they served for 40 years.

Women received \$2.75 per month for each year of service—\$110 a month if they served for 40 years. Now, if a worker retires after serving 40 years, he or she could receive more than \$525 a month.

Although benefits have increased dramatically over the last 30 years, they are not at the level they should be.

Compare WELS retirement benefits to those of two other major Lutheran church bodies: For every \$1 those church bodies pay retirees, WELS pays, respectively, 75¢ and 41¢ to its retirees.

WELS pension commission has tried to make benefits more equitable, but even though the plan began in 1966, benefits are provided for service dating back to 1946. Not receiving funding for those 20 years has produced an unfunded burden of approximately \$11 million.

Greater retiree benefits require greater contributions from churches—all at a time when budgets are tight. Increasing a congregation's pension contribution may jeopardize the congregation's ability to meet their expenses or to contribute to synodical work.

The 1993 synod convention recognized this problem and encouraged the use of nonbudget funds to help cover costs. However, so far, undesignated funds have not become available.

Yet, with continued support from congregations, organizations, and individuals, the pension plan will be able to provide meaningful benefits for retired called and lay workers. For information on supporting the benefits for these workers, contact WELS Benefit Plans, 2949 N Mayfair Rd #116, Milwaukee WI 53222-4392; 414/256-3860.

## Youth news

Please send photos or news on teen activities to: **youth news**, *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

**Angie Kaufman** and her horse, Coy Conclusive Lee, finished fifth at the American Quarter Horse Congress in Columbus, Ohio. Angie, a student at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., qualified as a team member of the Wisconsin Badger Congress Youth Team and competes for national titles.



**Steve Campbell**, a high school sophomore at Menominee, Mich., won the boys class A-B Upper Peninsula cross country final with a

time of 17:29. This was Campbell's first victory, as well as the first time a Menominee runner won the U.P. title. Campbell is a member at Christ, Menominee, Mich.

**Amanda Artz**, a member of St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis., was selected to represent Wisconsin as a national scholar at the National Young Leaders conference in Washington, D.C. National scholars confer with government leaders, diplomats, scholars, and journalists. This junior at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, also was principal oboe with the 1995 Wisconsin High School State Honors Orchestra.



## Invitations share the promise

"In sharing the promise, we invite people to hear about a promise they can count on—Jesus," says Bob Hartman, evangelism administrator.

Invitation cards, created by the evangelism commission and mass media, are offered to congregations that want to reach out to the community. Congregations can personalize them with date and time of services. Newspaper ads are also available.

The Christmas 1995 invitation card shared the message Christ has given us "A promise for all people." The Easter 1996 invitation card will reach out with "A promise for all eternity."

Although there aren't any cards for this February's Evangelism Sunday, the message sent was that we share the promise "To every nation, tribe, language, and people."

Contact Mass Media, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3281; FAX 414/256-3899.



## Obituaries

### James Palmer Schaefer 1922-1995

James Palmer Schaefer was born in Colome, S.D., on Dec. 24, 1922. He died Nov. 21, 1995 in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1947 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served Atonement, Milwaukee. He was executive director of the synod's capital fund drive, Missio Dei Offering, served as the synod's first stewardship counselor, and was executive secretary of the stewardship board. He was chairman of the synod's first administration survey commission, a member of the Coordinating Council and the committee on constitutional matters, and was the first editor of *WELS Historical Institute Journal*. He also served as the synod's director of public relations.

From 1982 until 1993, he was editor of *Northwestern Lutheran*. He is survived by wife Ruth; children Paul, Ruth Morrill, William J. (Judy), Grace (Steven) Kessler, James P. Jr., and Pency (David) Byhardt; grandchildren Jason and Andrea Morrill, Jonathan, Sarah, Benjamin, and William J. Schaefer III; sister Miriam Wiechmann; and sisters-in-law Ruth Eggert and Hilde (Ralph) Fischer.

### Hans Henry Johannsen 1936-1995

Hans Henry Johannsen was born May 4, 1936 in Tolstoy, S.D. He died Oct. 14, 1995 in Benton Harbor, Mich.

A 1958 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, he served at Salem, Mountlake Terrace, Wash., and St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.

He is survived by wife Charlotte, son Jim, daughter Thekla (Angelo) Wilson, granddaughter Dominique, mother Anni, and brother Karl (Connie).

### Richard K. Pankow 1933-1995

Richard Pankow was born Nov. 20, 1933 in Green Lake, Wis. He died on Nov. 6, 1995 in Appleton, Wis.

A 1958 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he taught at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, and served at Redeemer, Scottville and Emanuel, Custer, all in Mich. He also served at Zion, Crete, Ill., and Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.

He served on the Southeastern Wisconsin District Mission Board, WELS Board of Trustees, and the Boards of Control of Martin Luther and Luther Preparatory Schools.

He is survived by wife Winnie, sons Thomas (Susan) and Andrew (Penny), daughters Anne and Julie (Thomas) Blaney, five grandchildren, sister Marie (Armin) Jung, and brothers Jerry (Carol), and Paul (Karen).



**Ed's Story**—One Man's Journey In Faith (Code 5174)—1995, 14 min. color, JSCA (\$5) Honestly and informally, Ed tells how he wandered from church to church until he found a home in a WELS congregation. He is frank in telling what he liked or didn't like about churches he attended. Helpful and interesting for congregations who want to do a better job of reaching out to the community.

Order from Audiovisual Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

From Chaplain Philip Kieselhorst's report on his work in Germany: Big news during the month was the

decision to change the dates for the retreat. Some big event is going on in Worms

the last weekend of October so we were shut out in our attempts to find reasonable accommodations for a medium-sized group.



