

LUTHERAN



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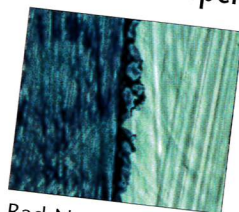
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Baptism with the Holy Spirit

I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Mark 1:8

Richard D. Balge



John the Baptist was the most popular preacher of his time. Some estimate that during his ministry a half million people came to hear him. Jesus said that no greater man was ever born.

John's message, however, in no way focused on himself. He told people to repent and to prepare the way of the Lord. He told them to get ready to receive their Savior. He talked about the greater one who was coming, for whom he was not fit to do the most menial work. He pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

John the Baptizer, he is called, but he says that Jesus is a greater Baptizer: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Only Jesus can baptize with the Spirit

"I baptize you with water." It was what God gave John to do and was not a trivial thing. But John is acknowledging that he can't pour out the Holy Spirit on people, can't turn sinners into servants of God. Jesus has to do that. When John says, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," he is saying: "Jesus is the Child of Promise, to crush the serpent's head, to bless all nations."

John's baptizing with water was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3).

The Holy Spirit was present and active when John baptized. Only the Holy Spirit can bring about repentance and give people faith that accepts the forgiveness of sins.

Only Jesus' perfect obedience in the place of disobedient sinners, and his sacrifice for us who could never satisfy God's justice, sealed the forgiveness of sins. John's baptism was a means of grace. Jesus, Spirit, baptizing with water: these went together.

Jesus baptized with the Spirit on Pentecost

After our Savior lived the perfect life of love in our place, after he died for our lovelessness, after he rose from the dead, before he ascended to God's right hand, he reinforced what John said about baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5).

Ten days after the ascension it happened. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. They preached with boldness. Peter preached Christ crucified and risen. He said: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. *And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* [emphasis added]. The promise is for you and your children . . ."

(Acts 2:38,39).

Jesus, Spirit, baptizing with water: these went together.

He's still pouring out the Spirit

Jesus, Spirit, baptizing with water: these go together.

As far as we know, Jesus never baptized with water. He sent those who did. He still sends them. He still pours out his Spirit in connection with Holy Baptism. The gospel is God's power for salvation. Baptism is the gospel, with water as a sign.

Where the gospel is, the Holy Spirit is, giving faith, hope, and love. Jesus makes baptism what Paul calls it in Titus 3:5, "the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." We needed that rebirth because we were born spiritually dead. We could not cooperate in that rebirth any more than we cooperated in our physical birth. In baptism—though not *only* in baptism—a new life is created.

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



- "Merry Christmas." You'll hear that over and over this season. What can make your holidays truly merry? Read our Christmas articles and be reminded of Jesus' work—coming into the world to save us from our sins.
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- As you celebrate the birth of Jesus, celebrate the birth of another baby—Faith Dabe. Turn to page 8 and read how God used Faith—and the struggle her parents went through—to strengthen a congregation.

- We bring you this issue in full color, our way of celebrating Christmas with you. Thanks to all the writers who shared their gifts with us this year. And thanks to you, our readers, for your letters and prayers. We are truly blessed. Merry Christmas.

