

# LUTHERAN



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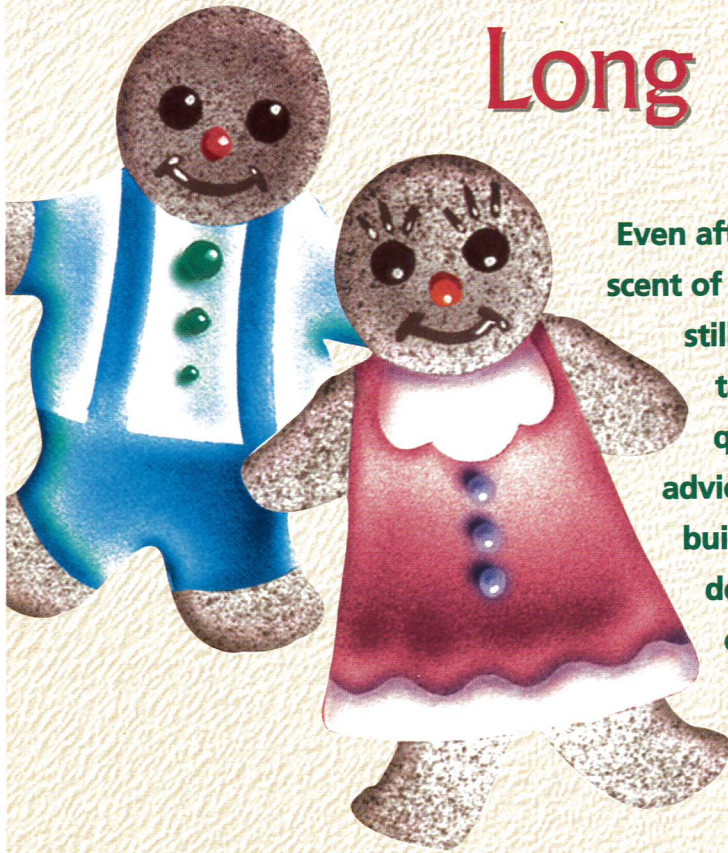
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# The day of the Lord will come

*You know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 1 Thessalonians 5:2*

Richard D. Balge

Christians regularly confess in the Apostles' Creed, "He will come to judge the living and the dead." Together we say in the Nicene Creed, "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." The Word of God through whom the worlds were made, who became fully human to redeem us, will come again to speak the last word on the last day. To some he will say, "Come," and to others, "Depart."

We must be aware of the day. We need to prepare for the day. We can encourage one another to be aware and to prepare.

## Be aware

Jesus and his apostles spoke of a time when faithful believers would be hard to find, when the love of many would grow cold, when the church's appreciation of the gospel would decline. They warned against the day when pleasure would be a god, wild abandon would become a way of life, blind unbelief would lead to a false sense of security. Paul, for example, writes: "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Many will not be ready for the day because they are not aware it is coming.

Every generation of Christians has known that the day of the Lord may occur at any time. We must never think of it as improbable in our time. Especially, we must not let the work and play, the sorrows and joys of this life dull our awareness.



## Be prepared

Whatever our responsibilities may be, in the workaday world and in the church, all Christians share this one: "Let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled" (1 Thessalonians 5:6). To sleep is to be unconscious. Spiritual sleep is being unconscious of sin and insensible to the good news of salvation. It is to hear and

not respond. It is to be unconcerned about the day of the Lord.

How will the Lord greet you on Judgment Day? Remember, it is not dishes you have broken, or simply the standards of polite society. It is the law of God we have violated; his holiness we have offended. God,

however, "did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that . . . we may live together with him" (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10). That good news, announced to us in Word and sacrament, prepares us for the day of the Lord—and helps us look forward to that day with joy.

## Be encouraging

Believers also have a responsibility that goes beyond self and immediate family. We are to "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians

5:11). In private conversation and in public worship, let us share our joy. To turn spiritual flabbiness into spiritual fitness, let us speak the truth in love to one another, always remembering that the day of the Lord will come.

*Richard D. Balge is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.*



- Thanksgiving is not a church holiday, but it reminds us to thank God for his blessings. Although we don't have one specific Thanksgiving article, this issue is full of accounts of thankful Christians.
  - ✓ In "Why do I teach Sunday school," you'll find people thankful for the chance to reach our youth. (p. 10)
  - ✓ Read about OWLS—senior citizens grateful for the opportunity to serve their Lord. (p. 6)
  - ✓ Learn of Christians who lived under communism, but thank God for the freedom they found in him. (p. 19)
  - ✓ Read about WELS members who lost possessions in storms, but are thankful their lives were spared. (pp. 22, 24, 25)
- Christmas is right around the corner. Does the upcoming holiday season have you stressed out?
  - ✓ Read our Advent article and renew your patience as you wait for Christ (p. 18)
  - ✓ As a Christian, you have an edge in coping with stress. See how you can handle stress. (p. 8)
  - ✓ Read how Jesus' peace calmed one woman's soul. (p. 16)

—LRB

Cover photo by Eugene Schulz

## NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

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# “Older wiser living saints”

Senior citizens combine active service to God with fun and fellowship.

Julie K. Tessmer

Though jokingly they call their group “Older Women, Lousy Spouses,” the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors’ (OWLS) initials better fit another reference—“Older Wiser Living Saints.”

With an original motto of “Served and serving,” OWLS combines active service to churches with fun and fellowship.

## Beginnings

“Having a national organization like this allows us, as seniors, to continue serving, but in a different capacity than when we were younger,” says Larry Carlovsky, OWLS president.

And in this capacity, the OWLS have found their niche.

A group for those 55 or older, OWLS started when the Committee on Aging, a division of the Commission on Special Ministries, decided an organization should be formed to help channel senior citizens’ talents. Their dream was fulfilled when the first OWLS convention was held in 1984.

“Now older people have someplace to vent their energy and abilities,” says Ruth Hirons, an original member of OWLS planning committee and now OWLS historian.

With 51 chapters and over 1,700 members, the OWLS participate in several national programs as well as serve locally in their congregations.

## National outreach

In one national program, they reach out to the unchurched



*Over 300 seniors enjoyed tours of Racine, workshops, fun, food, and fellowship during the twelfth annual OWLS Convention, held in Racine, Wis., this July.*

throughout the U.S. and Canada. Using a phone bank in Milwaukee, OWLS members canvass areas requested by WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) missions and established churches.

Since its beginning in 1990, callers for Gospel Outreach (GO) have made more than 100,000 calls, surveyed 63,000 people about their church life, and found more than 4,200 prospects.

“We’re finding souls for Christ,” says Clarence Saatkamp, chairman of GO. “Anytime you bring someone into the church, it’s exciting.”

One congregation that used GO was Lamb of God (ELS), Cartersville, Ga.

“We have a small group in the congregation,” says Joel Willitz, former pastor at Lamb of God. “We don’t have the time or wherewithal

to do an extensive phone survey.”

Willitz also used GO at his former congregation in Sebring, Fla. After the congregation followed up on prospects, over 100 attended a celebration service at the church.

Willitz took a call this fall to a mission congregation in Lakeland, Fla., where he may use the OWLS again. Willitz stressed the number of those reached is not what counts most. Reaching people with the gospel is worth all the time and effort, he said, even if only one new person comes to church.

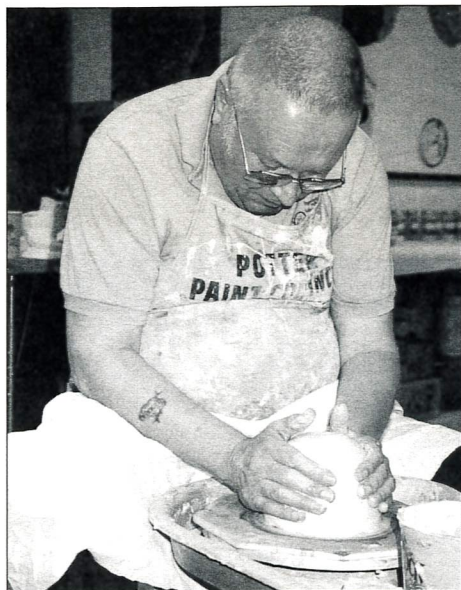
Because of their success and the amount of requests, an additional OWLS phone bank opened in La Crosse, Wis., in September.

## Friendship for prisoners

OWLS also works to spread the Word in a different area—prisons.

The original OWLS prison ministry committee, established in 1993, served the 110 WELS members known to be in prison. In 1995, the committee, working closely with special ministries, decided to make Bibles and Bible studies and tests available, free of charge, to 585 prison chaplains for distribution in the prisons. Now over 1,400 prisoners participate, with more requests for materials pouring in.

This year, OWLS members in New Ulm and St. Paul, Minn., sent prisoners over 30,000 copies of the *God’s Word Bible*, an easy-to-read, contemporary translation of the Bible, as well as four Bible study guides and devotional newsletters.



Harold Frank, from Oshkosh, Wis., learned how to shape a bowl on a potter's wheel at an OWLS hostel at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. OWLS hostels are week-long opportunities for education and fellowship.

OWLS members also correct completed tests from the Bible studies that prisoners send them, and mail certificates, along with the next study guide, back to the prisoners.

Although these Minnesota OWLS chapters are doing the hands-on work, the national OWLS raised money to cover most postage expenses. Members participate in the prison ministry pen pal program. Through a PO box in New Ulm, many write letters to over 200 prisoners who want a Christian friend.

### Partnership with youth

Besides reaching out to the unchurched, OWLS is trying to fill another gap—the generation gap between seniors and children.

Seniors in OWLS' Crossing Generations program offer their time and talents to Lutheran grade schools. Many local chapters have members who work one-on-one with children or act as teachers' aides. Other schools have OWLS

members showcase their talents and hobbies, getting children involved in activities with them.

At Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis., they planted a garden together. Roger and Ruth Hirons, members of OWLS, felt this would be a good learning experience. A committee was formed, consisting of Ruth and three seventh-grade girls.

After much hard work, the 1995 Crossing Generations garden was planted—with members reaping the harvest for their dinners. Students and seniors also enjoyed arranging flowers for church, having a pizza lunch using garden vegetables, and drying flowers as future projects.

“To see Pilgrim's garden taking shape was a joy, especially when I saw young children, older students, moms, and seniors helping the process along,” says Paul Snamiska, former principal at Pilgrim.

Nationally, OWLS sets up a scholarship fund for students attending Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

“We feel young people are the church's future, and we need to support them,” says Carlovsky.

### Relationships for life

But you know what they say about all work and no play. OWLS members certainly don't have to worry about that.

Besides helping the pastors by visiting the sick and shut-ins, maintaining the church library, stuffing mailboxes, and doing countless

other projects, local OWLS chapters enjoy plenty of fun and fellowship.

“We all have so much in common,” says June Koester, a member at Peace, Granger, Ind. “We just like to sit and talk.”

But they do more than talk. Parties, fish fries, game nights, picnics, guest speakers, trips—it's surprising they find time to chat.

Nationally, OWLS sponsors a trip every year. This September, over 40 traveled overseas to the Luther lands in Germany. It also conducts hostels at WELS schools, combining education with fellowship.

With all these opportunities, it's not surprising OWLS has taken off. Still, some don't want to admit they're old enough to join.

That's not what Adair Moldenhauer, member at Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, thinks: “You just can't wait to be old enough.”

For more information, contact OWLS, 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-9977.



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



OWLS members spent the week learning about the growing season of corn from Nebraskan farmers at a hostel held at Nebraska LHS, Waco.

# All stressed out

As a Christian, you have an edge in coping with stress.

John C. Johnson and Linda R. Baacke

**Y**ou're stuck in traffic. Horns honking, motorists screaming.

It's Monday. You worked all weekend, but you're still behind deadline.

You have to run errands. Then the meeting at church. Then the football game—and friends are stopping by.

Your cell phone rings. It's your mother. You promised you'd stop by.

Why didn't God put more hours in a day?