## New church body declares fellowship with WELS

There's a new church body on the scene—the Lutheran Confessional Synod (LCS). Christ, Decatur, Ill., and pastor, Randy L. DeJaynes, now bishop of the synod, withdrew from the ELCA for doctrinal reasons. They organized the LCS in 1994.

Although Christ is the only LCS congregation, two congregations are in the process of joining. Over 60 congregations requested information on the synod. LCS plans to begin at least two mission congregations in 1996.

At its general meeting last October, the LCS declared full fellowship with WELS. WELS already announced its fellowship with LCS at the July 1995 convention. LCS will apply for membership in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, the international synodical conference.

Christ Lutheran established the synod to offer a biblically sound church body for churches not ready to join WELS or the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.





## Genetic counseling poses new challenges for clergy

By the year 2001, scientists expect to complete mapping the human genetic blueprint. As each gene is identified, some day there is likely to be a commercial blood test to learn whether you have a gene for Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, colon cancer, or other adult-onset diseases or characteristics. For the price of a blood test, there will be a lot of hard-to-digest, scary information.

Who—besides busy doctors—will be around to help people grasp all the frightening ramifications?

Clergy will undoubtedly be called on to help deal with theological and coping issues arising from the new knowledge. "I don't think they are at all prepared," says E. Virginia Lapham, co-director of the Human Genome Education Model Project, which is studying the psychological aspects of gene testing. "Instead of being helpful, we are worried about untrained pastors being harmful. . . . To me, all that's happening is a challenge to pastors and also an appeal to get ready."

### rē · li' giōn

#### Defining religion

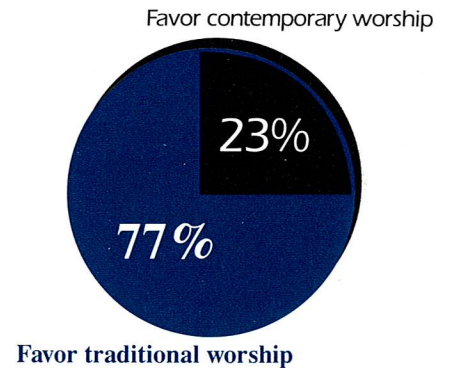
**New Age movement:** a spiritual movement that unites a variety of ideas and practices around a worldview that sees everything as god (pantheism) and everything as one (monism). New Agers believe that an individual can tap into unlimited powers by focusing his attention on himself and recognizing the divine within.

## Lutherans prefer traditional services and casual dress

Lutherans overwhelmingly prefer traditional to contemporary worship services. According to a national poll, 77 percent of survey respondents favored traditional worship while 23 percent preferred contemporary services.

Those more likely to prefer traditional services were 65 or older (94 percent), and those most apt to prefer contemporary services were age 30 to 44 (39 percent). Lutherans who consider themselves very active or active in their congregations were 11 percent more likely to prefer traditional services than those who consider themselves somewhat or not active (84 percent versus 73 percent).

Four out of five Lutherans also agreed that casual dress is suitable for



church. Of those who prefer contemporary services, 90 percent were apt to approve of casual dress for church. Only 77 percent of those who prefer traditional services approved of casual dress. The survey of nearly 1,700 Lutherans from three denominations was conducted by Lutheran Brotherhood.

## Polish church's image suffers from priestly show of affluence

A senior Roman Catholic bishop in Poland has criticized the church's priests for imitating Western lifestyles and told them they can no longer import stylish Western cars.

Bishop Alojzy Orzulik of Lowice, in a letter to the 305 priests in his diocese, said he had ordered the ban on auto imports "out of concern for the good name of the church's personnel and priests."

In a July survey by Public Opinion Research Center, only 47 percent voiced approval for the church's activities, a sharp drop from the 90 percent approval rating in 1990.

Another poll, by the daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*, found that three-quarters of Poles said the standard of living of Roman Catholic clergy was too high.

## Campus ministries struggle financially

Roman Catholic and Protestant campus ministry programs are facing a financial crisis, and a significant number—10 percent of those responding to a survey by the Center for Applied Research, a Catholic organization—say the elimination of their operation in the near future is likely.

In addition to the 10 percent that fear their programs will be eliminat-

ed, three of every four campus ministries anticipate a reduction in programs or staff in the next three years.

The survey found a typical campus ministry has an annual operating budget of about \$100,000 and serves about 600 people each week. On average, those served encompass 345 students, 102 faculty and staff, and 151 people unrelated to the institution.



## Jehovah's Witnesses abandon key end-of-world prediction

After warning for decades that the generation aware of events in 1914 would not die off before seeing an Armageddon bloodbath and the dawn of a new world, Jehovah's Witnesses are now saying, in effect, "Never mind."

A spokesman for the Brooklyn, N.Y.-sect said that a re-examination of Scripture prompted the leadership to see "this generation" as the people of a historical era rather than the lifespan of certain individuals.

"It doesn't change our belief that we are living in the time of the end," said Robert Johnson, media spokesman for 4.7 million Witnesses, including 900,000 Americans. Johnson and other Witnesses contend that the shift will not lead to a falling away of members. But some prominent ex-Witnesses predict the change will take away much of the urgency of the Witnesses' door-to-door message that time is short.

## Salvation Army receives most donated dollars

The Salvation Army received \$726 million in donations during 1994, making it the nation's top recipient of donations for the third year in a row, according to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, a Washington, D.C.-based newspaper. The donations increased from \$683 million in 1993.