—LRB

Cover photo by Jerry Harders

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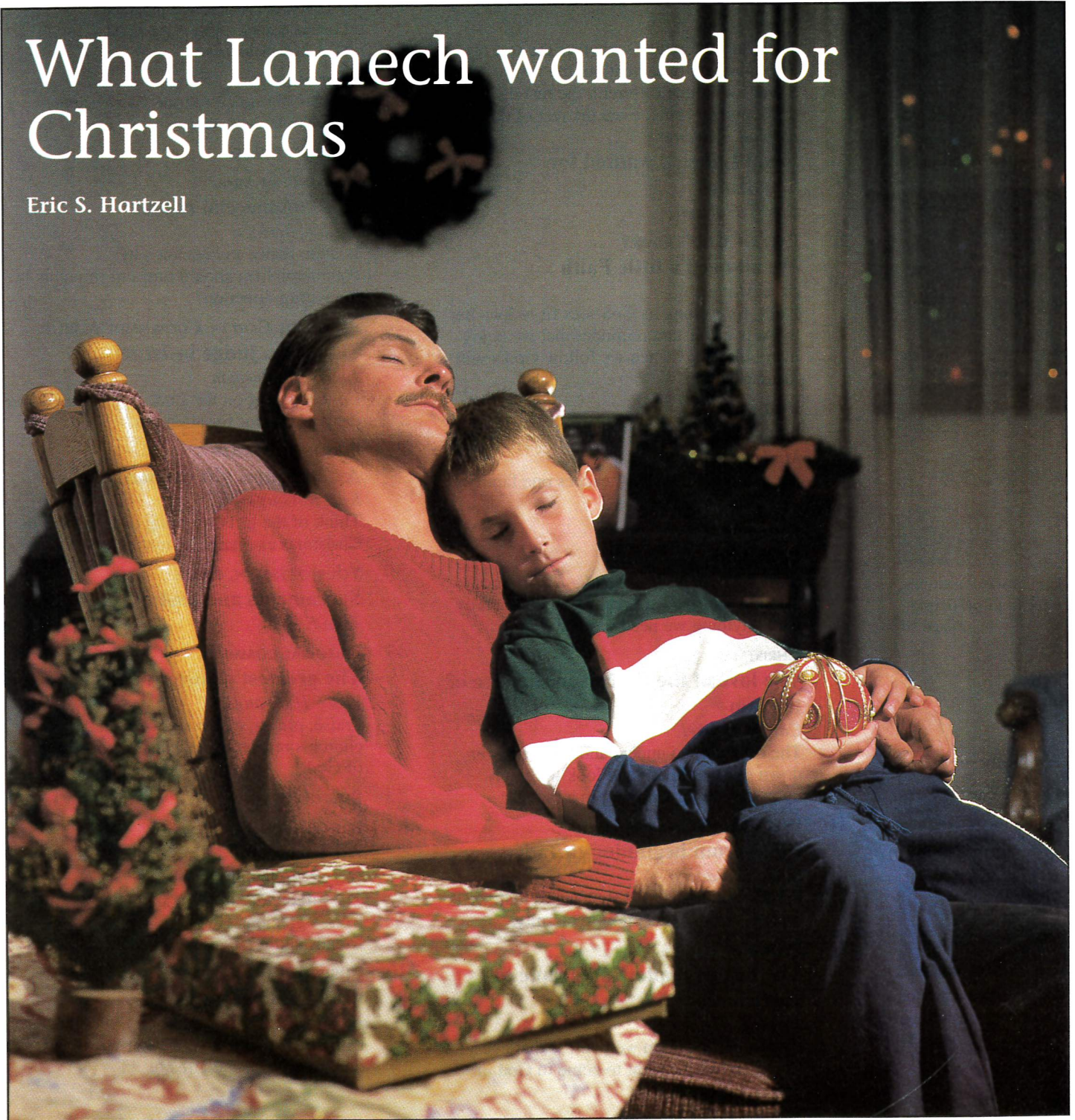
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There has to be rest—whether the rest of entertainment or recreation, the rest of doing something different, the rest of lying down and sleeping, even the rest of doing nothing. Rest was

What Lamech wanted for Christmas

Eric S. Hartzell



Lamech was Noah's father. If he had been presented with a Christmas wish list, we know one thing he would have asked for. Let him tell you himself, as you listen to him naming his son Noah: "God will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed."

So Noah got his name—comfort. Lamech wanted comfort in his work. He wanted a Savior from his work. He wanted out from under the curse that had come to cling to his work.

A curse clings to our work

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is actually worse than that. All work . . . kills. It kills joy; it makes life a burden.

Heaven is a picture of rest. Heaven is rest.

At Christmas time it is even more noticeable. Christmas has to do with rest—with not working. People who have to work when everyone else is not working get our sympathy. There has to be rest—whether the rest of entertainment or recreation, the rest of doing something different, the rest of lying down and sleeping, even the rest of doing nothing (and especially that rest when we think of Jesus who came to do our work for us!).

The Lord wove rest into the fabric of a perfect creation. "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the sev-

enth day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Genesis 2:2).