## Acknowledging stress

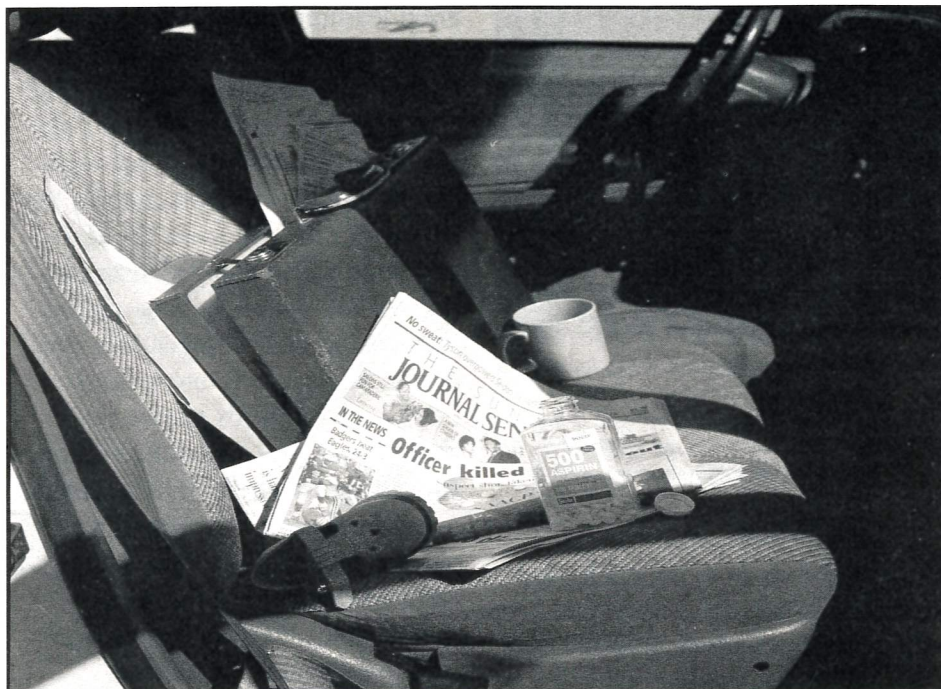
Everybody experiences stress. It's a fact—because you live in a sinful world, you will have stress. Just because you are a Christian doesn't mean you are exempt.

Because stress affects your body, mind, and even your soul, you need to see the warning signs.

Do you have aches and pains, headaches, blurred vision, or an upset stomach? Under stress, your heart rate, blood pressure, and adrenaline increase. Finally, you get sick—your body breaks when carrying the burden becomes too much.

Can you focus your thoughts? Stress causes your thinking to wander.

Are you looking for fights or arguments? Stress uses up your adrenaline, so you pick fights, squeezing out a little more adrenaline, trying to keep going. Or do you hide out? If you isolate yourself, you cope by running away.



Are you angry at God? Although you may not acknowledge it, the signs point to it. You drop out of church, stop praying, and stop studying the Bible.

But beware. The things you need to turn to, you turn from. The day you want to kick your Bible under the bed is your warning sign.

## Coping with stress

How you deal with stress—positively or negatively—is a personal stewardship issue. As a sanctified Christian, you care for the body God gave you.

When you're stuck in traffic, do you pull out a cigarette, waiting for the nicotine to soothe your frayed nerves? Do you stop by the corner bar after work, drinking until the

day's edge wears off? Or do you grab a quart of ice cream and a box of cookies and plop down on the couch, eating your troubles away?

Most of the negative ways you can deal with stress are sins. Galatians 5:19-21 gives a laundry list of poor coping examples: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."

The problem is: alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and food work. All have short-term positive results. Because they are a quick fix, it is hard to give them up to work on long-term solutions.



## Managing stress

Although you sometimes fail when you face temptation, as a Christian you have an edge in coping with and effectively managing stress. You know you have a Savior who loves you, forgives you, and promises to be there for you. When you are stressed out, you can follow these six steps to manage stress in a God-pleasing way.

**First, and most important, stay centered in Jesus Christ.** He helps us manage all aspects of life. Staying centered means having a close relationship with him.

*Ask Jesus to help you with problems.* It almost sounds too simple, but Jesus is your friend. You can talk to him at any time.

*Focus on his promises.* He promises to be with you, to forgive you, and to work all things for your good. Trust that he will do it.

*Hear and listen to his Word.* Go to church, attend Bible study, read your Bible.

*Unload your problems on Jesus and rely on him to help you.* Being a “control freak” creates a lot of stress. Let God work the evening shift, and you can get some sleep.

*Confess your sins to him.* Often we don’t confess our sins, even to Jesus. Get your sins out in the open and be assured of his forgiveness.

**Second, keep your social support.** Talk to your pastor, your friends. Your biggest social support is your family. Keeping your family strong will help you manage stress better.

**Third, eliminate aversive cognitive variables**—a psychologist’s term for crummy thinking. The Bible is full of truth. Your head is full of garbage. By using your own

faulty thinking you make things far worse than they actually are.

**Fourth, develop active behavioral strategies**—a psychologist’s term for planned physical activities. Go for walks, exercise. Try relaxation and breathing exercises.

**Fifth, pursue a healthy lifestyle.** Eat right, exercise, don’t smoke, don’t drink. Keep your body as resilient as possible to help you cope with the world’s challenges.

**Sixth, grow in “fruit of the Spirit.”** Read Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Those characteristics help you manage and tolerate stress in life, and are attainable through Word and sacrament.

As a Christian, you will be stressed. But you can cope effectively with it. You will have to study God’s Word—it is the only way to get an objective measure of what reality is. If you operate on scriptural principles, you are far more likely to manage stress better.

Remember, life is not a sprint. It’s an endurance race—and God will help you to the finish line.

NL

*This series is based on a Bible study held in summer 1996 at St. James, Milwaukee. Information was developed and presented by psychologist Dr. John Johnson, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, and reported by Linda Baacke, communications assistant for Northwestern Lutheran and Communication Services.*

Consider the following questions in terms of how much change has occurred in your life. Circle a number between 1 and 5. 1 represents no change and 5 represents a great deal of change.

Do you tire more easily and feel fatigued rather than energetic?

1    2    3    4    5

Are you working more and more and accomplishing less?

1    2    3    4    5

Are you becoming more cynical and disenchanted with things around you?

1    2    3    4    5

Are you more forgetful—about appointment, deadlines, and your personal possessions?

1    2    3    4    5

Are you more irritable, short-tempered, and disappointed in people around you?

1    2    3    4    5

Are you suffering from physical complaints—aches, pains, headaches, or a lingering cold?

1    2    3    4    5

Do you feel disoriented when the day’s activities come to a halt?

1    2    3    4    5

### Total the numbers you circled:

If the total is from 0-11 you are doing fine; 12-16 means you need to be alert; 17-23 identifies you as being in dangerous territory; 24-30 means rocks and stumps are sticking out all around you; a score over 30 indicates you have run aground, and the situation is life-threatening to you and others. See your pastor or other Christian professional.

# Why do I teach Sunday school?

Ten Sunday school teachers explain why they share the promise.

Laurie Biedenbender

You won't see these people enjoying coffee and doughnuts after church. They're down the hall doing the work God called them to do: share the promise of Jesus with our children.

These people teach Sunday school. In their classrooms, our children are singing Christmas songs and cutting out Jesus valentines. They're learning how Jesus, when he lived on earth, healed a blind man, and healed them from their sins when he died. They're discussing real life issues—because that's what the Bible is about.

These are the people our children hug when they're five and thank again when they're 25.

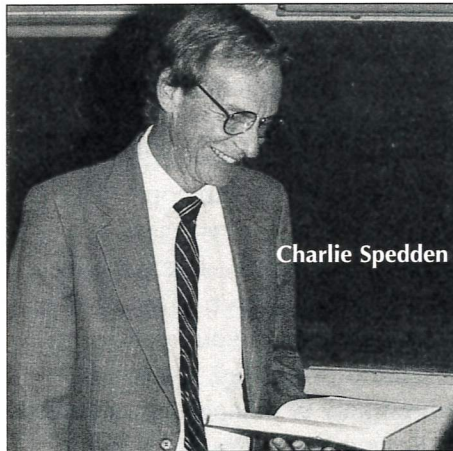
These people know that God has given them a singular opportunity to go and tell all nations.

**Ruth Uttech:** I enjoy the trust and innocence, the unconditional love and forgiveness of the three- and four-year-olds. I've taught over 25 years, and I still love sharing God's love with these children. I learn so much from them.



If you're thinking about teaching Sunday school, visit a classroom. Start as a helper if you don't feel confident teaching right away. Don't be afraid. Remember, the only one you need to please is God. The rest will fall in line.

**Charlie Spedden:** The seventh- and eighth-graders respond when I treat them like young adults. We communicate honestly about the seriousness of eternity and how much easier their life can be when they make choices based on Christian principles. For instance, the girls recently rated the traits they would look for in a boyfriend or eventual husband. They rated "Christian," "honest," and "loving" as the first three, and "good-looking" and "wealthy" last.

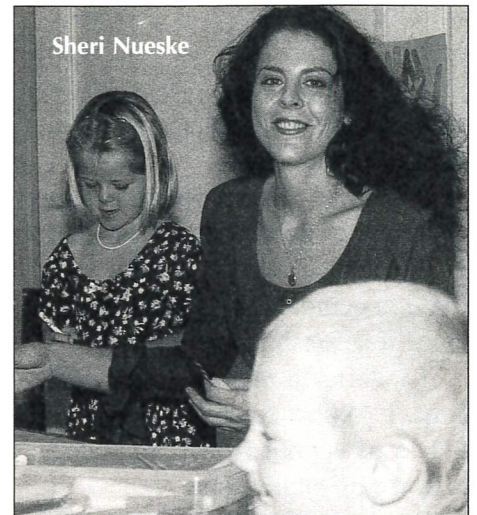


Teaching not only gives God's Word to our students, it reinforces it in us. This helps us continue the work he has commissioned us to do.

**Sheri Nueske:** Teaching Sunday school is a special way of giving something back to your church family.

My students made paper plate valentine cards for their parents. When they shared their cards with the class, I saw that all the children put a sticker of Christ in the middle of their valentines and their moms, dads, sisters, and brothers around it. They all knew that nothing is possible without Christ, and anything and everything is possible if Christ is the center of their life.

I was not raised in a Christian family so I didn't learn all the Bible stories as



a child. Now I'm learning with my second-graders. You'd be surprised at the growing you do as a Christian working with children and learning more about our Savior through their eyes.

**Melissa Schultz:** A joy of teaching Sunday school is knowing that you, through the power of the Lord, have given a little child the best gift ever, the message of the gospel. These preschool children are excited to hear new things about the wonders of God

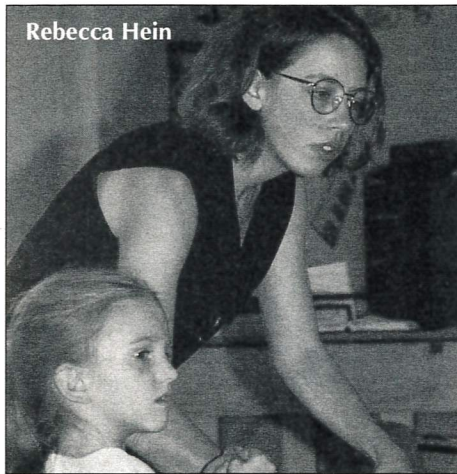


and his Son who came to save them.

Last Christmas Eve, in my first year of teaching, all the children were sitting in front of church, and one little girl

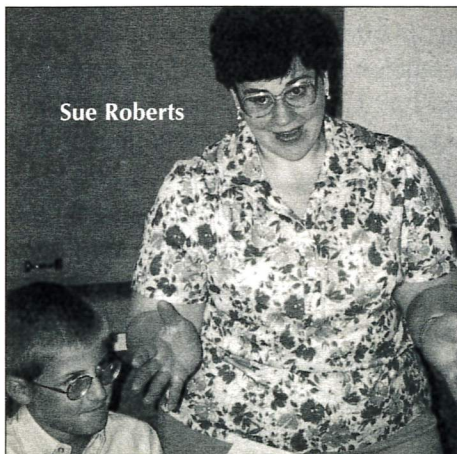
mouthing to me that she loved me. I know that they love me because of Jesus' love in their hearts and because I teach them about Jesus.

**Rebecca Hein:** We all know what it means to have a tough week. Children also have tough weeks, whether it be a rough time at school or at home. They need some encouragement. It's always memorable when a child's frown turns to a smile after hearing God loves them and died so they can go to heaven.



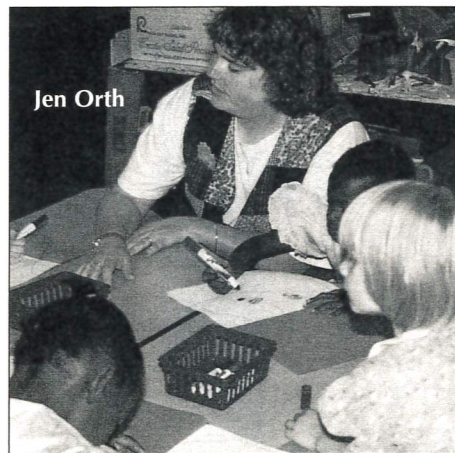
God wants children to come to him. Sunday school may be the only chance some children have to hear the gospel. As a Sunday school teacher, I'm thankful God has given me such a *fun* way to serve him.

**Sue Roberts:** The minds of my students, kindergarten to fourth grade, are not cluttered with unimportant things,



so they see the pure joy and love in the Bible stories. It's great to see their faces light up when they really understand our discussion of Jesus' love. I asked them once what blessing they were thankful for, and a second grader said death, because without it, he'd never see Jesus.

**Jen Orth:** In my career as an early childhood teacher, I can't openly share my faith. But at Sunday school, I can share the joyous news of Jesus with these small lambs. Because they're so young, three to six, they feel that I'm important to them. They say 'Hi' no matter where we are. They trust me, and can openly share my love.