In the listing, the American Red

Cross was in second place, with donations of \$497 million, a 7 percent decline in giving to the disaster-relief agency.

Overall, donations to the nation's 400 largest nonprofit organizations rose to \$22.4 billion in 1994, an increase of 6.3 percent over the previous year.

## Jewish groups denounce Hebrew Christians

Jewish groups from across the theological spectrum have denounced so-called Hebrew Christians for allegedly attempting to gain acceptance by claiming to be Jews even though they accept Jesus as the Messiah.

A statement signed by the major seminaries of Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative, and centrist Orthodox Judaism claims, "Even if they are of Jewish birth, [Hebrew Christians] cannot be considered members of the Jewish community. Hebrew Christians are in radical conflict with the communal interests and the destiny of the Jewish people.

They have crossed an unbreachable chasm by accepting another religion."

Mainstream Judaism has long rejected the claims of Hebrew Christians, also known as Messianic Jews, who say belief in Jesus does not negate their right to call themselves Jews.

Moishe Rosen, executive director of Jews for Jesus, responded that Jews who believe in Jesus "remain Jews by virtue of culture, birth, and loyalty to a people." They are not practicing the religion of Judaism, from which they "dissent" he said.

## Marriage policy plays in Peoria

In 1991 there were 1,210 divorces in Peoria. That year the clergy there adopted "Community Marriage Policy" (CMP), and in 1992 there were 947 divorces. The apparent success of CMP is touted similarly in 27 cities across the country.

The idea of CMP, the brainchild of religion columnist Michael McManus, is that clergy and local churches agree not to marry couples who have not prepared for marriage, and to foster "church interventions" to save marriages in trouble. At a time when increased attention is being paid to family and marriage, McManus's program is making a difference.

(Reported in *First Things*, Nov. 1995)

## Malaysian city silences church bells and hymns

The bells of Christian churches and church hymns have been silenced by a new law in the city of Kota Bharu, capital of the Malaysian state of Kelantan.

Singing and dancing are also now banned in the city. Both state and municipal authorities are dominated by Muslim fundamentalists.

Muslim fundamentalists in Kelantan have condemned Christian festivals, including Christmas, as "unislamic or unholy."



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Defining religion

**evangelical:** gospel preaching. Lutheran congregations and synods that include "evangelical" in their name wish to emphasize that they believe in salvation by grace through faith apart from works.



# Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3232; FAX 414/256-3899. Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY

### Pastors:

**Bilitz, Keith J.**, from Christ, Denmark, Wis., to Trinity, Johnson, Minn.

**Fischer, William E.**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

**Loux, Randy B.**, from St. John, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.

**Tetzlaff, David A.**, from Christ, Milwaukee, Wis., to NWD institutional ministries

**Zuberbier, Michael J.**, from St. John, Gladwin, Mich., to Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich.

### Congregation treasurers

The cutoff date for Synod Mission Offering (SMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 1995 lock box offerings will be credited as 1995 receipts through January 9, 1996, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as December offerings on the remittance coupon. Please note that offerings must be mailed to the lock box rather than delivered to the synod offices.

Randy Matter, controller

### The synod administration building will be closed:

Jan. 1—New Year's Day

Callers may leave voice mail messages, 256-3888; FAX 256-3899.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**St. Paul, Minn.**—Mt. Olive (75). May 4, anniversary banquet, 6 PM; May 5, confirmation reunion and anniversary service, 9 AM; Sept. 22, rededication service, 9 AM. For banquet reservations, contact Marcia Schuyler, 612/771-9127.

**Somers, Wis.**—Abiding Word (25). Jan. 21. Service, 3 PM; dinner to follow. Hwy 31, PO Box 194, Somers WI 53171; 414/552-8186. Contact Scott Lentz, 4519 Ridgecrest Dr, Racine WI 53403; 414/554-6350.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**Livermore, Calif.**—Good Shepherd. Formerly Pleasanton. Worship 10:15 AM: 2021 Las Positas Ct, Suite 145, Livermore CA 94550; 510/371-6200.

## ITEMS AVAILABLE

**Video**—WELS Kids Connection monthly video magazine for children and families. Contact Commission on Youth Discipleship, 414/256-3274.

**Evangelism big books**—"Christian Countdown to Christmas." Commission on Youth Discipleship has published the third in a series of four big books for pre-K through third grade. To order the book and accompanying resources (catalog item 38-4002, \$14.95) contact Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022.

**Organ**—suitable for chapel or small church. Gulbransen series 400, model #401—can play as piano, celeste, chimes, and brass. 44" wide, 26" deep, 39" high. Asking \$700. Janet Remus, RR2, Box 203, Winthrop MN 55396; 507/647-2164.

## COMING EVENTS

**Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference convention**—Apr. 23-25. Parador Vistamar, Quebradillas, Puerto Rico. Visitors are welcome. Wilbert Gawrisch, N73 W27077 Kettle Cove Ln, Sussex WI 53089; 414/538-1462.

**Alcoholism awareness retreat**—for Christian alcoholics or family members. May 3-5. Cousins Retreat Center, Milwaukee, Wis. John Cook, WLCFS, PO Box 23980, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5000.

### Regional youth rallies—

July 8-11. School of Mines, Rapid City, S.D. Tim Johnston, Great Falls, Mont.; 406/452-1286.

July 23-26. Tacoma Pacific Lutheran Univ., Wash. Contact person: Earle Treptow, Langley, B.C., Canada; 604/532-7829—for registration: Jeff Kurbis, Kent, Wash.; 206/946-4488.