But sin came and spoiled work and changed our rest into something that it wasn't originally intended to be. We can't rest the way God did. It isn't the joyful changing of activities anymore. Our rest now means stopping all activity just to keep going. It is the rest of the sore and the blistered. It can't be the rest of someone who pauses joyfully in the middle of God-pleasing work to thank his God for the activity and chance to please him. It can't be because of the curse of the thorn and the sweat that plagued Lamech, Noah's father.

God gave us rest

But there is a Christmas Noah, a Christmas comfort. To those who pant and labor and get tired, the Savior comes at Christmas with his invitation, "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).

He makes this invitation to shepherds at work, to Mary in her labor, to Joseph in his work of supporting his wife and child in the cattle barn, to wise men laboring to get to the place of the star, and to us, too, in whatever way we may be working. It is one of life's great mysteries and joys to discover that the tiny baby we work to have come into view in our Christmas life is the one who gives us rest.

Heaven is a picture of rest. Heaven is rest. What the angels sang about to working people of the world in their "glory to God in the highest" is rest and peace. It is peace from the stress and strain of our effort to work our way to heaven.

**It is one of life's great
mysteries and joys to
discover that the tiny baby
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the one who gives us rest.**

Part of that heaven is experienced already when we crawl onto our Savior's baby lap and rest in his cradle—rest from the responsibility that rests on us, rest from the wear and tear of the awful responsibility of trying to save our own souls. Baby Jesus came to do that work for us.

What I really want for Christmas, along with Lamech, is rest. And with Lamech, that is what all of us who want it get.

NL

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

We all need a little Faith

Faith, for as long as God sees fit to loan her to us, is a constant reminder that we enjoy many blessings when we follow God's will for our lives.

Brad Mattes

July 31, 1996 was the day we held our breath. That fateful day, Rachel and Brett would deliver their baby girl, diagnosed with acute hydrocephaly. For three long, agonizing months, doctors and specialists had predicted that the child's condition was incompatible with life. By human standards, they gave no hope for her survival.

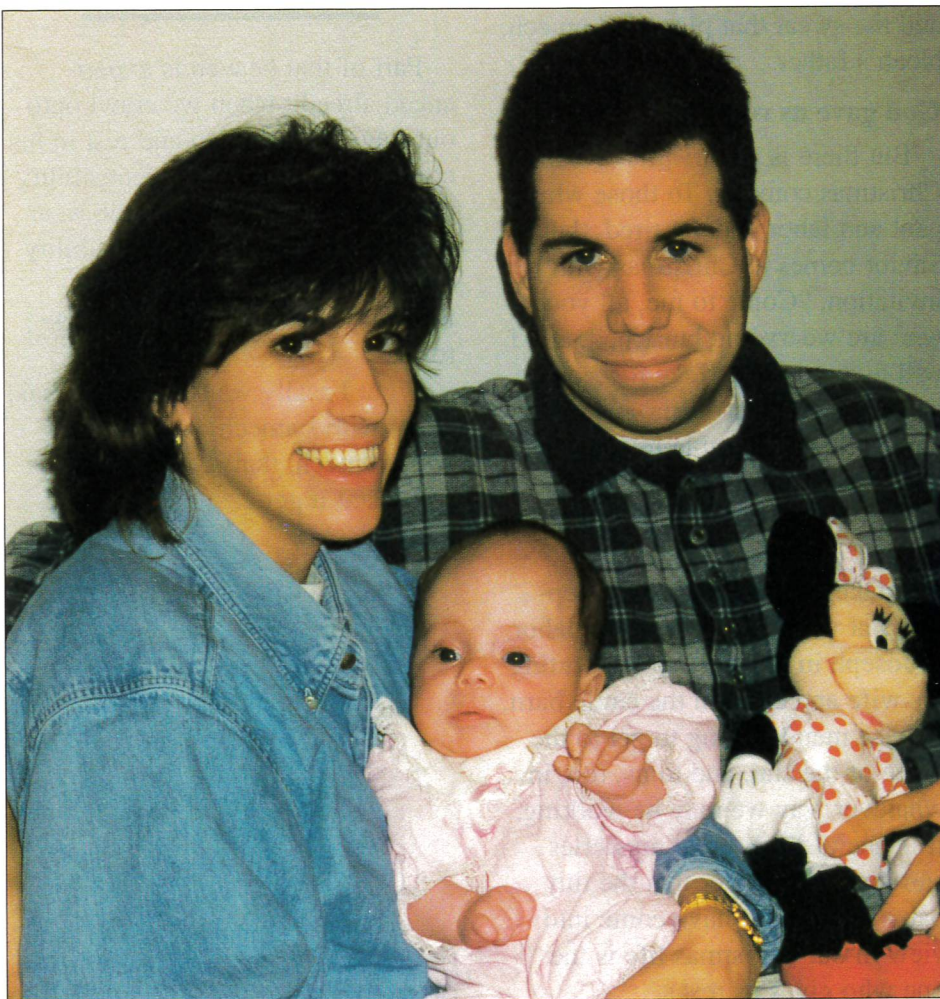
Earlier in the pregnancy, Rachel and Brett had been full of the usual excitement enjoyed by any first-time expectant couple.