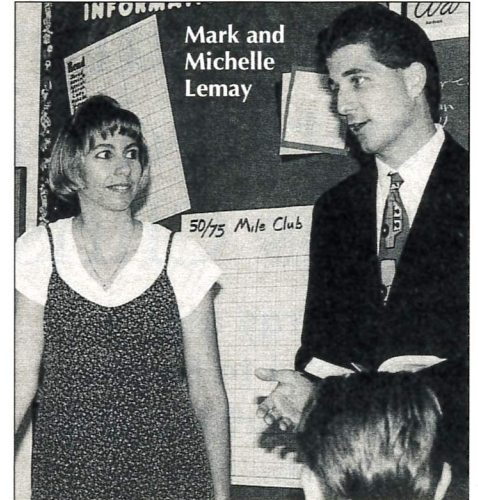


Kids today need as many advocates and friends as they can possibly find. Teaching Sunday school is a great way to be their advocate and friend—and also introduce them to their best advocate and friend, Jesus Christ.

**Dr. Mark LeMay:** As I teach Sunday school, I want to glorify God and show the kids, by example, what being a Christian is all about.

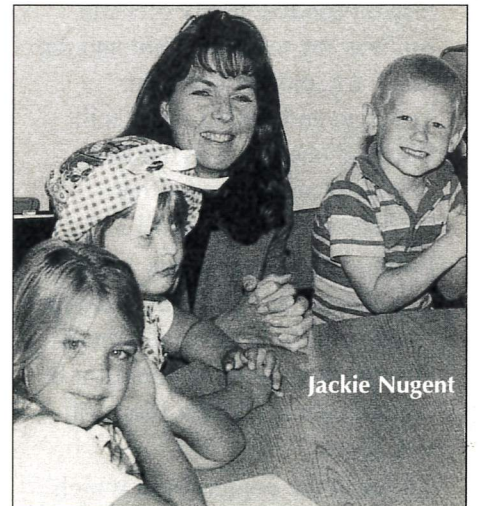
Kids like to participate in activity-based lessons, so I look for ways to make the learning fun. I really like that part of teaching. I want to prepare well so that each lesson will teach the kids something they didn't already know.

**Michelle LeMay:** Fifth- and sixth-graders are independent, and they have a lot of energy and excitement. Just



being around these kids charges my spiritual battery! What I teach is the most important subject in the world!

**Jackie Nugent:** I have heard it said, "Kids are the only thing we can take to heaven with us." That thought, coupled with the chance to share God's Word with our youth, makes teaching Sunday school a wonderful experience.



*Thanks to these congregations and their Sunday school teachers for their input:*

**St. Mark, Citrus Heights, California**  
Michelle LeMay, Dr. Mark LeMay, Sheri Nueske, Jackie Nugent, Charlie Spedden

**St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wisconsin**  
Rebecca Hein, Jen Orth

**St. Luke, Watertown, Wisconsin**  
Sue Roberts, Melissa Schultz, Ruth Uttech

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

# The Liturgy: centered on Jesus Christ

The Liturgy allows the gospel to be the most important part of worship.

James P. Tiefel

For Martin Luther, there was no one more important than Christ. Why? Perhaps more than many of us, Luther understood what life was like without Christ. He was sharing his own experience when he wrote,

Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay;  
Death brooded darkly o'er me.  
Sin was my torment night and day;  
In sin my mother bore me.  
Yet deep and deeper still I fell;  
Life had become a living hell,  
So firmly sin possessed me  
(*Christian Worship* [CW] 377:2).

Luther, the great sinner, knew that in Christ he had a great Savior. For Luther, Christ was the sun in God's universe—the foundation of God's salvation and the focus of God's Word:

Christ is the center from which the entire circle has been drawn and towards which it looks and that whoever directs himself to this Center belongs in the circle. For Christ is the central spot of the circle; and when viewed aright, all stories in Holy Scripture refer to Christ.

Luther knew that the gospel, the good news about Christ, was not

only the most important part of every Christian's life, but also the vital ingredient in Christian worship. He wrote, "I have no one to sing and chant about but Christ. Him alone I proclaim, in him alone I glory."

Luther joined his thoughts about worship to those of St. Paul, who wrote: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

## Let the gospel be the most important part of worship

The Liturgy, born in the early centuries after Christ, recast by the Lutheran reformers, and now revised for our 21st century use, allows the gospel to be the most important part of our Sunday worship.

Think of the songs of the Liturgy. We sing them . . . Luther sang them. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.



You take away the sin of the world: receive our prayer.

You sit at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us.

For you only are holy; you only are the Lord. ("Glory Be to God on High," CW, pps. 16;17)

Think of the words of the Liturgy. We hear them . . . Luther heard them.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who brought the gift of salvation to all people by his death on the tree of the cross so that the devil, who overcame us by a tree would in turn by a tree be overcome (CW, p. 21).

Think of the portions of the Bible that are read as the Liturgy progresses through the church year. We listen, as Luther did, to the story of Christ's birth, his ministry, his battle with Satan, his suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his gift of the Spirit.

Think of the sacrament of the altar, which the Christian liturgy has included since Christians first began to use the Liturgy. We have received the sacrament . . . as did Luther—the true body and blood of Christ given for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Think of the sacrament of baptism, as it fits naturally into the Liturgy. We, as did Luther, find daily comfort in our baptism.

Martin Luther knew as well as anyone knows today that the Word of God does not demand the use of the Liturgy or any other order of service. But Luther also knew that the Liturgy, with its time-tested and

gospel-filled Ordinary and Proper, leads worshipers into the circle whose center is Christ.

### **Let any substitutes for the Liturgy still center on gospel**

Should we ever worship without the Liturgy? We attend weddings and funerals where the lessons are not guided by the church year. There are special services on Christmas and Easter at which we don't sing the customary songs of the Liturgy. There are good reasons to use an order of service other than the Liturgy.

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**Luther knew that the gospel was not only the most important part of every Christian's life, but also the vital ingredient in Christian worship.**

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There can be wrong reasons for worshiping without the Liturgy, however. Beginning in the late 1600s, some Lutherans decided to stop using the Liturgy. We call them Pietists, and we would not have found very much that looked like the Liturgy in their worship.

Sadly, we would not have found much of the gospel either. Over a period of years the Pietists came to the conclusion that Lutherans spent too much time on the gospel. They were not as interested in hearing about what Christ had done for them as they were in thinking about what they could do for Christ. They were not content to hear that Christ had saved them; they wanted to

experience an inner feeling that proved they were saved.

The Liturgy contained more of Christ's work than they wanted and fewer emotional highs than they needed. And so they gave up the Liturgy and its church year and the sacraments. Eventually, many German Lutherans gave up on the gospel too.

Did the Pietists set out to lose the gospel? No. But once they gave up the Liturgy, there was little left to correct their tilt toward their emotions and reason. Tragically, the Pietists' mistake is being repeated in thousands of Christian churches today.

May we use a different version of the Liturgy than those found in *Christian Worship*? Of course. Does the Liturgy need to have the same prayers, the same songs, and the same musical setting every Sunday? Of course not. The Bible gives us freedom to use worship rites that best suit our needs.

But that freedom does not include removing worship's focus on the gospel. St. Paul wrote, "For what I received I passed on to you *as of first importance*: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

Lutherans value the Liturgy because the Liturgy makes the gospel the most important part of worship. And that's where the gospel belongs.

NL

*James Tiefel is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*

# Legal or not, evil is as evil does

What the government won't do for us, we need to do for ourselves.

Rolfe Westendorf

**A**bortion is legal in our country. Since 1973 millions of babies have been killed in the womb by abortion doctors. Even the ugly "partial birth" abortion is legal. The doctor can still kill the baby, even when everything but the head is outside the womb. Congress passed a law to make this form of abortion illegal, but President Clinton vetoed it because it would "infringe on a woman's right to choose."

Abortion is legal. That doesn't make it right.

## Legal doesn't make right

Drunkenness is legal in our country. You can drink yourself unconscious without being arrested, as long as you don't bother anyone else while you're doing it.

Drunkenness is legal. That doesn't make it right.

Obscenity is legal in our country. The courts have made a mockery of prosecutors who attempt to enforce well-meaning obscenity laws, while the sellers of pornography go laughing all the way to the bank. Prime-time television dumps moral garbage into our living rooms. Big-time rappers applaud murder and rape, and nobody can stop them.

Obscenity is legal in our country. That doesn't make it right.

## Legal protects rights

It would be nice to have the government remove all this evil from public view so we wouldn't have to worry about it. But that's not hap-

pening, and it probably won't. This is a free country that protects the "rights" of its citizens. Some enjoy obscenity and drunkenness, and they want to get rid of inconvenient babies. The laws that would prevent these evils would deprive them of that pleasure, and powerful organizations are committed to defending their "rights," no matter how self-destructive they may be.

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**If we have to lead ourselves instead of waiting for the government to do it, we had better be sure we are going in the right direction. The Bible can give us the direction we need.**

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There's good in that concern for rights. Some day our rights may come under attack. Some day the majority might want to rob us of our right to teach God's Word in our schools, or to worship as we please. Some people think that religion is a bad thing, and their numbers are growing. Some day the courts may have to protect our rights as they are now protecting the pornographer's rights.

## Legal and right is our challenge

It would be nice if the government would remove these evils for

us. But that's not likely to happen. In the meantime these evils have gotten worse and worse, until we hesitate to let our teenagers out of the house or turn on the TV.

But freedom is a two-edged sword. The law can't prevent obscenity on television, but the law can't make us watch it either. The law won't prevent the killing of unborn babies, but we can be sure that none of our babies are killed. The law can't prevent the pornographer from peddling his wares, but the law can't prevent us from declaring that his merchandise is destructive and disgusting.

Instead of waiting for government to eliminate these evils for us, we need to be eliminating the evils for ourselves. TV is a good example. We have the power to control the entertainment that comes through the tube, so we aren't watching unacceptable, sinful programming. That takes work. It takes time. It would be easier if the government would do it for us. But why should lawmakers listen to complaints of those who don't bother to turn it off in their own homes?

There is no law that says we must allow our children to roam the streets and pick up all the garbage that's out there. We have the power to control our children's environment, at least during the first 10 years, if we have the will to do so. Why should lawmakers listen to the complaints of those who make no

effort to control what their children hear and see?

The government has the job to pass good laws that will protect families and children. But government may never agree on how this is to be done. Does that mean that God's people are helpless to protect themselves? Certainly not.

### Legal under God is our direction

We need to begin by getting serious about God's Word and worship. If we have to lead ourselves instead of waiting for the government to do it, we had better be sure we are going in the right direction. The Bible can give us the direction we need. God's Spirit working in the Word can give us the strength and conviction to go in that direction. God's Son, who has won our salvation, gives us the reason.

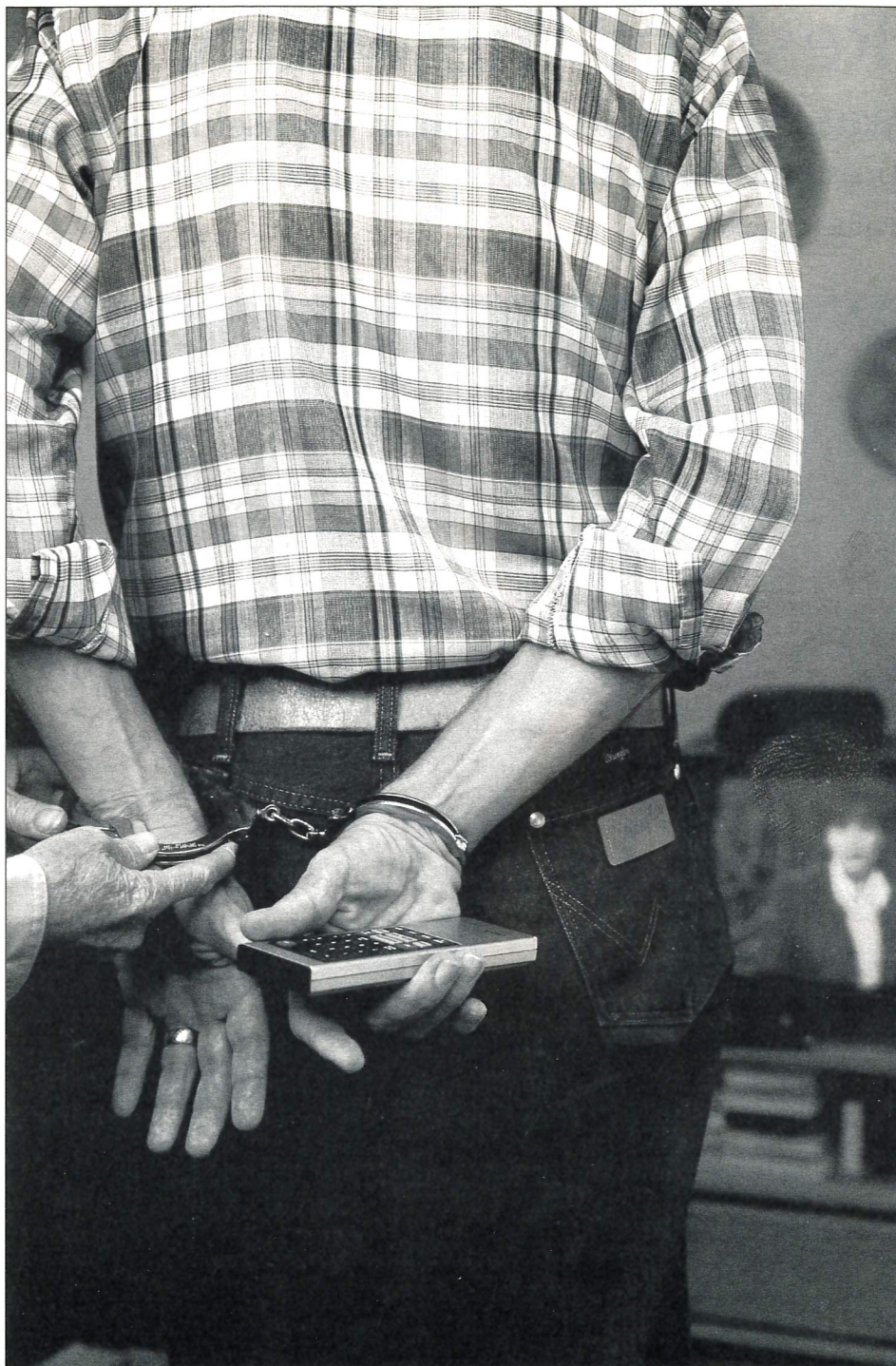
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**Some day the courts  
may have to protect  
our rights as they are  
now protecting the  
pornographer's rights.**

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We need to put an end to the rule of money in our homes, and let God have the last word. Abundant living doesn't depend on abundant possessions. A satisfied life is not the result of sensual satisfaction. School cannot produce useful citizens without the solid foundation that the parents lay. And self-indulgence cannot produce that solid foundation.