July 29-31. LPS, Watertown, Wis. Dale Raether, Juneau, Wis.; 414/386-3313.

**WELS handbell festival**—Apr. 20-21. St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn. Cheryl Diener, 223 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203.

**European study tour**—A tour of Luther lands, Austria, and Switzerland led by Professors Arnold and Paul Koelpin. June 15-July 6. Approximate cost: \$2,400—includes airfare, land transportation in Europe, hotels and meals, and group entrance fees. Contact Special Services, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142.

### 1996 district conventions—

**A-C**, June 17-19, Arizona Gulf Resort, Mesa, Ariz.; 714/534-5617.

**D-M**, June 11-13, St. Martin, Watertown, S.D.; 605/845-3704.

**MI**, June 11-13, MLS, Saginaw, Mich.; 517/835-1776.

**MN**, June 18-20, MLC, New Ulm, Minn.; 507/282-8280.

**NE**, June 17-19, NELHS, Waco, Neb.; 402/656-3176.

**NA**, June 11-13, Elizabethtown College, Penn.; 703/534-1719.

**NW**, June 17-19, FVLHS, Appleton, Wis.; 414/722-6712.

**PNW**, June 14-16, Evergreen LHS, Kent, Wash.; 503/253-7338.

**SA**, June 10-12, Tampa/Orlando area, Fla.; 404/928-7919.

**SC**, June 10-11, Calvary, Dallas, Tex.; 713/498-2634.

**SEW**, June 11-12, WLS, Mequon, Wis.; 708/852-1519.

**WW**, June 3-5, LPS, Watertown, Wis.; 715/834-2595.

## NAMES WANTED

**Bowling Green, Ohio**—Kenneth Mellon, Abiding Word (ELS), 826 Jefferson Dr, Bowling Green OH 43402; 419/353-9013.

**Camp Verde/Rimrock/Lake Montezuma, Ariz.**—Gary Haag, 1450 E Fir St, Cottonwood AZ 86326; 520/634-0630. Or contact Bill Lipke, 452 Spruce, Camp Verde AZ 86322; 520/567-3321.

**Cartersville/Kingston/Acworth/Adairsville/White/Rome, Ga.**—Joel Willitz, Lamb of God, 80 Oakridge Dr, Cartersville GA 30210; 770/382-9888.

**Home schooling families and congregations**—Those interested in forming a self-supporting, synod-wide home schooling assistance organization. This will provide guidance, books, lesson plans, and instructional materials for home schoolers. Send name, address, and SASE to Pastor Londgren, St. John home school survey, 1002 N McEwan, Clare MI 48617; 616/348-2633. Return names by Mar. 1.

**Fargo/West Fargo, N.D.**—Paul Baur, Shepherd of the Valley exploratory, 2407 35 Ave, Fargo ND 58104; 701/235-9449.

**Students at Northwestern/Loyola/DePaul University, Chicago, Ill.**—Steven Radunzel, 2238 Central St #1, Evanston IL 60201; 708/864-5230.

## NEEDED

**Videos and ideas**—Special projects, programs, and events of Lutheran elementary schools, Sunday schools, and youth groups. For WELS Kids Connection monthly video. Send to WELS Kids Connection, Commission on Youth Discipleship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.

**Altar cloths**—White and green for altar and pulpit, 84 x 21.5. Contact Darlene Johnson, 608/582-4274 or Pastor Dan Schoeffel, 608/526-4829.

**Sunday school leaflets**—Copies of the Sunday school series, "The Story of God's Love." Good for teaching English as a second language. Contact Jim Bourman, 4410 S Kirkwood, Houston TX 77072; 713/498-2634.

**Furnishings**—Altar, Bible stand, candle holders and candles, offering plates, paraments, candle lighter/extinguisher, guest book stand, advent wreath stand, pews, Allen organ with bench, wooden church building with bell. For Georgetown, Tex., mission. Contact Alice Pennington, 512/863-7364.

**Book**—*The Life of Christ*, by Fahling. Contact Merel Frank, 708/823-2992.

**Information on activities**—For synod-wide calendar. Congregational, circuit, and district events where more than one congregation participates. Include district, event, date, time, place, and contact person. Send to WELS Communication Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210; FAX 414/256-3899.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**Volunteer director**—For WELS Kingdom Workers Christian Volunteer Corps. Submit resumes to David Timm, WELS Kingdom Workers, 2401 N Mayfair Rd Suite 204, Wauwatosa WI 53226; 414/771-6848; 1-800-466-9357.

## SERVICE TIMES

**Faith, Reedsburg, Wis.**—Thurs., 7 PM; Sun., 9 AM. Sunday school and Bible class, 10:15 AM. 1400 E 8 St, Reedsburg WI 53959; 608/524-6353.

**Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.**—Sun., 8:30 AM and 11 AM. Sunday school and Bible study, 9:45 AM. 2045 Hercules Ave, N Clearwater FL 34623; 813/441-8239.



# What's so funny?

Kenneth A. Cherney

I've always enjoyed Garrison Keillor's humor. Even his jokes about Lutherans. Especially his jokes about Lutherans.

When he started out in the Midwest, he says, three words he could always count on to get a laugh were "Lutheran," "hot-dish," and "chicken." A truly uproarious story would be one about Lutherans eating hotdish and feeding the rest to their chickens.

My favorite was about Spanish Lutherans who traced their ancestry to a Norwegian ship that was blown off course and ran aground near the Iberian Peninsula. The Spaniards took the Norwegians in and fed them rice mixed with hamburger in tomato sauce—the glop we know as "Spanish rice." In return, the Norwegians gave them the Epistle to the Romans.