The unborn child was not expected to live

However, six months into her pregnancy, a sonogram detected the first ominous sign that something

was dreadfully wrong. As members of Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, we too mourned the news that upon birth Rachel and Brett's unborn child was not expected to live.

It's likely that Rachel was facing the most difficult spiritual challenge of her life. Having been diagnosed with diabetes earlier in the pregnancy, she must have, on more than one



Rachel, Faith, and Brett Dabe. Through Faith, the family and their congregation have grown in faith, placing their trust in God to fulfill his will.

Hydrocephaly, one of the more common birth defects, occurs in fewer than one in 1,000 births. It is caused by a build up of excess cerebral spinal fluid that enlarges the head.

Doctors don't always know why it occurs. Family genetics or infections can be the root of hydrocephaly, but it can also occur spontaneously—no apparent reason at all.

The outlook for hydrocephalic babies is bleak. But research has been done regarding in-utero surgery. Doctors place a shunt or tube in the baby's brain that drains off fluid so pressure does not build up and damage brain tissue. The results of these risky procedures are mixed.

Hydrocephaly is difficult to diagnose until the second or third trimester. Partial birth abortion supporters claim, therefore, that because soon-to-be parents get the diagnosis so late, the parents should have the option to abort.

Faith proves them wrong.

occasion, questioned the injustice of her and Brett's situation.

At this time the partial-birth abortion controversy hit its peak. Rachel and Brett's unborn child was a perfect example of babies targeted by this grisly procedure. In cases like this, medical experts often tell the distraught mother-to-be that her child has no chance of survival. Why not do the compassionate thing and save her and her husband three months of agony? Why not abort the baby? Thankfully, Rachel and Brett chose to follow God's will and put their family in his hands—regardless of what the future would hold.

At times like this, Christians have a solid rock on which to stand. Many of us have experienced our own crises accompanied by powerful spiritual blows. The Bible is full of God's promises of guidance, love, strength, and protection.

Now the hour of truth arrived. It was a day Rachel and Brett looked forward to and dreaded at the same time—relieved that this long, painful ordeal would soon be over, but fearful of facing a bleak reality.

God's church was praying

Meanwhile God's church was praying. Rachel and Brett are blessed with a close-knit church family and other Christian friends. We were feeling their pain and had been fervently praying that God would heal this child. As the delivery day arrived, God's saints prayed even more.

Faith's name, given to her by her father, must have been God-inspired. In the hours that followed her birth, Faith and her family were showered with many blessings: she breathed on her own and sucked milk from a bottle. The following day an MRI revealed that her brain had developed enough, in spite of her condition, to sustain life.

In addition, she had a loving pastor who took time from his



Faith was born on July 31, 1996. For three months the Dabes waited for the day Faith was to be born, for the day doctors said she would die.

vacation to be there and baptize Faith, as God received her as his child. God also provided a caring and compassionate hospital staff that saw to everyone's needs.

The angels must have been singing that day as the family rejoiced with the blessed news that Faith was expected to live—now with them and forever with the Savior. After enduring three months of hopelessly dire predictions, Rachel and Brett would have a baby to take home and love.