We need to tend our children as if no one else could be trusted to do



it, and expose our children only to those who have earned our trust.

Does evil have to be illegal? Obviously not. Evil is already illegal in the eyes of God. Let God's people see evil as God sees evil.

Then we'll be getting someplace, even if the government never gets anyplace at all.

*Rolfe Westendorf is pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee.*

NL

# Rest for the weary

With the help of a Christian counselor, a woman faces her guilt-filled past and looks to her hope-filled future.

Pamela Stokes



Anyone looking at me from the outside saw a young woman who appeared very sure of herself. I spoke with deep conviction about a life in Christ. Yet, inside, a fierce struggle was going on. I knew I had salvation and the promise of eternal life in heaven through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Yet Satan held me in bondage through lies he fed me about my past.

## Recognize you are a child of God

As an infant I was baptized into Christ, yet as a child I was sexually abused. It was not a one-time occasion, and I believed I was worthless. Instead of laying claim to forgiveness in Jesus, as a young adult I lived a life of promiscuousness. I suffered emotional abuse and abandonment. Physical abuse reared its ugly head.

As an adult trying to live a Christian life, I listened to Satan's lie that told me not to tell anyone about my past. I believed I was a sinner damned, not a saint forgiven. I feared if I told anyone about my past, my credibility as a witness for Christ would be gone.

Then God's intervention led me to my first counseling session. With his help, I opened the door to my past and told my Christian counselor about areas in my life that led me to believe I was worthless. His reaction was not dismay, shock, or disgust. He responded with Christ-centered



advice: "Okay, so this happened to you, and you've done things you regret. Have you sought forgiveness? Then all those things have been taken to the cross and freely forgiven. Let's learn how to change your thinking and behavior so the past doesn't rule your future."

I learned there is no sin that God has not forgiven through Jesus, or any wound that cannot be healed by the Holy Spirit. I learned to lay claim to the truth that I am a child of God. I let Satan know who I was by speaking the truth out loud: "I, Pamela Stokes, am a child of God."

### **Fix your eyes on Jesus**

Believing I was a child of God was like being set free from prison. Along with this freedom, though, began restless days and sleepless nights. Doubts, fears, and even signs of a struggle with demons plagued my mind.

I knew that when my mind told me not to tell my counselor what went on in my head, I needed to share my thoughts with him. We would pray and lay these thoughts at the feet of Jesus so they could no longer have power over me.

When my soul was crying for peace, I received the best advice—"Fix your eyes on Jesus." "Don't depend on other people; they may let you down. Jesus knows your needs and will never let you down."

The Bible gave me direction: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such

opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:2,3). These words gave me strength to continue counseling even when I thought I was losing my grip on life.

### **I hadn't had the strength to walk through forgiveness on my own. But the Lord led me to victory.**

Satan wants us to believe we are helpless human beings, and he is all powerful. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, all power was taken from Satan. His fangs and claws were removed, but how he can roar. In prayer I was able to silence him.

The Lord's Prayer is a powerful prayer that speaks for all our needs. I prayed it when full of doubt and in need of encouragement. I knew when things seemed beyond hope and I didn't have the strength to call out to God, the Holy Spirit interceded for me with groans that words cannot express.

### **Live as a child of light through forgiveness**

Although I believed I was God's child and knew how to stand firm in my faith, something was missing. My past still seemed to have a strong effect on my future. Anger and bitterness burned in my heart against the people who had wronged me. Not only had I not forgiven others, but I hadn't forgiven myself for not turning from sin when my conscious spoke to me. The restless yearning in my heart was the Lord

calling me. He was asking me to show mercy to others, as he had shown mercy to me.

By the grace of God, one afternoon I sought freedom through forgiveness. With the counselor praying with me, I went on my knees before God and denounced any fellowship I might have had with Satan, claimed my inheritance as a child of God, and brought before the Lord the names and deeds of those I had not forgiven. The blood of Jesus washed clean the anger and bitterness.

I hadn't had the strength to walk through forgiveness on my own. But the Lord led me to victory.

I still need to wade through many things in counseling. Life as a Christian hasn't become problem free. It won't be until the Lord calls me home. But I know that whatever lies ahead God will never leave me nor forsake me.

God uses tools to aid us in our walk on earth. He used the ministry of a Christian counselor and the willing heart of a friend to help me find peace. He called, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

**NL**

*Pamela Stokes received her Christian counseling through Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, which has offices in Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota. She is a member at St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wisconsin.*

# Good things come to those who wait

Before Christmas arrived, there was a long genealogy of those who never saw Jesus, but waited patiently for his advent.

Wayne A. Laitinen

The secular world exhausts its celebration of Christmas between Thanksgiving and Dec. 25. During the same time, the church waits in patient expectation for the Savior to be born at God's appointed time. And we are waiting again—this time for Jesus to return to judge the living and the dead. Until then, the immediate gratification of celebration gives way to the fasting, prayer, and vigilance of Advent.

**The four weeks of Advent are a snapshot of the history between the time of Adam and the time of Jesus' birth.**

Think of it. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, the Lord promised a Son who would crush the head of Satan and restore eternal life.

Christmas would be just around the corner, or so they thought. Perhaps that's why they named their firstborn, "Cain": "I have gotten a man—the Lord."

But their anticipation of Christmas was premature. So they named their next son, "Abel": "Futility." They probably didn't think this son would turn out any

better than his brother. No Christmas here, either.

In fact, Christmas wouldn't arrive for thousands of years. Before Christmas arrived, there was a long genealogy of those who never saw Jesus, but waited patiently for his advent: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David.

But the highway of history between Adam and Jesus was also strewn with the carnage of those who couldn't wait for Christmas to come. There was Cain, who wanted his will done—now! There were those who were still laughing at Noah when the storm broke. There were those whose bodies were strewn across the desert floor because they longed for the steak and potatoes of Egypt instead of the milk and honey of the Promised Land. Wicked King Saul despaired of God's help and fell on his own sword. Many of God's people succumbed to world religions, and eventually were carried into exile by their enemies. For the last 400 years of Old Testament history, God wouldn't even speak to them.

**At just the right time—in their midnight of despair—God broke through.** After 4,000 years of waiting, Christmas finally arrived. The Lord had not forgotten his ancient promise after all. The humble virgin stared in amazement into the tiny eyes of God as he nursed at her breast. He created her. Yet the Almighty laid aside his power, took on flesh, was born of this human mother, and depended on her for food, warmth, and protection.

Why? To take our places under his own justice. Those miniature fists would, one day, be curled over spikes. The tender flesh that covered his ribs would be pierced by a sword.

Is Christmas worth the wait? You bet it is. And, now that we wait for Jesus' second advent, we know that our watchfulness, prayer, and meditation on his Word will not be disappointed either. Do not lose heart. He will be here soon!

NL

Wayne Laitinen is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

JESUS Joseph Heli Matthat Levi Melki Jannai Joseph Mattathias  
 Amos Nahum Esli Naggai Maath Mattathias Semein Josech Joda  
 Joanan Rhesa Zerubbabel Shealtiel Neri Melki Addi Cosam  
 Elmadam Er Joshua Eliezer Jorim Matthat Levi Simeon Judah  
 Joseph Jonam Eliakim Melea Menna Mattatha Nathan David  
 Jesse Obed Boaz Salmon Nahshon Amminadab Ram Hezron  
 Perez Judah Jacob Isaac Abraham Terah Nahor Serug Reu  
 Peleg Eber Shelah Cainan Arphaxad Shem Noah Lamech  
 Methuselah Enoch Jared Mahalalel Kenan Enosh Seth Adam GOD

# Imagine hardships; see blessings

Communism didn't dampen these Christians' dedication to Christ.

John Vogt

Imagine communist graffiti being sprayed on your church sign and fences.

Imagine the government staging communist youth rallies on your church's front yard during your Sunday services.

Imagine the government confiscating your church property to use it as barracks for border guards.

Imagine being forced to wait 25 years for permission to build a simple church, and then being granted permission only on the condition that it not look like a church.

Although you may only imagine these things, they really happened to the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELF) of Germany. ELF is a sister church of WELS and a partner in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

ELF managed to survive and hold solidly to the Scriptures under 45 years of communism. At the ELF's 81st synodical convention in Steeden, from May 30-June 2, WELS representatives learned about more struggles this church—and those living in East Germany—faced under communism.

Although these people were convicted of no crime, they were kept behind a wall for 30 years, not being able to visit friends or stores just two blocks away.

Citizens were forced to keep a "housebook" of all visitors to their homes. Within 24 hours of each visit they were required to take that book to the police to have it approved and the necessary stamp affixed.



Communist graffiti covers the entrance to the ELF property in Berlin, Germany.

Still, one young ELF pastor left the freedom of West Germany and put himself under communism in order to serve the congregations that called him. The churches were allowed to meet, but couldn't post service times. They paid a minimum of \$350,000 for half of an old, rundown house and an attached garage. Out of that, they built a classroom, library, dormitory rooms, and kitchen for their seminary.

ELF now enjoys freedom from an oppressive government and freedom to reach out with God's Word beyond the walls and fences of East Germany.

These Christians, no more in number than a large WELS congregation, support 17 pastors, 42 churches and preaching places, and a seminary. At the same time, they are doing mission work in three countries.

Serious new challenges posed by Germany's reunification remain. Oppression has been replaced by a spiritually indifferent society. Only two percent of Germans attend church. Moreover, there is the economic adjustment. The cost of everything has greatly increased, and high unemployment plagues eastern Germany.

WELS helps ELF through the Germany Support Fund, which depends on the nonbudgetary offerings of our members. Without such help, ELF would face severe hardships.

NL

For more information, contact Pastor John Vogt, 1001 N Capitol Ave, Lansing MI 48906; 517/485-4118 or 485-0250. Or contact the Germany Support Fund, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

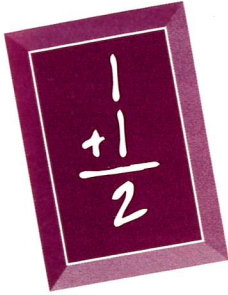
John Vogt is pastor at Emanuel First, Lansing, Michigan.



## Arizona-California

**Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.**, dedicated a 3,000 square foot school addition on Sept. 1. The area included two classrooms, an office, and restrooms. . . . **Hope, Penryn, Calif.**, opened the only new WELS Lutheran elementary school this year—with an enrollment of four.

*Hermann John*



## Michigan

**Shepherd of Peace, Worthington, Ohio**, celebrated the groundbreaking of their new church on Aug. 25. . . . **June Koester** retired after 43 years of teaching Sunday school at Peace, Granger, Ind.

*David M. Zahn*

## Minnesota

**Cross, Rockford**, celebrated its 90th anniversary on Oct. 13. . . . **Grace, Nelson, Wis.**, celebrated its 100th anniversary on Aug. 18. . . . **Walter Gutknecht** retired from teaching Sunday school at Immanuel, Buffalo. He taught for 50 years. . . . **St. John's, Lake City**, celebrated **Arthur Hackbarth's** 40th anniversary in the teaching ministry.