But, at the risk of sounding stuffy, I saw nothing funny in what Keillor said at a fund-raiser for St. Mark Lutheran Church in San Francisco—though the remark was intended humorously. When asked why he, a non-Lutheran, had decided to help the church, he said the answer was simple: guilt.

He asked, "Why does anybody do anything for church? Why do people serve on church councils, teach Sunday school, serve at potlucks? That's easy: They feel guilty. They think they're supposed to do these things in order to make up for the bad things they've done. Most of all, they believe if they don't do their church chores now, some day it'll catch up with them. Churches, after all, have a direct line to God. It makes sense to stay on their good side."

Garrison Keillor is probably right. A lot of people probably feel that way.

But if that's true, then it's tragic.

It's ironic, because Christianity is all about removing guilt, not cultivating it. Of course, Christians don't simply wish their guilt away or pretend they have nothing to feel guilty about. We have. On innumerable occasions we've all said and done hurtful, destructive things—but the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God has atoned for every one of them.

"Not guilty" is the verdict God pronounces over you because of what Jesus has done. That, in a nutshell, is the Christian gospel. Churches that proclaim it are in the business of taking loads off people's minds—not piling on more.

Also, the Spirit who's at work in Christian people isn't the type to chase you to your church with a whip in his hand. He isn't going to bully or threaten you. He's the Spirit who teaches you to call God "Father" ("Abba," in Aramaic. See Romans 8:15). That Spirit sets people free. He hates seeing them reduced to slavery. He's certainly not the one responsible when people do things for their churches because they're afraid they'll be punished if they don't.

Yes, there are people like that. Sometimes they're the most devout, active church members you meet. But they've essentially taken the victory Jesus won for them and thrown it away. And there's nothing funny about that at all.

Keillor's comment reminded me of a clergyman I knew who told me about enthusiastic new members. "Pretty soon they'll learn that belonging to this church is basically a pain in the neck."

He was kidding, too.

Again, the humor in what he said eluded me.

*Ken Cherney is pastor at Living Hope, Mandeville, Louisiana.*

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*Christianity is  
all about  
removing guilt,  
not cultivating it.*

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# Good old godly guidelines

If following God's Word gets you labeled "old-fashioned," consider yourself blessed.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

**H**ave you ever been accused of being old-fashioned? I say accused because the term old-fashioned implies that something is terribly wrong with you. You have a defect in your thinking or way of living that most people don't have—and you maybe don't even realize it.

Baking bread from scratch, wearing white socks, asking permission for a daughter's hand in marriage, staying home to raise the kids, being on time, keeping your word, staying married through thick and thin, going to church every Sunday morning, hanging wash out on Monday morning—these will get you the label "old-fashioned" in a hurry.

## Old-fashioned isn't bad

But being old-fashioned is not necessarily bad—especially when it comes to the things of God. God himself, in a sense, is old-fashioned in that he does not change. We don't consider this a fault, but one of the virtues that makes him God.

The writer to the Hebrews concludes his epistle in chapter 13 with a number of brief encouragements. Each is a gem that, when followed, affects everyday Christian living.

However, the first eight verses of chapter 13 are somewhat

exceptional in that they encourage six ideas that have grown out of favor with the world. If you are over 40, you have observed a deterioration in both the practice and popularity of these ideas to the extent that they are now labeled by most as old-fashioned. We may consider them "little things" that aren't very important, but God doesn't. The Christian walk with God often consists of "little things" that have tremendous significance to our faith life.

## God does not change

God himself is unchangeable, and he has an unchangeable will for his people whether they lived in 2000 BC or AD 2000. The writer to the Hebrews vividly reminds us of this truth in verse eight: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Jesus Christ does not change. His essence as God, his relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, his power and glory and honor are the same from eternity to eternity. His work of redemption; his office as prophet, priest, and king; his gift of salvation by grace through faith in him are permanent, etched in

stone, irrevocable. His model for Christian living, his will for his followers, his great commandment to love are as modern, up-to-date, and fresh as tomorrow's morning dew.

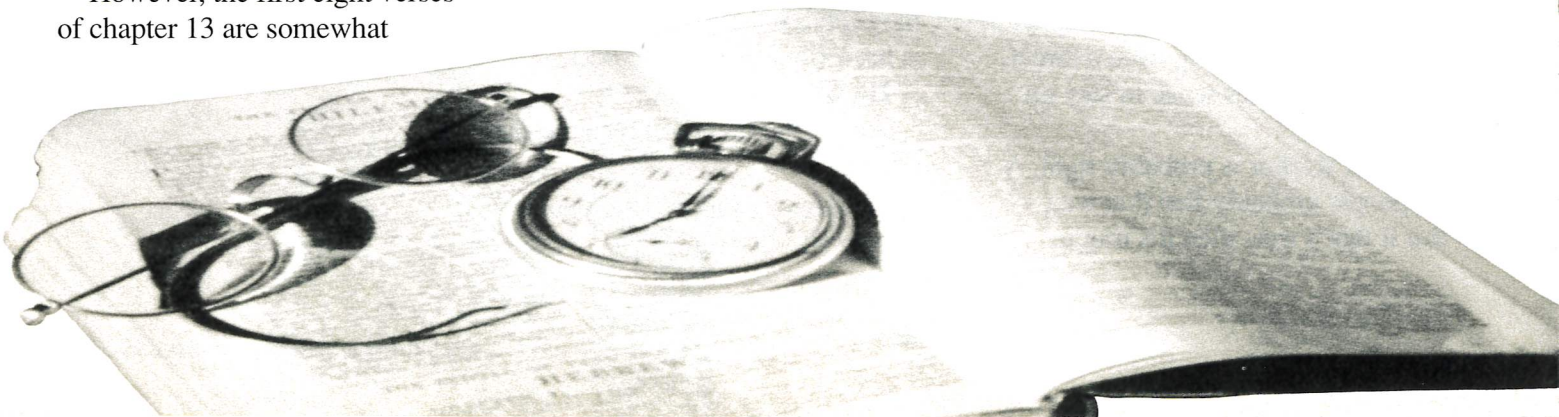
## God's Word still applies

With change, corruption, and decay all around us, we may sometimes wonder whether the problem is really with us. Maybe we are just out of step with the times. Maybe we are stuck in our ways and need to change and simply go with the flow.