The baby brought blessings

So far, in Faith's brief life, she has also been a source of blessings to the members of Beautiful Savior. We have, in a dramatic and visible way, experienced the privilege of asking the Creator of the universe to intercede on behalf of this child. And in his mercy, he has.

Our church is blessed to have in our midst a living example of God's unchanging love. Faith, for as long as God sees fit to loan her to us, is a constant reminder that we enjoy many blessings when we follow God's will for our lives. We are reminded that God places every child of the congregation into the care and guidance of its members to assist the parents in their child's spiritual upbringing.

Faith, by secular human standards, could have been an abortion statistic.

However, her heavenly Father carefully chose Rachel and Brett as her parents so his perfect plan would be carried out.

Will there be hurdles for Faith and her family? Only God knows that. One thing is certain. Regardless of how long she will be in our midst—during good times and bad—this is one congregation that will be thankful for a little Faith.

Brad Mattes, chairman of his congregation's WELS Lutherans for Life chapter, is a member at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.

NL

Max the “yapper”

An annoying little dog teaches one family a valuable lesson.

Michelle Jones

Our former neighbors had a miniature Doberman named Max. Although Max weighed about two pounds, he carried a mighty set of vocal chords. The minute he flew out the door and leapt from the deck, you could almost hear the groans from the neighborhood as he began his unrelenting chorus of yapping. Like a pinball, he'd dart from one end of his yard to the other—yap-yap-yapping. We love animals, but to say we despised this pint-size yapping machine would be an understatement.

On a very cold morning a few weeks before Christmas, the kids were doing their school work as I visited with a relative on the phone. I rolled my eyes as I watched ol' “yapper” emerge from his home and make his death defying leap to the snow-covered ground. He made his customary zig-zagged path

through the yard, but came up short when he discovered the pond was frozen. He tip-toed his way onto the pond. I shook my head, as he gained confidence and covered more territory.

I said to Heather and David, “Now watch, that dumb ol' Max will probably fall into the duck's hole.” Sure enough.

We leapt to our feet, scrambled into our winter gear, and raced to the pond. About 25 feet from the edge, with his nose barely above the water and his eyes bugging out of his head, Max was frantically paddling for his life.

My number one priority was to keep the kids from darting onto the pond—no small task.

Secondly, how was I going to get this stupid dog out of the water without getting wet?

I inched my way onto the ice.

I became acutely aware of the crackling noise each step produced, as well as the network of cracks that raced across the ice. When I got within 10 feet of Max, the ice started to buckle. I knew I wasn't in grave danger because the pond is only four feet deep there, but I didn't relish a dip in the frigid water.

I called to Max but that was useless. A man who lived across the



pond from us, yelled to me, "You're going to have to go in or he'll die!"

He repeated his revelation a couple of times as if I couldn't hear him. As he yelled I thought, "Max isn't even my dog. I don't even like this dog. Why don't you go in and save this stupid dog?" The neighbor finally shook his head, threw up his arms in defeat, and went inside.

Aw man. I knew he was right. I'd have to go in after Max. I'd never let him die like that.

Think, think, think. I had to think. What I needed was some kind of leverage—something to reach out to Max.

I yelled to David to bring me the longest board he could find from his woodpile. Then I told Heather to run into the house and bring me two or three towels. David came back in a flash with a five foot long by six inch wide board. I knew I only had one chance to make this work. Dragging the board with me, I got onto the ice as close as I could safely get to Max. I lay down on my stomach and

eyed the hole, lining up the hole with the board. This was it—now or never. I gave the board a shove, watched it glide over the ice and out to the hole.

Perfect! I couldn't believe it. I couldn't tell if I was shaking from excitement or from the cold.

We all started to call Max. He was slowing down—no doubt due to the icy water. We kept calling and calling. Then it happened. His front paws connected with the board. He managed to pull his head clear of the water which allowed him to rest. This was crucial for Max. He could hang there and freeze to death or with the aid of the board he could climb to safety.

Our calling became more urgent. Slowly he pulled his weary body out of the water. With his head low and his tail between his legs, he whimpered over to me. I snatched him up and quickly got off the pond.