## Southeastern Wisconsin

**St. John, Burlington**, celebrated the 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry of **Eileen Weeks** on Sept. 29. . . . **Epiphany, Racine**, dedicated its new school addition on Aug. 25. Epiphany and **First Evangelical, Racine**, jointly operate the school with pre-K through grade 3 at Epiphany and grades 4-8 at First Evangelical. . . . **Atonement, Milwaukee**, dedicated its new school on Sept. 8.

*George Ferch*

# District news

## Dakota-Montana



The 21st area Lutheran high school held its first opening service in August. Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D., has 23 students and four full-time staff members. The only WELS high school in the Dakota-Montana District, GPLHS currently conducts classes in a vacant public school. In the next few years GPLHS plans to build classrooms and housing on already-owned land.

## Western Wisconsin

**Jehovah, Altura, Minn.**, celebrated its 100th anniversary on Aug. 18. . . . **St. James, Cambridge**, commemorated its 100th anniversary with three special services in October. . . . **A joint Reformation Festival service** for the central conference was held on Oct. 27 at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills. . . . **St. Paul, Wonevoc**, celebrated its 125th anniversary with a heritage Sunday on Oct. 27.

*Elton Stroh*



**John Richmond** (right), the Milwaukee area representative for Lutheran Brotherhood, presents a check to **Ron Heins**, parish planner, to help continue the parish assistance program. **Wayne Mueller**, parish services administrator, looks on. Parish assistance, a WELS consulting service, helps self-supporting congregations assess and plan their ministry of outreach and nurture. Over 100 congregations have used this service during the last few years. For more information, call 414/771-1235.

## News briefs

- For the 1996-97 school year, **\$500 for faculty growth and development through group inservice training was made available to each of the 362 Lutheran elementary schools.** The Aid Association for Lutherans grants, if all WELS schools apply, will total \$181,000.
- **Atonement Lutheran School, Milwaukee, received a grant** from the Wisconsin Advanced Telecommunications Foundation to develop a computer laboratory and a computer network for administration, teacher, student, adult, and community use and for private school modeling in the state. Atonement was one of 17 applicants who received cash grants; 179 proposals were submitted.
- **The Builders For Christ (BFC) video received a Telly Award.** The video introduces congregations and members to BFC—a group of WELS members who help mission congregations build churches. The Telly Awards were established to showcase and give recognition to outstanding non-network and cable film and video programming. Past recipients include Columbia Pictures, Nike, and Sony. Steve Zambo, a member at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis., produced the video, and Steve Boettcher a member at Calvary, Thiensville, Wis., directed it.

## rē·li·giōn

### Defining religion

**inspiration:** The teaching that God breathed into the writers of Scripture the truths he wanted them to record in the very words he chose. The Holy Spirit used each writer's vocabulary, writing style, life situation, etc., to convey the very message he intended us to have.

## Missionary conference offers encouragement

"Going on to maturity" was the theme of the Latin American Missionary Conference, held in Boca Raton, Fla., in July. Members of WELS Latin American Executive Committee and the Board for World Missions met with WELS and ELS missionaries from Brazil; Colombia; the Dominican Republic; Mexico; Peru; Puerto Rico; El Paso, Tex.; and Miami, Fla. They worshiped, studied God's Word, gave work reports, and

shared ideas for future cooperation in Latin America.

Each day's discussion centered on a different stage of training in various fields—evangelism, nurture, theological training, and partnership in ministry. Missionary wives had separate meetings and Bible studies aimed at helping them understand their role as missionary wives.

*Missionary Timothy Satorius*

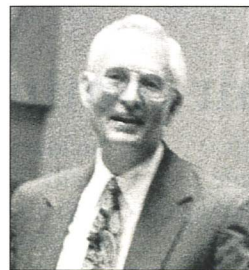


*Attendees of the Latin American Missionary Conference. This conference allowed missionaries to exchange ideas as they work toward a common goal. "Even though each field is different, we still need to work together," said Timothy Satorius, missionary in Puerto Rico. "We can produce transferable materials and encourage one another as we share the gospel in different cultures."*

## Valleskey heads seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, has a new president. The post was left vacant this summer when Armin Panning accepted a call to teach full-time at the seminary and stepped down as president.

Seminary professor David Valleskey accepted the call to fill the position.



*David Valleskey, new president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.*

Valleskey, who served as vice president and financial aid officer, still teaches pastoral theology and New Testament.

A 1962 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Valleskey served in Livingston, Mont., and San Jose, Calif., before going to the seminary in 1984.



## YOUTH NEWS

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

### Youth rallies share the promise

This summer, three regional youth rallies were held across the U.S. "Regional youth rallies offer a great opportunity for spiritual growth," says Jerry Kastens, youth discipleship administrator. "They are smaller and can be more personal than the international rally."

From June 28-30, youth from the Arizona-California District gathered in Southern California under the theme—Get a Life, Follow Jesus.

A second rally was at the School of the Mines, Rapid City, S.D., from July 8-11. A total of 247 teens and adults participated. Under the theme "Operation Sovereign Shield," a staff sergeant and a captain, both WELS members who serve in the armed forces, encouraged students to put on the full armor of God. WELS president, Karl R. Gurgel, led all devotions and the closing service.

"The rally left us spiritually and emotionally charged up," says Kastens.

The third rally was at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from July 29-31.

Besides building up the teens in their faith, the rally offered youth an opportunity to share their faith. The 239 rally goers traveled to Madison, Wis., to participate in a "Share the Promise Canvass."

The teens and counselors joined



At one rally, teens participated in a trust pass. In addition to activities, youth studied God's Word and shared what they learned with others.

110 members from six Madison-area congregations. They invited residents to congregations' worship services, vacation Bible schools, Sunday schools, Lutheran elementary schools, and Bible classes.

But two of the canvassers did more than share the promise. When the two went to one home, they were confronted by a kitchen fire. They helped put out the fire, held a terrified child, and called 911 for help. When the fire department arrived, the canvassers left the house and continued to invite people, who lined the streets when they heard the sirens, to learn about Jesus.

Through the canvass, 3,600 homes and apartments were contacted. Of those, 1,700 were invited to

hear God's Word, and 100 individuals and families expressed interest in attending the WELS congregation.

Pastors and congregation leaders were impressed by the willing service and good conduct of the teens. Residents also had favorable comments. "It is wonderful to see teenagers out inviting people to hear God's Word," said one resident.

"We hope to have more youth service projects like this," says Kastens. "Youth want to be built up in their faith, but they also want to share their faith. These rallies are a great way for teens to serve their Lord."

To see footage of the teen canvass, see the November edition of WELS Connection.

### Tornado repair continues

After a tornado ripped through Oakfield, Wis., the townspeople pulled together and started picking up the pieces. WELS members also stepped in and helped St. Luke's, Oakfield, the WELS congregation hit by the tornado.

Along with volunteering time, effort, and personal items, WELS

members supported the church financially. Ken Strack, Committee on Relief chairman, presented a check for \$50,000 to St. Luke's members.

Several members whose homes were demolished have already purchased existing homes, while others are in the planning stages for rebuilding on-site.

Church services are being held at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, and the elementary school meets in a former public grade school eight miles away. An architect has been selected in order to begin construction of a new complex that ought to be ready by next school year.

## Students use vacation time to help with VBS

Besides the usual activities of swimming, tanning, working at a summer job, and relaxing, many teens helped spread the Word to children in vacation Bible school (VBS) this summer.

Over 50 students from nine WELS high schools and colleges, and two Milwaukee colleges spent two weeks helping eight inner city Milwaukee churches with VBS outreach.

Students spent their first week canvassing thousands of homes, telling about the upcoming VBS programs. They served as teachers and helpers for VBS for the participating churches during the second week.

"These young people are blessed with a fantastic cross-cultural experience," says Keith Tullberg, pastor at Siloah and the VBS project director. "It's the best of two worlds—they get to share the gospel and have fun."

For many of the 832 children who attended the outreach-oriented VBS programs offered by the churches, this may have been the first time they heard the gospel, says Tullberg. For example, at Siloah, 208 children came to VBS; only eight were from

Siloah's grade school.

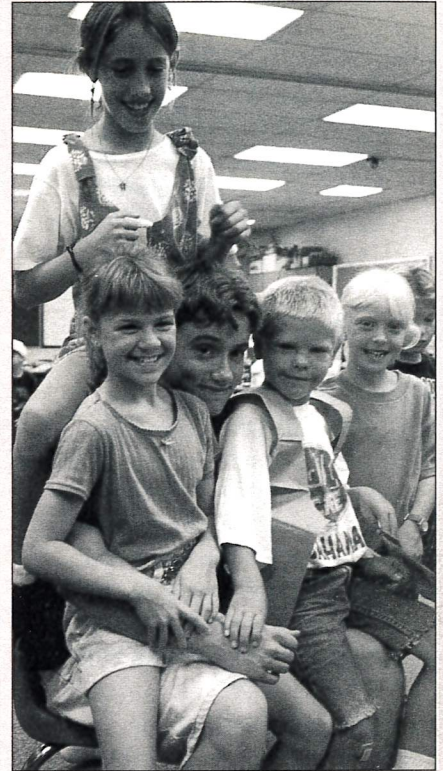
"Many children heard the gospel, and that never returns empty," says Tullberg. "But if only one child believes, it's all worth it."

Nine students from the National Honor Society at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., spent a week helping Abiding Love, Loveland, Colo. They served as teachers for VBS in the morning and spent afternoons canvassing new areas of Loveland.

Over 50 attended VBS at Abiding Love, a large number for a mission congregation with only 55 members.

This is the fourth year students at Lakeside have participated in a summer service project. They've also participated in VBS programs in Arizona and Wisconsin, and promoted Christian education in Canada.

"It's good for students to have a flavor of mission work," says Emily Armstrong, advisor of the National Honor Society and teacher at Lakeside. "It's heartening for them to know there are hard-working Christians everywhere who are striving to spread the Word."



Greg Pufahl, a student at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., surrounded by his fans. Pufahl and eight other students from Lakeside helped Abiding Love, Loveland, Colo., with their VBS program this year.

## New curriculum offers worship education

Everyone in the congregation can learn more about worship through *Come Worship Christ*, a new worship curriculum offered by WELS Commission on Worship.

"*Come Worship Christ* presents an approach to worship education for the entire congregation," says Bryan Gerlach, worship administrator. "The Bible gives us a great deal of freedom, but biblical principles guide the use of our Christian freedom. Grounding Christians in those principles takes a consistent congregational approach. *Come Worship Christ* encourages that approach."

Co-authored by James Tiefel, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, and Stephen Geiger, tutor at Martin Luther College,

New Ulm, Minn., *Come Worship Christ* includes nine courses for groups such as adult and teen Bible classes, worship committee, altar guild, and ushers. Each course has a teacher's guide and reproducible study guides. There are also self-study courses for organists and choir directors.

"Both in content and appearance, the study guides are aimed at each unique audience," says Geiger. "Youth and adults, both new members and old, can grow in their appreciation of Lutheran worship."

All courses are enhanced by four videotapes, produced with assistance



from WELS Mass Media Ministry. The videos serve as a "primer" for the courses.

"These are more than 'talking head' presentations," says Tiefel. "These videos present basic worship concepts in a visually appealing and stimulating way."

Geiger adds, "The videos whet appetites with a taste of worship principles. The worksheets follow up with menus of Bible study and application."

*Come Worship Christ* costs \$69.95 plus shipping and handling. Order through Commission on Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3278; FAX 414/256-3899.



**Life Before Birth—The Creator's Blueprint** (Code 8270)—1995, 54 min. color JSCA (\$7.50) Offered by the Creation Research Society to disprove the evolutionist's contention that the development of the fetus repeats the supposed changes that took place in evolution. Rather, the development of the embryo is evidence of God's marvelous design.

**Preview of a Birth** (Code 8288)—1996, 15 min. color JSCA (\$7.50) This video describes in detail human development from sperm and ovum to birth. It includes no anti-abortion appeal, but the pro-life message is obvious.

*Videos are available for rental by congregations, schools, and church groups. Order from Audiovisual Library Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.*

**DON'T  
KEEP THIS  
MAGAZINE!**

**Share it!**

## Hurricane spares missions

WELS congregations in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico experienced relatively little damage to their churches and homes from Hurricane Hortense in September, escaping with only limited flooding and loss of power and water for a few days.

Others in the island did not escape so easily. Heavy rains of up to 12 inches caused flash-flooding and mud slides in Puerto Rico, destroying more than 650 homes. Over a dozen are dead and many were missing.

## Large congregations given networking opportunity

Congregations who average over 500 in worship will have an opportunity to share their strengths, as well as learn from other large congregations, at the first ever Large Congregation Networking workshop in St. Francis, Wis., on Feb. 4-6, 1997.

"Large congregations asked for opportunities to get together with others who have the same challenges," says Bruce Becker, administrator for adult discipleship. "They learn from one another and share in the uniqueness of being a large congregation."

Pastors and leaders of large congregations, together with the Commission on Adult Discipleship, are planning the workshop, using the

theme "Sharing our blessings."