The writer to the Hebrews says "No." He says you are right on track when you follow the Scripture's advice. So, the writer encourages you to continue to treat one another in the faith as close family, extend that love even to those you don't know, practice true sympathy to those in need, reserve sexual relationships only to the marriage bond, be content with what you have, and respect your called leaders and imitate their faith.

Old-fashioned? Perhaps. Still God's Word? Definitely.

*Fred Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.*





# The current state of the abortion debate

Joel C. Gerlach

Passage of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act by the House of Representatives last November is hailed by pro-life supporters as evidence of a new wind blowing. It signals the beginning of a change in the public's attitude on abortion.

Meanwhile, Republicans aspiring to be president are divided over the right-to-life position. Some adamantly oppose abortion. Others, though they "personally oppose pro-choice," speak about accommodating a more pragmatic position.

The willingness of some presidential aspirants to back away from the pro-life position is disconcerting. It comes when liberal voices are coming to grips with arguments that pro-lifers try to advance in the public square.

Some examples. Eyebrows were raised when Norma McCorvey (Jane Roe in *Roe vs. Wade*) switched sides. Cracks in the pro-choice front appeared last October in *The New Republic* in an article by feminist Naomi Wolf. She acknowledged that abortion is an evil, kills children, and traumatizes women. Though pro-choice, she suggests that abortion advocates need a "moral framework" to support their position. That's a new wrinkle and poses a dilemma for people who dismiss the immorality of abortion.

In an *Atlantic Monthly* cover story on abortion (Sept., '95), Dr. George McKenna sees parallels in the rhetoric between those supporting slavery in the 1800s and those supporting abortion on demand today. He suggests pro-lifers should continue efforts to sway public opinion, rather than outlaw abortion by congressional action.

All this coincided with Pope John Paul II's visit last fall. We note the respectful media coverage of what the Pope said. He spoke out in defense of his position in "Evangelium Vitae" (the Gospel of Life). In that encyclical, the Pope deplored the deepening struggle between a "culture of death" and a "culture of life."

In a summary of what the Pope said to his audiences, the *New York Times* wrote,

The Pope attributes an erosion of respect for human life to our exaggerated individualism and to the materialism, hedonism, and moral relativism it fosters. He says we have turned a blind eye to the "necessary conformity of civil law with moral law." . . . The centerpiece of the argument is that there are certain objective moral facts that cannot be altered, even by our society's instincts toward moral pluralism, compassion, and majority rule. Abortion and euthanasia are crimes, he says, and society where such killing is allowed will invariably revert to barbarianism and list toward totalitarianism.

Just when battles over pro-life issues are beginning to be won, some presidential aspirants are pulling back, apparently because of the risk involved in taking a pro-life position based on the conformity of civil law with natural law.

It's time for citizens who want to halt our nation's slide in the direction of barbarianism to let their voices be heard. It's no time for Christians, called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, to watch the action from the bleachers.

*Joel Gerlach is pastor at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.*

*The willingness of some presidential aspirants to back away from the pro-life position is disconcerting.*



# Religious principles of Boy Scouts

John F. Brug

*I heard that the Boy Scouts have changed, and we no longer have to be against scouting. When did this happen?*

The Boy Scouts are among the most respected organizations in this country, and the skills, activities, and companionship they offer could benefit any child. Yet for more than 60 years WELS has warned its members that their children should not participate in the program.

Our basic objection to scouting was that the required promise and law contain religious elements which imply that the scout can do his duty to God, regardless of his religion. This contradicts the clear statements of Scripture that no one can perform works pleasing to God without faith in Christ.

Over the years the wording of the scout law and its explanation has become more vague and less offensive, but the religious principles have been maintained. All members of the scouts must accept the scout oath and law, but they may interpret it in their own way. For example, an atheist boy who refused to promise to do his duty to God was denied membership, but when he took the oath with the understanding that "god" was not a personal being, he was permitted to join. This is certainly an offensive interpretation of the concept of "duty to God." Scouting can acknowledge not only the adherents of non-Trinitarian religions, but even atheists as "doing their duty to god."

Recognition of the religious basis of scouting is not limited to WELS. Advocates of strong separation of church and state have objected to the promotion of scouting in public schools because of its religious requirements.

Because the religious requirements of scouting remain unchanged, our WELS children have a better option in the Lutheran Pioneers. Pioneers provides many of the same benefits as scouting, without the objectionable religious requirements.

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*Lutheran Pioneers provides many of the same benefits as scouting, without the objectionable religious requirements.*

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Although the religious principles of scouting remain unchanged, there has been one notable development. The increased vagueness of the scouting literature and the fact that some scout troops may make little use of the religious features make it more difficult to convincingly demonstrate, from the scout handbook, the false religious principles which underlie scouting. This makes it more difficult to convince parents that their children should not belong to scouts.