Heather and I wrapped him snugly into the towels, talking soothingly to him as his body was wracked with tremors.

Max's owner stood waiting for him on the other side of the fence.

Max was safe with his owner, and was going home. We all breathed a sigh of relief.

I find it easy to see similarities between ol' Max the "yapper," and all of us. We go through life "yapping" our heads off for what we want. We slip and slide around, falling into sin at every turn. Then in the end, like Max, we all face a chilling "death hole." Its icy waters are only too ready to pull us under.

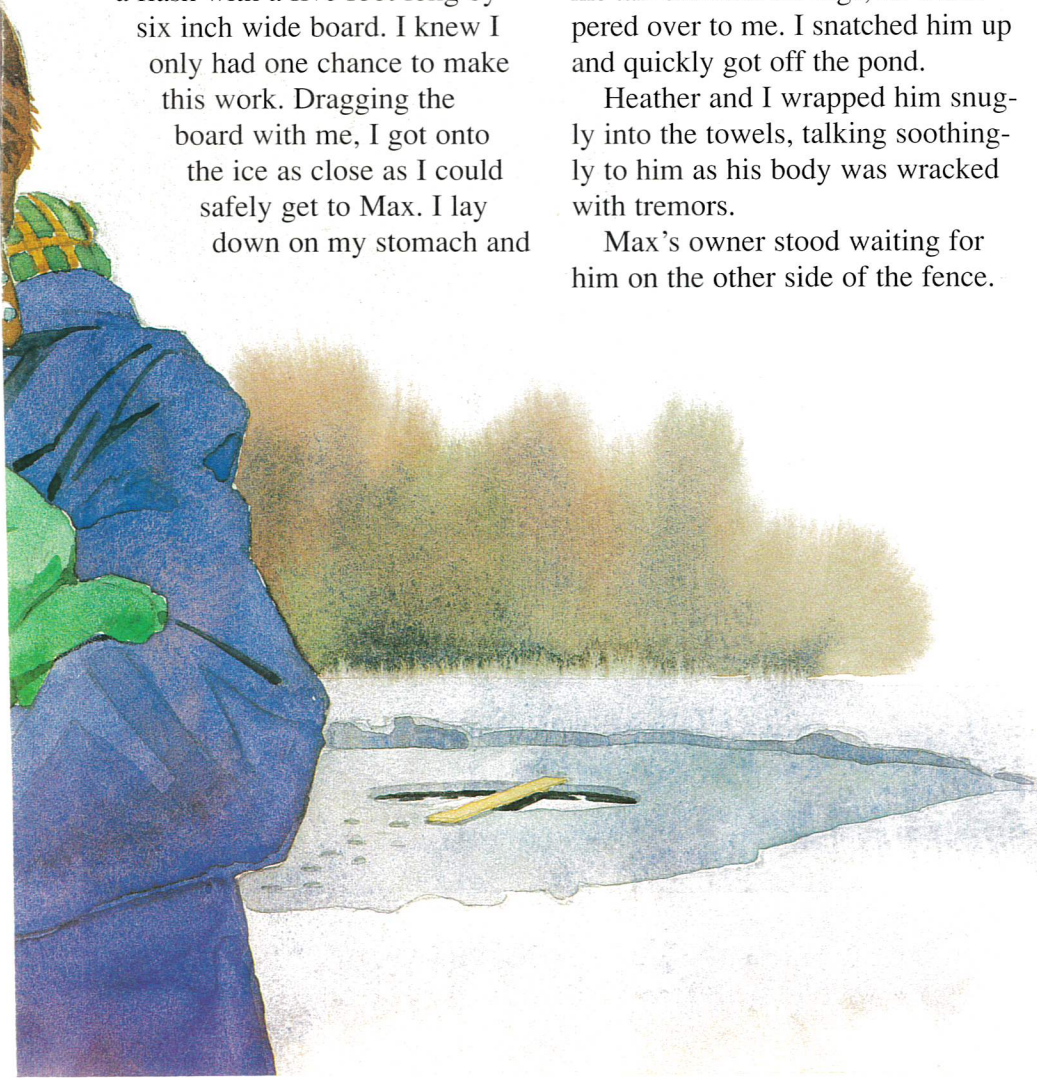
God in his love slid a board out to save us. On it hangs Christ who gave his life for ours. Just as the kids and I frantically called to Max, so too, Jesus urgently calls to all of us. He wants us all to be saved.