The workshop, open to all large congregation leaders, offers four major presentations; 10 workshops on topics such as tracking members, setting priorities, planning for the future, and coordinating volunteers; as well as opportunities to network.

Workshops, conducted by WELS large congregation leaders, are geared to large congregations and designed to facilitate interaction.

"The hope is, if it works well, similar workshops could be developed for other congregations based on size or type," says Becker.

## Storm hits Arizona congregation

Once again, nature struck a WELS congregation.

In August, a microburst hit Arizona. Members of Grace, Glendale, weathered 100-miles-an-hour winds. "We have 7 inches of rain a year, and that day we had 1.3 inches in an hour and a half," said David Clark, pastor at Grace.

At least 10 members homes sustained some sort of damage—knocked down fences, damaged roofs, and water leaks. One family couldn't live in their home because the storm moved the air conditioner from the back of the house to the front. Some

went without power for two days.

"It's nothing like the hurricanes that hit the East Coast," said Clark. "But this is the desert; we don't get storms like this."

Repair work is slow. "Roofing is the biggest problem," said Clark. "We've had two inches of rain in the past two weeks (one-third of total yearly rainfall) and when people don't have roofs that's a big problem."

He continues, "But the good thing is that no one was hurt. Things were damaged, but no one was killed. Money, things—the Lord supplies those."



## Celebrating hurricane recovery

One year after a hurricane ravaged the island, St. John's, Antigua, held a hurricane recovery celebration service. Since Hurricane Luis hit on Sept. 5, 1995, building and rebuilding homes and lives has kept members busy.

"This service is our special way of thanking God for the way he blessed us from the hurricane," says David Kehl, pastor at St. John's.

Many of the blessings came from the generosity of WELS members.

Builders for Christ sent 60 men and women to help repair storm-damaged property. Nearly 2,000 WELS churches, schools, groups, and individuals gave \$320,000 to the mission.

The money helped rebuild church property, 21 member homes, six non-member homes, and three community facilities. Enough money remains to rebuild nine member homes, six non-member homes, and two more community facilities.

"We went in a thousand directions with repairs," says Mark Henrich, pastor at St. John's, "but in the end it sharpened our focus on why we're here as a Lutheran congregation."



Members of St. John's, Antigua, gathered on Sept. 1 to thank God for the blessings he has given since Hurricane Luis hit in September 1995. "Through all the prayers, gifts, and workers that came to us," says Mark Henrich, pastor at St. John's, "we, as a congregation, appreciate how special it is to be a part of the WELS family."



*Before and after—On NL's November '95 cover, Pastor David Kehl was shown visiting with Aloma Gordon whose home was hit by Hurricane Luis. In September '96, Gordon and Kehl pose in front of Gordon's new home. Her new house was paid for, in part, by money sent by WELS members. Gordon lived in her storm-damaged house while the new one was being built around it. When her new house was complete, the old one was torn down, and the remains thrown out the window.*

One example is their renewed sense of outreach. "We feel even more than before that now is the time to accomplish things, to reach out—not just talk and plan, but go and do."

St. John's had been trying to start family Bible nights on the south side of the island. The pastors had suggested twice a month. After the hurricane, that wasn't often enough for the members. Now, family Bible nights are held every Tuesday.

Also, the members have a better focus to care about others' needs. At the celebration service—and throughout the month of September—a special offering was collected for those in Oakfield, Wis., whose homes were destroyed by a tornado.

"Although we can never truly repay everyone who helped," says Kehl, "we can help others who are going through similar challenges."

Through hardship, the congregation was tested, and emerged stronger. Says Henrich: "It's like the congregation said, 'Look what great things

God has done for us, and how he brought us through all this.' Now they have more confidence that we can go out and do great things for the Lord."



After eating supper, Jacob (7), Joel (5), and Jamie (3) take turns saying their memory work. Jamie loves giving her dad a big hug after attempting to keep up with her big brothers. Usually it turns out to be quite an interesting Bible passage, such as Genesis 1:1, "In da beginning, God created da heavens and d'sert!"

*John and June Hering  
Mito City, Ibaraki, Japan*



Most news reported in this section is derived from Religion News Service. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or *Northwestern Lutheran*.

## Building faith considered a benefit of youth groups

Knowing that today's teens need extra spiritual support, 52 percent of Lutheran parents say that membership in a church youth group is either an extremely important or a very important part of a young person's life.

The information, taken from a national survey by Lutheran Brotherhood of 515 Lutheran parents, showed that among four benefits related to youth group membership (building good friendships, building self-esteem, building faith in God, and teaching moral values), Lutheran parents say building faith in God is most important. In fact, 49 percent believe that building young people's faith is an extremely important part of youth groups.

There is little difference in the importance people place upon youth group involvement based on where they live. Forty-nine percent of those living in urban communities, 54 percent of those living in suburban communities, and 54 percent of those in rural communities say it is extremely important or very important for children to be involved in church groups.

*Lutheran Brotherhood did not indicate how many respondents came from each Lutheran body or if the results varied from one to another. —ed.*

## Archeological digs in Israel threatened

In August, archaeologists were evicted from Modi'in, the largest construction site in Israel. This raises new fears that ultra-Orthodox Jewish members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government are determined to increase the already considerable influence that Jewish religious law has over the nation's secular majority.

Israel's deputy housing minister, Rabbi Meir Porush said it was more important to protect Jewish remains than study biblical sites. Traditional Jewish law forbids disturbing graves.

The decision-stunned archaeologists viewed it as setting a precedent.

"Once they stop the archaeologists from their research," Yoram Tsafir,



the former head of Hebrew University's archaeology department, told the Associated Press, "we lose our ability to study history, the origins of the country."

Ultra-Orthodox protests at construction sites have long been common in Israel. But, lacking political power, past protests were ineffective as Israel's secular Jewish majority prevailed. Normally, bones were dug up and reburied elsewhere. Only about 10 percent of Israel's Jewish population of more than 5 million is ultra-Orthodox.

## "One true church" finds truth

For over 60 years, the Worldwide Church of God, under its founder Herbert W. Armstrong, proclaimed itself the "one true church." But, in the 10 years since his death, the one-time cult has moved toward orthodox Christian faith. Today, church leaders recognize the Trinity, assert salvation by faith, and view themselves as part of a larger worldwide communion of believers in Jesus Christ.

In the March/April issue of *Plain Truth*, Joseph Tkach Jr., pastor general for the Worldwide Church of God, wrote an apology. In it he stated, "Our flawed doctrinal understanding clouded the plain gospel of Jesus Christ and led to a variety of wrong conclusions and unscriptural prac-

tices. We have much to repent of and apologize for."

Tkach continued, "We make no attempt to cover up the doctrinal and scriptural errors of our past. We are looking our history squarely in the face and confronting the faults and sins we find. They will always remain a part of our history, serving as a perpetual reminder of the dangers of legalism."

Still, not everyone in the Worldwide Church of God agrees. Some 30 splinter groups have formed. The church has lost 40 percent of its members, half its income, and its television program as the leadership has tacked toward traditional Protestant faith. [*Christianity Today*, July 15]



One Sunday, my preschool grandson and I sat together in church. In his sermon, the pastor began giving examples of how people thoughtlessly used the word "hell" in their everyday conversation. As he said each phrase, he included the word "hell" in it. After several examples, Cody, with a concerned look on his face, pointed to the pastor and whispered, "Grandma, if he keeps talking like that, he won't go to heaven!" And we thought Cody wasn't paying attention.

*Debera Fellers  
Fort Collins, Colorado*

## In brief

- A national survey shows that only 13 percent of Americans favor unrestricted access to abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. The study, by the Tarrance Group, also shows **52 percent of Americans favor the outlawing of all abortions**, or all abortions except the one percent (according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute) performed for rape/incest/life of mother. [*First Things*, August 1995]
- **Church attendance in a given week is greater among women** (46%) than among men (28%). [Barna Research Group, Feb. 28]
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, the rate of **suicides among elderly Americans jumped nine percent** from 1980 to 1992. Oregon's state health division reports a record number of suicides since 1994, the year the Hemlock Society successfully lobbied for an assisted-suicide initiative. The increase, boosted by a 26 percent increase in suicides among 15- to 24-year-olds, gave Oregon a suicide rate 37 percent higher than the national average. [*First Things*, August 1995]
- On any given weekend, **more than half of America's teenage population is in church**, significantly higher than the adult population. When Gallup polls asked teenagers how important is it that parents go to church with children and teens, 38 percent said very important, and 35 percent said somewhat important. About 55 percent of teens go to church each week, and almost 75 percent think their parents should go too. [*First Things*, May]

*Through my Bible  
in 3 years*

### December 1996

1.  John 17:1-5
2.  Jn. 17:6-19
3.  Jn. 17:20-26
4.  Jn. 18:1-27
5.  Jn. 18:28—19:16
6.  Jn. 19:17-37
7.  Jn. 19:38—20:10
8.  Jn. 20:11-31
9.  Jn. 21:1-14
10.  Jn. 21:15-25
11.  Isaiah 1
12.  Is. 2, 3, 4
13.  Is. 5
14.  Is. 6
15.  Is. 7:1—8:15
16.  Is. 8:16—10:4
17.  Is. 10:5-34
18.  Is. 11, 12
19.  Is. 13:1—14:23
20.  Is. 14:24—16:14
21.  Is. 17, 18, 19
22.  Is. 20:1—22:14
23.  Is. 22:15—23:18
24.  Is. 24, 25
25.  Is. 26, 27
26.  Is. 28
27.  Is. 29:1—30:17
28.  Is. 30:18—32:20
29.  Is. 33, 34, 35
30.  Is. 36, 37
31.  Is. 38, 39

## Constitutional amendment on religious expression considered

Public discussions about a proposal to amend the U.S. Constitution to address religious freedom issues resumed in July before a House of Representatives subcommittee.

The hearing came more than seven months after two Republican members of Congress proposed different versions of a proposed amendment aimed at reducing alleged discrimination against religion in public institutions, and allowing greater religious expression in public places.

Some Republican leaders and groups, such as the National Association of Evangelicals, support

a modified version of language originally proposed by Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill. That language, which has been through numerous drafts, now reads:

"In order to secure the right of the people to acknowledge and serve God according to the dictates of conscience, neither the United States nor any State shall deny any person equal access to a benefit, or otherwise discriminate against any person, on account of religious belief, expression, or exercise. This amendment does not authorize government to coerce or inhibit religious belief, expression, or exercise."

## Judges rule jewelry in jail justified

A federal appeals court struck down Wisconsin state regulations barring inmates from wearing religious jewelry because the jewelry might be used as a weapon. The ruling upheld the constitutionality of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

"The burden of justification is on the state," the appeals court said.

"And (in this case) it has not been carried."

At issue was Wisconsin's rule barring prisoners from wearing items which, because of their shape or configuration, could be used as a weapon. Prison officials refused to make an exception for religious jewelry such as crucifixes.

# Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3231;  
FAX 414/256-3899; e-mail nl@sab.wels.net  
Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY

### Pastors:

**Buske, Mark D.**, from St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., to Our Savior (exp.), Roanoke, Va.

**Carter, William R.**, from Trinity, Coleman, Wis., to St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis.

**Edwards, Robert M.**, from Timothy, St. Louis Park, Minn., to Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.

**Eggers, Brian A.**, from St. Paul, N. Mankato, Minn., to St. Peter, Elmwood, Wis.

**Henkel, Carl R.**, from Mt. Olive, St. Paul, Minn., to Cameroon

**Krueger, Robert M.**, from New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla., to Shepherd of the Hill, Knoxville, Tenn.

**Smith, Jeffrey S.**, from Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M., to Abiding Savior, Elk River, Minn.

**Weber, Jeffrey A.**, from St. John, Ann Arbor, Mich., to St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.

**Zank, Joel M.**, from Resurrection, Rochester, Minn., to Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.

**CORRECTION:** Randy Bader is still pastor at St. John, Vesta, Minn. In addition, he is serving as a one-year visitation pastor to St. Paul, Seaforth/St. John, Belview, 6SE, Minn.

### Teachers:

**Barker, Pamela J.**, to Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.

**Billitz, Kristin**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

**Durfey, Carley**, to Bethany (ELS), Port Orchard, Wash.

**Fenske, Lisa K.**, to Northland LHS, Wausau, Wis.

**Fischer, Sandra K.**, to Bethany, Gibsonia, Pa.

**Fregien, Rachel Orvold**, to Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.

**Getka, Naomi S.**, from Zion, Mobridge, S.D., to Centennial, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Groehler, Barbara A.**, from Resurrection, Rochester, Minn., to Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn.

**Kapanke, Lorna J.**, from St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn., to Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.

**Keibel, John A.**, to Zion, Monroe, Wis.

**Koepf, Kurt W.**, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.

**Koestler, Michael**, to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

**Krohn, Beth L.**, to Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.

**Leerssen, Rosemary C.**, from Bethany (ELS), Princeton, Minn., to Salem, Loretto, Minn.

**Mildebrandt, Cynthia**, to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

**Otte, Mary**, to Trinity, Johnson, Minn.

**Raabe, Michael**, to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.

**Roloff, Sarah M.**, from Grace, Manitowoc, Wis., to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.

**Russel, Karen**, to Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.

**Schram, Max F.**, from Friedens, Kenosha, Wis., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Steffen, Heather M.**, from St. John, Wood Lake, Wis., to Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev.