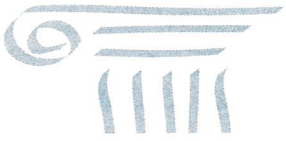
The Girl Scouts are a separate organization, but the same principles and observations apply to that group also.

To study the current situation more thoroughly, see the 1991 study prepared by WELS Committee for Information on Organizations, available from your district president.



*For more information about Lutheran Pioneer programs, contact Lutheran Pioneers, Box 66, Burlington WI 53105; 414/763-6238. Lutheran Girl Pioneers, 1611 Caledonia St, La Crosse WI 54603; 608/781-5232.*





**I would like to see you continue your "Through the Bible" series,** as I'm only one and a half years into it and am enjoying it. Also, I like your new format of the magazine.

*Ed Ellinghuysen  
Winona, Minnesota*

**I enjoyed Pastor Hartzell's article on hope** [Nov. '95]. The use of the word has changed over the past centuries. Most of the time when we use the word hope, we use it in a way that has an element of uncertainty. The definition of hope that I was not aware of is: hope gives promises of the future. This is certainly the meaning we understand in the Bible. The word hope has troubled me for some time, until I looked it up in the dictionary. Your article fortifies my understanding.

*L.R. Lutz  
La Crosse, Wisconsin*

**Regarding Ben Kohls, 13-year-old karate student,** [Nov. '95]. Over the summer I spent an evening at the home of a boy in junior high who learned how to improve his martial arts performance through meditation and summoning "special" powers. An unwanted side effect of his occultic dabbling was a ghost-like figure that drove him from his home one August evening.

Karate and other martial arts do not require the assistance of the demon gods of Eastern religion. We Christians are dangerously naive, however, to neglect the fact that all martial arts come out of a culture that inherently connects both.

*James A. Aderman  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**While reading about God's work in Hong Kong** in the Nov. '95 issue, I had to smile about, and agree with, Madame Chong Hin Yan's mother for the reason her daughter got cancer. That she got cancer because she became Christian is likely the truth, but she did not get it for punishment. It is clear God used this to open the hearts of her father and her mother. God does work in mysterious ways to fulfill his will, which is always to bring more of us back to him.

*D.C. Sell  
Dexter, Michigan*

**My daughter and I read the Bible in three years.** I've often read through it in one year, but this was better and we certainly got more out of it. I'm glad you are continuing it.

I also have enjoyed Carl Henkel's articles about his grandmother, my aunt. Thanks for NL.

*Shirley Osgood  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**In Nov. '95, "Your question, please" deals with applause in worship.** Prof. Brug makes the point that "the appropriateness of applause . . . is a matter of cultural judgment." That point needs making as this denomination becomes increasingly cross-cultural and infused with people who aren't operating under German Lutheran cultural norms.

Because of this, I was puzzled by the statement, "We don't usually interrupt the sermon with applause when we like its content or style." Who is "we?" In many churches, including a few WELS churches, people do respond to the message with "amens" and applause. The practice of responding to music or a message with silence, as per

German Lutheran custom, is going to feel unnatural, awkward, and even rude to people coming into WELS worship from different American cultures.

*Phil Merten  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin*

Send your letters to Readers Forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX 414/256-3899. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity and conciseness. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Northwestern Lutheran*.

*Through my Bible  
in 3 years*

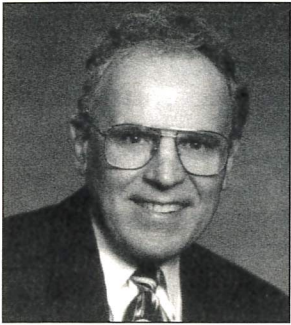
**February 1996**

- 1.  Leviticus 8
- 2.  Lev. 9, 10
- 3.  Lev. 11
- 4.  Lev. 12:1-13:46
- 5.  Lev. 13:47-14:32
- 6.  Lev. 14:33-15:33
- 7.  Lev. 16
- 8.  Lev. 17
- 9.  Lev. 18
- 10.  Lev. 19, 20
- 11.  Lev. 21, 22
- 12.  Lev. 23
- 13.  Lev. 24
- 14.  Lev. 25
- 15.  Lev. 26
- 16.  Lev. 27
- 17.  Hebrews 1
- 18.  Heb. 2
- 19.  Heb. 3:1-6
- 20.  Heb. 3:7-4:13
- 21.  Heb. 4:14-5:10
- 22.  Heb. 5:11-6:8
- 23.  Heb. 6:9-20
- 24.  Heb. 7:1-14
- 25.  Heb. 7:15-28
- 26.  Heb. 8
- 27.  Heb. 9:1-15
- 28.  Heb. 9:16-28
- 29.  Psalm 119

**CLARIFICATION:** In the article Congregation receives Senate citation (Dec. '95), the congregation should not be equated with the AAL branch, which received the citation.



## Shifting the focus in marriage



Gary P. Baumler is editor of Northwestern Lutheran and WELS Director of Communications.

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*"It is time to rebuild a family culture based on enduring marital relationships."*

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“America’s divorce revolution has failed.”

The above conclusion comes from the Council of Families in America, a group of “scholars and analysts . . . a volunteer, nonpartisan, interdisciplinary group of citizens from across the human sciences and across the political spectrum”—a group sponsored by the Institute for American Values in New York City.

We don’t usually quote such a secular, evolution-oriented “think tank” in support of scriptural values. We’re more likely to disagree with such a group.