When we grab hold of the cross, Jesus lifts us out of death's grip and wraps us in his loving arms. He carries us home to heaven, lifting us across the fence and placing us into the waiting arms of our owner, our Heavenly Father.

Listen to God's calling. Grab hold of the cross that saves us. Hold on with all of your might. Your eternal life depends on it.

NL

Michelle Jones is a member at Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kansas.



Fear not

Though our fears are real to us, there really isn't anything we need to be afraid of.

Anthony E. Schultz and Julie K. Tessmer

When you were young, were you scared of the monsters under the bed? Did Mom or Dad have to prove to you there really wasn't anything there? You probably still weren't sure—and were still frightened.

Now you are afraid of spiders, heights, poverty, disease—even death. Your childhood fears seem silly and irrational. Your fears now are more real, more believable.

Or are they?

Turn your fears over to Jesus

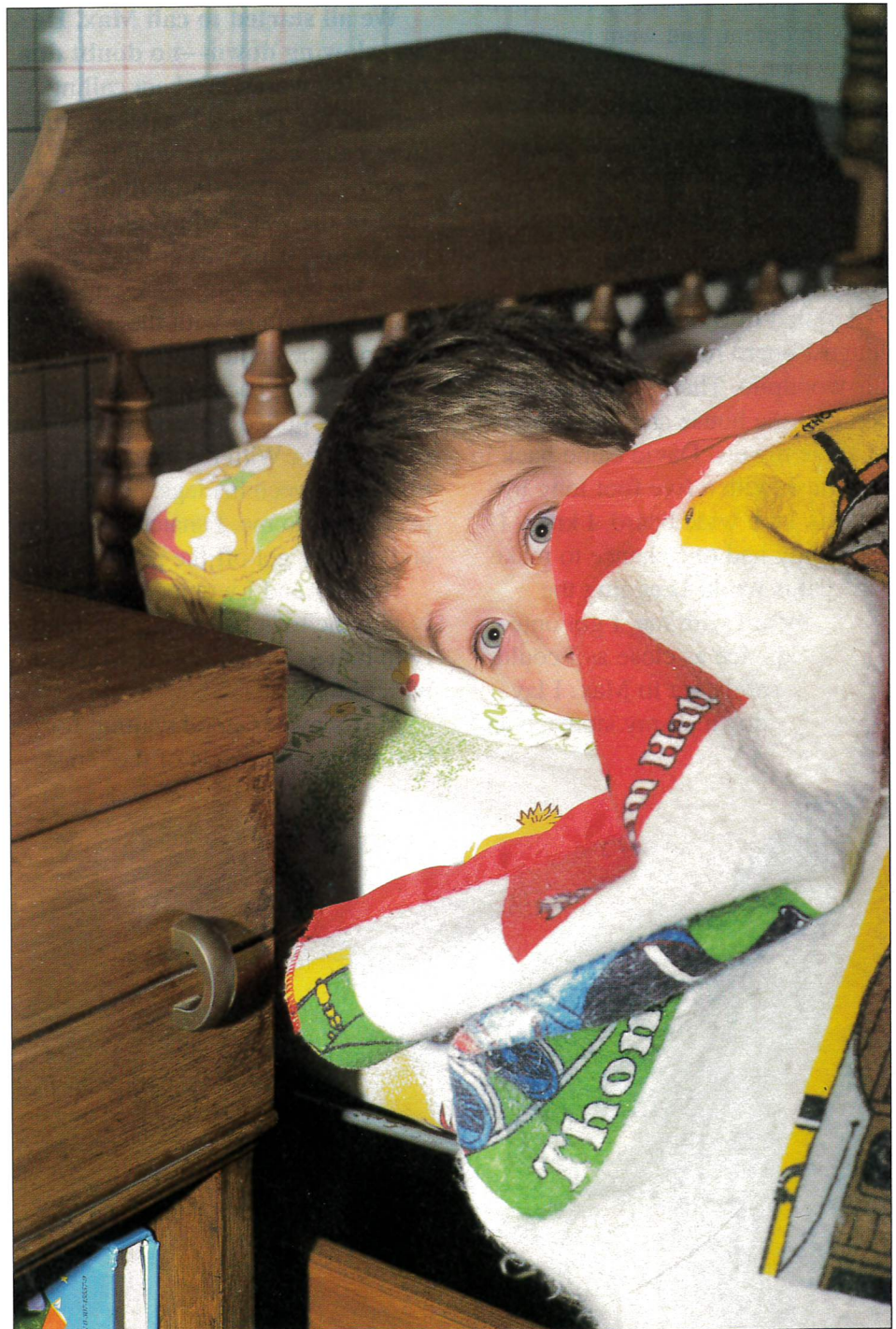
Because of sin and the devil, we can never totally escape our fears. But when we trust in Jesus, we can face our fears and work to overcome them. Jesus shows us that though our fears are real to us, we really don't need to be afraid of anything.