**Stein, Kathleen G.**, to Lakewood, Tacoma, Wash.  
**Tegen, Kathryn R.**, from St. Paul, Round Lake, Wis., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.

### The synod administration building will close:

November 28 & 29—Thanksgiving

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

## COMING EVENTS

**Pastor conferences**—Fall—Nov. 5, 9 AM, St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn. Spring—Feb. 4, 1997, St. John, New Ulm, Minn. Pastor/teacher/delegate—June 18, 1997, 9:30 AM, St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.

**Dedication**—of Calvary Academy. 4 PM, Nov. 10, at Zion, South Milwaukee. Light lunch and tours follow. 414/571-1522.

**Vesper Singers concert**—Nov. 24, 7 PM. Trinity, 612 S 5 St, Watertown, Wis. Frank Zabell, 414/261-2131.

**Men's retreat**—Jan. 24-25, 1997. Willmar Conference Center, Holiday Inn, Willmar, Minn. \$30. Joel Thomford, 320/235-5996.

**Holy Land tour**—Feb. 17-26, 1997. Led by Lloyd Huebner, retired president of DMLC, New Ulm, Minn. \$2,279. For more information, contact New Ulm Travel/Travel Fun Tours, 507/359-2051; 1-800-657-0151.

**Handbell festivals**—Northeast regional handbell festival—April 5-6, 1997, Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis. Southeast regional—April 19-20, 1997, LPS, Watertown, Wis. Western regional—April 19-20, 1997, Onalaska LHS, Onalaska, Wis. Cheryl Diener, 223 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203.

**Women's retreat**—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. April 11-13, 1997. Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866 (AM only).

**Dedication**—of Morning Star church and school. 3:30 PM, Dec. 1. Potluck follows. N71 W20131 Highland Rd, Jackson WI 53037; 414/677-1377.

**Dedication**—of Beautiful Savior church. 4 PM, Nov. 3. Meal follows. 1825 Sheridan Rd, Petoskey MI 49770; 616/348-2633.

## NEEDED

**Campbell's soup and product labels**—For WELS school needing equipment, games, and teaching tools. Good Shepherd, 2900 42 St NE, Cedar Rapids IA 52402.

**Furnishings for starting worship**—Communion ware, offering plates, candle holders and candles, altar, lecturn/pulpit. For Living Savior exp., SW metro Denver, Colo. Ross Stelljes, 303/904-1214.

**Piano or full size keyboard**—for WELS exploratory congregation. Will arrange shipping. Nathan Strobel, 3037 Corrib Dr, Tallahassee FL 32308; 904/668-0286.

## ITEMS AVAILABLE

**Church furnishings**—Crucifix and collection plates. Free for cost of shipping. New Life, Shoreview, Minn.; 612/484-1169.

**Pews**—4 to 8. Free for cost of shipping. Cross, Rockford, Minn.; 612/477-5981.

**Hymnals**—The Lutheran Hymnal (140). Free for cost of shipping. St. John, Allegan, Mich.; 616/673-6212.

**Organ**—Two keyboard Hammond, one octave pedals. For church or school. Free for cost of shipping. Christine Brown, 414/744-7261.

**Organ**—Hammond, 25 pedals, 2 keyboards, cherry finish. Church or home. Excellent condition. \$1,100. 517/687-2129.

**Recordings**—Martin Luther College 1995 Christmas concert. CDs, \$14; tapes, \$9; \$2 shipping for first item, \$1.50 each additional item. Order from Music Division, MLC, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073-3300.

**Organ**—Allen Theatre Deluxe, two manuals, full pedals, external speakers, 48 stops including chimes. Church, home, or school. Excellent condition. \$2,000. Amy Berg, 608/356-7005.

**Recordings**—Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts concert. CDs, \$13.50; tapes, \$9.50. Send checks made payable to WELS to Commission on Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

## NAMES WANTED

**Seattle, Wash.**—Thomas Gunn, Grace, 11051 Phinney Ave N, Seattle WA 98133; 206/363-8551.

**Redmond, Wash.**—Todd Goldschmidt, Living Hope, 13607 174 Ave NE, Redmond WA 98052; 206/485-4547.

**Tallahassee, Fla.**—Nathan Strobel, Faith, 3037 Corrib Dr, Tallahassee FL 32308-3305; 904/668-0286.

**NW District Institutional Ministry**—Serves the following cities: Waupun, Fond du Lac, Plymouth, Oshkosh, Winnebago, Appleton, Oneida, Green Bay, and Oxford. Refer inmate or patient names to David Tetzlaff, 22 N Park Ave, Fond du Lac WI 54935; 414/925-5525.

**Eagle/Gypsum/Edwards/Vail/Aspen/Glenwood Springs, Colo.**—Brent Merten, Mountain Valley, PO Box 3547, Eagle CO 81631.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Milwaukee**—St. Paul (70). Nov. 3. Service, 10:15 AM; meal follows. 414/871-1520 or 414/444-8261.

## SERVICE TIMES

**Weslaco, Tex.**—Planning to winter in southern Texas? Worship with us at Abiding Savior, Weslaco. Services at 10 AM (8 and 10 AM from December-March). Church is six blocks south of Expressway 83 on Mile 6 West Rd (Westgate Dr). 210/968-5228.

## MLC EXTENSION COURSE

**Understanding Family Systems, SM 9044**—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Jan. 17-18, 24-25, Jan. 31-Feb. 1, Feb. 14-15, 21-22. The course can be applied toward synodical certification for people who have applied for staff ministry certification. Contact Special Services, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142.

# God's people need more

Kenneth A. Cherney

I realize I'm on thin ice here. You may be tired of studies about how the average student in an American school is incapable of learning his own shoe size, or about college graduates who can't name the language that is spoken in Germany.

**But I have to share the results of one more survey with you. This one is for real, and the data are frightening.** If we can trust them, they're a scathing indictment of religion educators—people like me, in other words.

In this survey, large numbers of people identified themselves as Christians.

Unfortunately, large numbers of these "Christians" have never been taught anything about Christianity.

For example: many (29%) of these "Christians" agreed with the unchristian statement, "When he lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins, like other people."

An astounding number (80%) agreed that "the Bible teaches that the Lord helps those who help themselves." This, of course, is one of those "lost verses" of the Bible. You'll find it next to "cleanliness is next to godliness." It's not there.

Most shocking of all, almost a third of these "Christians" agreed with this statement: "Jesus Christ was a great teacher, but he did not come back to physical life after he was crucified." One of these people was probably the same confused church member who wrote in a letter to her denomination's headquarters: "If our Lord Jesus knew what you were doing to his Church, he'd turn over in his grave!" (Jesus isn't in his grave, Ma'am. That, you might say, is the whole point.)

I hope you won't misunderstand me. I don't mean to bash the "Christians" who got those questions wrong.

**Actually, after this survey, I think we religious educators should bash ourselves a little, and consider just where people get these crazy ideas.** We ought to look carefully at what these "Christians" are saying and ask, "What kind of 'Christianity' is this?"

The "Christianity" these people hold isn't what Jesus taught. It's not the message the apostles gave their lives to spread throughout the world. It's not the faith that brings solid comfort to millions amid the trials of life, and helps them face death with courage and hope.

This survey suggests that to many people, their "Christianity" means no more than a certain way of *feeling* about God. For some, the wonderful richness of Christian truth has been replaced by a brief set of insipid slogans, none too long to fit on a bumper sticker or T-shirt: "Jesus is the answer." "Jesus changed my life." "Let go and let God."

God's people deserve better than this. To maintain your faith today, you *need* more than this.

People have asked why we offer so many classes at Living Hope. Why, here at our church, people of all ages and all levels of education come together to do very enjoyable—but also very serious—Bible study. They wonder why we believe that a cradle-to-grave program of Christian education is central to our mission.

If you've wondered about that, I hope now you can see why Christian education means so much to us—and to other WELS congregations. And I hope you'll come and see what it can mean for you.

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

*After this survey, I think we religious educators should bash ourselves a little.*

# Samuel: believer in a faithless land

Christians who live in a downside society have the same role as Samuel—proclaim God's messages.

James A. Aderman

Israel in Samuel's young adult years was terminally ill. The nation reeled from the spiritual diseases of immorality, selfishness, pride, and hatred. And there was no cure. The quackery of heathen superstition replaced the balm of God's grace. Weakened by a diseased soul, Israel fell easy victim to the thievery, thuggery, and mayhem of their more powerful neighbors.

## Israel's faithlessness to God

**1 Samuel 4:1—7:2** describes the gangrenous effects of this downside world. Scan it. Watch as Israel uses the Ark of the Covenant, the physical evidence of God's commitment to them, as a good luck charm to coerce the Lord to give a victory.

Imagine the national trauma as the Lord refuses to be his people's puppet and allows the Philistines to rout them and capture his Ark. Eli collapses and dies at the news. His jolted daughter-in-law succumbs during grief-induced childbirth, but not before naming her son Ichabod, "the glory has departed from Israel."

Sense the national grief not only at the loss of the Ark, but of 30,000 soldiers. Few families could have escaped losing at least one son. Think of the disillusionment with Israeli politicians, church leaders, and the Lord—the downside world of spiritually adulterous people.

But read on, with your eye on our upside God. He didn't need Israel to rescue his Ark and his

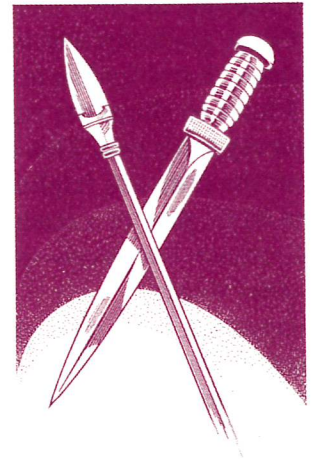
honor from the Philistines. Go ahead, laugh out loud as he humiliates Philistia and her god. Dagon, half fish/half human, clumsily bows before the Lord—and is dismembered in the Lord's presence. Philistine capitol after Philistine capitol surrenders to the Lord, literally brought to their knees by waves of disease-carrying rats who spread rectal tumors and then urban panic. Imagine this warlike nation so indelicately incapacitated and forced into shameful surrender.

## God's faithfulness to people

Look at 7:2. A sovereign God continues his faithfulness to a wayward people. "All the people of Israel mourned and sought after the LORD." Repentance. Spiritual focus on the Lord. Renewal. God's plan for healing Israel prescribed bitter medicine, but spiritual health began to return.

Samuel's role? "The Lord . . . revealed himself to Samuel through his word. And Samuel's word came to all Israel" (3:21—4:1). During those downside days, the young prophet faithfully continued to proclaim God's messages. Because he spoke truth, "all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD" (3:20).

Christians who live in a downside society have the same role. Our upside God is in control no matter how hostile the cultural climate.



## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. What light does this story about our God's gracious sovereignty shed on Romans 8:28, 31-39?
2. How might the fall of communism in Europe show the hand of our upside God? Think of other global, national, local, and personal examples.

Jesus is proof that our Father's justice and grace will triumph. Since triumph is guaranteed, Christians are freed to keep sharing what God has taught them. Since they'll be proven right, Christians will keep explaining to their society why God is allowing cultural problems. Since God will vindicate himself and them, believers keep pointing others to God's justice, without neglecting to emphasize his mercy.

Our God is an upside God. Live as upside people.

*James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.*

# It's a shame

Walter F. Beckmann

A number of television documentaries and talk shows deal with AIDS. Two I saw made me stop and think about the shame of it all.

On the first show, Maury Povich interviewed guests who innocently contracted AIDS. A young girl told how her mother, a hemophiliac, contracted the AIDS virus through a blood transfusion and passed it on to her. When asked how she felt about being HIV positive, the girl said she wasn't going to feel ashamed. Maury assured her, and rightly so, that she had no reason to be ashamed. Those who would shun her should feel ashamed.

Most of us know of hemophiliacs who have become HIV positive from contaminated blood, or of others who innocently contracted the disease from an unfaithful spouse. Fear of contracting the disease might make us avoid them. But in love and faith, we ought to learn about the disease, what precautions to take for our protection, and how to help such victims. We ought to be ashamed if we pass by instead of stopping to help. We should encourage them—God hasn't abandoned them, and we won't either.

But shame on the person who contracted the disease by sharing a needle while doing drugs, or through illicit sexual or homosexual activity. What a shameful desecration of a body the Holy Spirit wants to use as his temple. That's a reason for shame, the kind of shame the Bible calls contrition, the first step in sincere repentance. Without contrition and repentance, saving faith cannot endure, and without faith, there is no salvation.

Further shame on the person who has the disease and knowingly transmits it to others. Such a person is as much a killer

as the terrorist who plants a bomb in a suitcase on an airplane or in a crowd at the Olympic games.