Nonetheless, the council reported in “Marriage in America” 1995: “The divorce culture—by which we mean the steady displacement of a marriage culture by a culture of divorce and unwed parenthood—has created terrible hardships for children. It has generated poverty within families. It has burdened us with unsupportable social costs. It has failed to deliver on its promise of greater adult happiness and better relationships between men and women.”

The 20-page report indicates that “fewer than 50 percent of Americans today include ‘being married’ as part of their definition of family values. . . . [And] ‘Till death do us part’ has been replaced by ‘as long as I am happy.’”

“The time has come,” says the council, “to shift focus. It is time to rebuild a family culture based on enduring marital relationships.”

Included in the shift is recognizing anew that marriage is a “natural institution, meeting and guiding the primary human inclinations toward sexual expression, reproduction, and emotional intimacy.”

The council members do not derive their views on marriage from the Bible, but they reflect the three-fold purpose for which God instituted marriage: companionship, sexual intimacy, and procreation.

☉ **Companionship:** “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Our culture puts a high value on individualism, unrestricted personal liberty, self esteem. God puts a high value on sharing and self-sacrifice for others’ good. Because of sin, we do not come by God’s values naturally. In faith, we must work at them.

To develop companionship, we need to be companions. We need to spend time together and have a friendship and fellowship as well as love.

☉ **Sexual intimacy:** “They will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). To human beings, sex is not meant to be a mere biological function, but it signals singular emotional bonding as well. Caring and affection are equally important as physical satisfaction. In the marriage bond, sex combined with self-giving love has its most blessed fulfillment. We should cherish such a gift from God.

☉ **Procreation:** “Be fruitful and increase in number” (Genesis 1:28). Children are a blessing from God and a responsibility for parents under God. The report recommends, “Reclaim the ideal of marital permanence and affirm marriage as the pre-eminent environment for childrearing.”

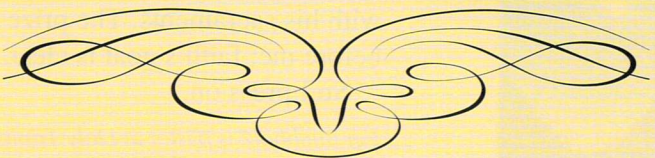
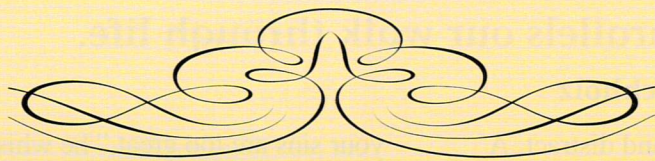
The biological mystery of bearing children is by itself a marvelous blessing from God. But with it, God gives us the solemn duty to raise what we have borne. That usually takes father and mother working together under God for the best results. It takes bringing up our children in the Lord.

The Council of Families calls for action in all major sectors of society to return to a culture of marriage. We call for action by us as Christians to keep God in our marriages and our marriages God-pleasing.

*Gary P. Baumler*



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# So I press on

Our hike up the mountain parallels our walk through life.

Jon Buchholz

I trudge up the steep trail. My legs ache. My lungs cry. My heart pounds. My head throbs. I want to shrug off my 50-pound pack and hurl it to the valley below.

A few paces up the switchbacks—then stop, gasp for air. The top is in sight. I press on toward the ridge above. Another pause. I can't seem to fill my lungs. Only a few more paces, and the conquest will be mine.

This was the Lutheran Pioneers' ranger trip in Colorado's San Juan Mountains. Our trip took us through magnificent terrain. The prize: a spectacular view of alpine meadows and mountain peaks, trout fishing in the clear waters of mountain lakes, and the thrill of accomplishment.

As my heartbeat slows, I think of Paul's words to the Philippians: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

**Our hike up the mountain parallels our walk through life.** The goal is clear. Ups and downs are many, obstacles seem insurmountable,

attractions entice and distract. A picturesque waterfall along the trail may seem a worthy goal in itself, prompting the question, "Why go farther?" It's hard to shoulder the pack again once you've put it down for a break. And when the trail gets steep, the temptation is strong to say, "I can't do it. I quit."

The goal of our faith is a wonderful eternity with Jesus. But the road that leads there is long and tortuous, full of obstacles and dangers. The attraction of wealth may distract us from our heavenly goal and cause us to drop our packs and get cozy with the world. Build our lives on emotions and notions, and we'll meander through life without clear guidance from God's Word. We'll soon lose the trail and lose sight of faith's goal.

**Along the way, the devil urges us to put faith in ourselves.** "You can pull yourself up; your strength will see you through." To the tender of conscience he speaks words of despair. "Your pack is too heavy;

your sins are too great," he whispers. "Give up, because it's no use."

But the gates of paradise stand open to receive us. Entrance is free, secured by the blood of our Savior. We anticipate the privilege of feasting there with our Master, gazing upon our Savior's face, and praising him for his eternal victory. No earthly diversion compares to the glory that awaits God's people.

**In Christ, the conquest is certain.** He has walked in our place, experienced our pain, and shouldered our burdens. With loving mercy, our Savior shields us from the dangers along life's way and steers us from the traps Satan sets. With his Word, he calls us to the heaven-bound path of simple trust in him for the forgiveness of sins.

Our trip through the mountains is over. But my journey through life continues—a journey for which I need the constant strengthening of my Savior, as he admonishes me with his law, comforts me with his words of forgiveness, and feeds me with his sacraments. The prize is before me; faith's goal is clear.

So I press on.

*Jon Buchholz is pastor at Holy Trinity, Kent, Washington.*