Let me tell you about the other TV program. One guest had been raped by a gang of men, one of whom had AIDS and transmitted it to her. He was caught and given three years in prison. The day he got out, he raped another woman, and now she too is HIV positive.

That makes me ashamed, ashamed we allow this to happen to an innocent woman, ashamed we don't do more to raise a great cry of moral outrage. Our government must use the power God has given it to punish the wrongdoer.

At times I'd like to write off those who contracted the disease by sinful living. It would be easy to say, "They disobeyed God's law. They brought his judgment upon themselves. Now let them suffer and die in it."

But then I think, "How thankful I am that God doesn't deal that way with me and my sins," I hang my head in shame and pray, "Let me be like Jesus."

It's a shame if we ever become so disgusted with people who have sinfully contracted this disease that we won't take the time to point out to them that though their sin has been shameful, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses them from all sins. It's a shame whenever blood becomes contaminated with the AIDS virus, but it's a far greater shame when, through a failure to repent, the holy precious blood of God's Son has been shed in vain. That's the greatest shame of all.

Walter Beckmann is a pastor at Grace, Falls Church, Virginia.

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# Divorce and remarriage

John F. Brug

*In light of Mark 10:11,12, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery," why do WELS pastors officiate at the weddings of divorced persons? If a person divorces, shouldn't that person be resigned to single life?*

In Mark 10, Jesus says that obtaining a legal divorce to marry someone else cannot legitimize the new sexual relationship in that second marriage. Because the offenders sinfully broke a marriage to enter a new marriage, the new union is adultery even though the first marriage was legally dissolved. That the second marriage is legal by the state's laws would not make it morally right according to God's law. The church may not give its blessing to such marriages, which violate the sixth commandment.

When may a divorced person remarry in the church? To help pastors and members wrestle with this question, WELS Conference of Presidents prepared a pamphlet, "A Study of Marriage, Divorce, Malicious Desertion, and Remarriage in the Light of God's Word." This pamphlet is available from Northwestern Publishing House. The following answer is based on it, with a few observations.

Scripture does not treat in detail the moral propriety of remarriage

after a divorce. Clearly, persons who have suffered wrongful divorces, inflicted by their spouses, are free to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:15, Matthew 5:32). Mark 10 must be read alongside the parallel passage in Matthew 19:9, which states that where marital unfaithfulness has occurred, the innocent party may get a divorce without incurring guilt.

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## Scripture does not treat in detail the moral propriety of remarriage after a divorce.

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The question of remarriage by guilty parties who have repented of their sin does not receive explicit treatment in Scripture. Our general practice is that a guilty party may remarry if that person has repented and has sought reconciliation with the spouse whom he or she wronged.

The abandoned spouse, however, is not obligated to take the offender back. The abandoned spouse may even have married someone else before the offender repented, making any reconciliation impossible. If the abandoned spouse has died, remarried, or refused reconciliation, we would not absolutely deny repentant offenders the right to remarry. Remaining single may not be the preferred option, since this may subject them to sexual temptation.

In evaluating a request for remarriage

from a person who sinfully ended a marriage by adultery or desertion, we look for repentance. Repentance carries with it a desire to stop committing the sin and to restore, if possible, what sin has ruined.

With repentance, therefore, we also expect a genuine desire to restore the broken relationship, if possible.

Should reconciliation be truly impossible, there seems to be no absolute prohibition that prevents the repentant person from remarrying. This assumes, however, that, as far as one can observe, the repentance and the attempt at reconciliation is equally genuine. There can be no "planned repentance" in anticipation of remarriage, for that is no repentance at all.

The repentant person must also have the intention of living a godly life in the new marriage bond.

Because factors about a divorce may not be public knowledge, observers should be cautious about judging a pastor's decision to participate in the marriage of divorced persons. If a specific case creates questions or offense, the concerned individuals should speak to the pastor. In cases that likely will cause offense, it might be wise to explain the case to the congregation or church council.

*John Brug is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.*

**Send questions to Your question, please, Northwestern Lutheran,  
2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; e-mail nl@sab.wels.net.**





**We just read the article on Erna Sprengeler [Sept.] Here is a sequel:**

Erna Albrecht (Sprengeler) was my first grade teacher in 1928 when my father, Henry C. Nitz, was missionary at East Fork. In 1948 we became neighbors when I was called to be missionary at Whiteriver, Ariz. In the mid 1960s, Mrs. Sprengeler was a member of St. John, New Ulm, Minn., where I was serving. The last time we were together was at the dedication of the new East Fork Christian day school and high school in 1988, 60 years after she was my teacher in East Fork.

*Frederic H. Nitz  
Watertown, Wisconsin*

**Re: Your question, please [Sept.]** Prof. Brug gave us a good non-answer about smoking. Referring to Luther's Catechism (Kuske), the answer is summed up in "that we do not hurt or harm" our neighbor's or our own body. Smoking does just that—to the smoker and those subjected to their smoke.

Physiologically, smoking (as well as being overweight) causes diseases such as those of the cardiovascular, respiratory systems, kidneys. Smoking never does anything good to a body. Take a stand. Smoking does harm.

*Evelyn Drews  
Cudahy, Wisconsin*

**Professor Brug's article on smoking [Sept.] added to the haze rather than cleared the air.**

Though we don't have a specific word of God that labels smoking a sin, decades of studies (except those supported by tobacco interests) conclusively prove that smoking is harmful to those who smoke and to

those who breathe that smoke.

Smoking is addictive. Smoking wastes money, consumes an undue amount of health care, and promotes a loss of productivity due to unnecessary sick days. Smoking encourages others to smoke, including rising numbers of teens.

How can the Christian weigh the risks of smoking and then decide it is an option?

*James Aderman  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**Re: "Care, not suicide" [Sept.] by Robert Fleischmann.** I was disheartened with the implied negative generalizations. I worked as a long term care social worker for 17 years, helping residents and families cope with loss, pain, disease, and dying.

Living wills are not, as the article purports, rooted in biased institutional policy. Living wills are written by the persons for whom they are to be enforced, and are only enforceable after a terminal illness has been diagnosed, and the person can't give verbal direction. Living wills can direct specific treatments as well as no treatment.

A patient is not, as the article quoted, "subject to institutional policies and practices"; a patient is subject to the physician's orders. A doctor may stop treatment, but only after discussions with the family, caregivers, and physicians.

If a living will is written with a bias to die, it is one person's bias for one person's life. The accusation of "institutions adopting a right-to-die mentality" is, in my experience, false and misleading. There are thousands of caretakers in countless institutions giving loving, attentive, and appropriate care until a last breath is taken.

*Deborah M. Barnes  
Blue Earth, Minnesota*

**Pastor Fleischmann responds:**

*Living wills were created by pro-euthanasia agencies (Choice in Dying and Right to Die Society). That doesn't necessarily mean that all living will legislation is not good—just most of it.*

*The absence of a medical directive statement does subject a patient to the institution's policies. Those practices are confined by existing state statutes, which differ from one state to the next. What may be adequate safeguards in one state may be absent in another.*

*When I said that more institutions are adopting a presumption-to-die mentality, I did not say that all institutions are like that. My experience in counseling many families on end-of-life concerns, however, leaves no doubt in my mind that there is clearly a trend for a presumption-to-die mentality.*

*Finally, I agree that aggressive treatment that is futile should not be pursued.*

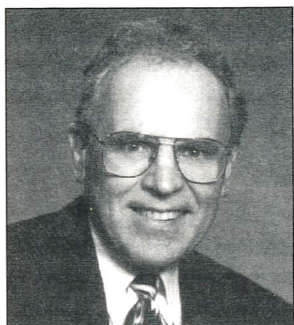
**I'd like to assure the concerned reader from Richmond, Va.,**

[Readers Forum, Sept.] that the pastor quoted in the July issue as launching into the German Lord's Prayer when asked for "the old Lord's Prayer" has much love and respect for our German Lutheran heritage. Not only did he grow up with the German worship service, he conducts it once a month. His point is we all have different favorite things from our heritage, but in our congregational worship we need to agree on a single form.

The item first appeared in our South Atlantic District newsletter, which I serve as editor. Readers of our newsletter are well acquainted, so we have a certain amount of good-natured fun. Outside of that our inside jokes can come across differently. I apologize to the reader for passing along something that seemed insensitive to our heritage, and thank her for her concern.

*Philip Wilde  
Englewood, Florida*

## “The angel craze is over.”



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

**We cannot depend on a message that falls silent when the sales fall below the profit level.**

“The angel craze is over,” confirms editor Lynn Garrett of Publishers Weekly Religion Bookline.

“Forgiveness . . . has fallen silent now.” “Aging and spirituality . . . is also largely missing but will likely return. . . .”

The subject of these judgments is book publishing, but isolated this way, the words haunt my consciousness. I wonder what I am not seeing in this picture.

Obviously, we can publish only so many books about angels before the marketplace is saturated, and the buyers look for something else. So too with any other spiritual subject, like forgiveness. The religious publishing industry ignores such facts at its own peril.

Still, I puzzle over the words. Were angels only a “craze”? Is forgiveness ever “silent”? Dare it be? Is it safe for spirituality to be largely missing for the aging?

If we are finished buying books about angels, does that mean we are no longer interested in angels? Do we still find daily comfort in knowing God sends his angels to watch over his children?

And forgiveness! We cannot live without forgiveness—literally, spiritually, eternally. That’s what Jesus Christ is all about. Our sins bring death. The forgiveness won by Jesus gives life. We need forgiveness to resolve our eternal problem. We need forgiveness to resolve our daily problems. The forgiveness we need starts at the cross of Christ and affects all we are and do.

As we age, we become increasingly aware of our spiritual needs. If spirituality is “largely missing,” then, pray God we


will find it before it’s too late. In old age, even when we live in luxury, we have precious little comfort. But the Comforter, God’s Holy Spirit, works peace and joy in our hearts through Christ. May he never be missing for us in our senior years.

So you see, we need angels and forgiveness and spiritual help for the aging and much else that comes and goes in religious books. But we need those things whether or not they are on the new-books list for the season. We don’t need to ride the waves of passing crazes that are as elusive as the waves that disappear at shore’s edge. We cannot depend on a message that falls silent when the sales fall below the profit level. We cannot use help that is missing when we need it most.

The way to make sense out of all this is, strange to say, with a book. You probably have this book already. You just need to read it—every day. In it you’ll see the angels at work and learn all of what they can do for you. You’ll learn all about forgiveness: why we need it, how God provided it, how we receive it, what it means for our lives. You’ll find the spiritual help you need no matter how old you are.

This book has survived the crazes of nearly two millennia. This book can never be silenced. This book is the rule by which the passing books must be measured. This book is the Book—the Bible.

*Gary P. Baumler*



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# Goodbye

In heaven's happy language, there won't be a word "goodbye."

Eric S. Hartzell

The Apaches of Arizona and New Mexico have no word for goodbye in their language. They don't have one word to describe the misery of hands hanging, eyes swimming, voice gone, heavy heart, that the word goodbye means.

Oh that we human beings could have it so simple. Just ban the word from our language. It isn't that simple, though, because the Apaches know the meaning of the word even though they may not have the word to say.

## Goodbyes on earth

Goodbye! It isn't often said that way . . . with an exclamation mark. Unless of course we are leaving prison, or a shouting sergeant, or hard and thankless work. Then goodbye comes easy and quick and loud.

Otherwise, goodbyes are said hoarsely and slowly. It is hard to say goodbye because love chokes us. Love puts the pathos in goodbye. We blink and swallow hard and render glancing looks because we love the person standing in front of us. Goodbye means separation. Goodbye means time is up. Goodbye means no more.

Something loved and depended on, and maybe taken for granted, either has to leave or has to stay. Our fingers reach out and strain to touch once more—for just a second.



Then it is gone. Goodbye.

Scripture describes some pretty poignant goodbyes. David and his friend Jonathan wept goodbye. The apostle Paul and his people at Ephesus wept goodbye too. "They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship" (Acts 20:37,38). And to the Corinthians, Paul said, "Finally, brothers, goodbye" (2 Corinthians 13:11). The word "finally" makes goodbye hard. This is the last. The end. Finally.

## No goodbyes in heaven

But as we struggle with goodbyes in our lives, one tremendous thought casts a wide swath of joy across our sad landscapes. Jesus hasn't said goodbye to us. The One known as the Word doesn't use this word goodbye. He says instead, "And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our human condition is to be forever saying goodbye. We are doomed to having to say goodbye to every beloved face and form and place we meet. With every acquaintance a potential goodbye looms on the horizon. But Jesus stands there and says, "Surely I will be with you always." Our best friend is with us always. No goodbyes to him. No goodbye from him.

Heaven can be described in many terms and descriptions. But one of the most comforting and endearing descriptions is: we will be forever with our Savior and every single one of his loved ones who, because they are Jesus' loved ones, also become our loved ones. In heaven, we will never know another goodbye again.

The Apaches don't have goodbye in their language, although they know its meaning. In heaven's happy language, there won't be a word goodbye either. We won't even know what it means.

*Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas.*