Even though we know we have nothing to fear with Jesus near, our minds still tell us we are afraid of certain things. We might fear snakes or public speaking or rejection.

God gives us words of wisdom to help us combat some common fears:

Fear of the dark—This fear might seem childish. When we were young, we needed our night-light and security blanket, and that door better be open a crack.

But we still may be afraid of the dark as adults—or at least of things that happen in the dark. Robberies, strange noises, threatening shadows happen when the lights go down. But the Bible says in Psalm 139,



“Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.” Jesus sees us in the dark of night. He is always there for us.

Fear of being alone—We can feel alone even when people surround us. We may be lonely. We may be in a place where we don’t know anyone. We may discover we are sick and wonder if anyone else is going through the same thing. It’s scary to feel so alone.

But we aren’t alone: “Because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5). God is always with us and will protect us from harm.

Fear of being poor—Are we afraid of having nothing to eat, or are we just scared to open the container with three-week-old leftovers in the back of the refrigerator? Do we have nothing to wear, or are the clothes we want at the dry cleaners? Do we have no earthly possessions, or are we just having trouble affording that third TV? Most of us don’t have to fear being poor.

If financial worries creep into our minds, we need to read Matthew 6:25-34. In these verses Jesus tells us not to worry about our lives, what we’re going to eat, drink, or wear. If Jesus takes care of the sparrows and the daisies, he won’t forget about us.

Fear of growing old—What happens when we grow older? Our eyesight and hearing fade, our gray hair recedes, our bodies get tired even though we don’t work them as much as we used to. But remember that even though bodies grow old and frail, what’s inside is still the same.

God is with us when we grow old. “Even in your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will

carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (Isaiah 46:4). He never forgets about us but gives us strength to handle the trials of aging.

Fear of death—Death can strike anyone at any time. We might not be around tomorrow to fix today’s problems. If we go to bed angry at a friend, we might not be able to reconcile the next day. We can’t afford to waste the time we have on earth.

**The farther away we stay
from the devil—
the closer we get to Jesus—
the safer we will be.**

Yet if we constantly worry about things that could happen to us, including death, we miss out on life. What is the worst thing anyone can do to us? Take away our lives? That can only happen if Jesus lets it. If it does happen, where will we end up? In heaven—where we will have no more pain or fears.

Jesus will always be with us, even in death, as David said in Psalm 23. Be happy in the knowledge that Jesus is guiding us through life until he takes us to be with him in heaven.

Fear of Satan—Jesus conquered sin, death, and the devil when he died on the cross. Satan, however, tempts us and can harm us. The farther away we stay from the devil—the closer we get to Jesus—the safer we will be.

“I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that

is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38,39).

Channel your fears with Jesus’ help

Debilitating fear is destructive, but respect for danger can be healthy. It makes us more careful. We think twice before walking by ourselves on a dark street in a bad neighborhood. We eat well and exercise more to lessen the risk of heart disease and cancer.

But if we are afraid to go out at night or think we have a terminal disease every time we sneeze, our fears have taken control. The devil works overtime to feed our fears, so they take over our lives. Such fears destroy our trust in God.

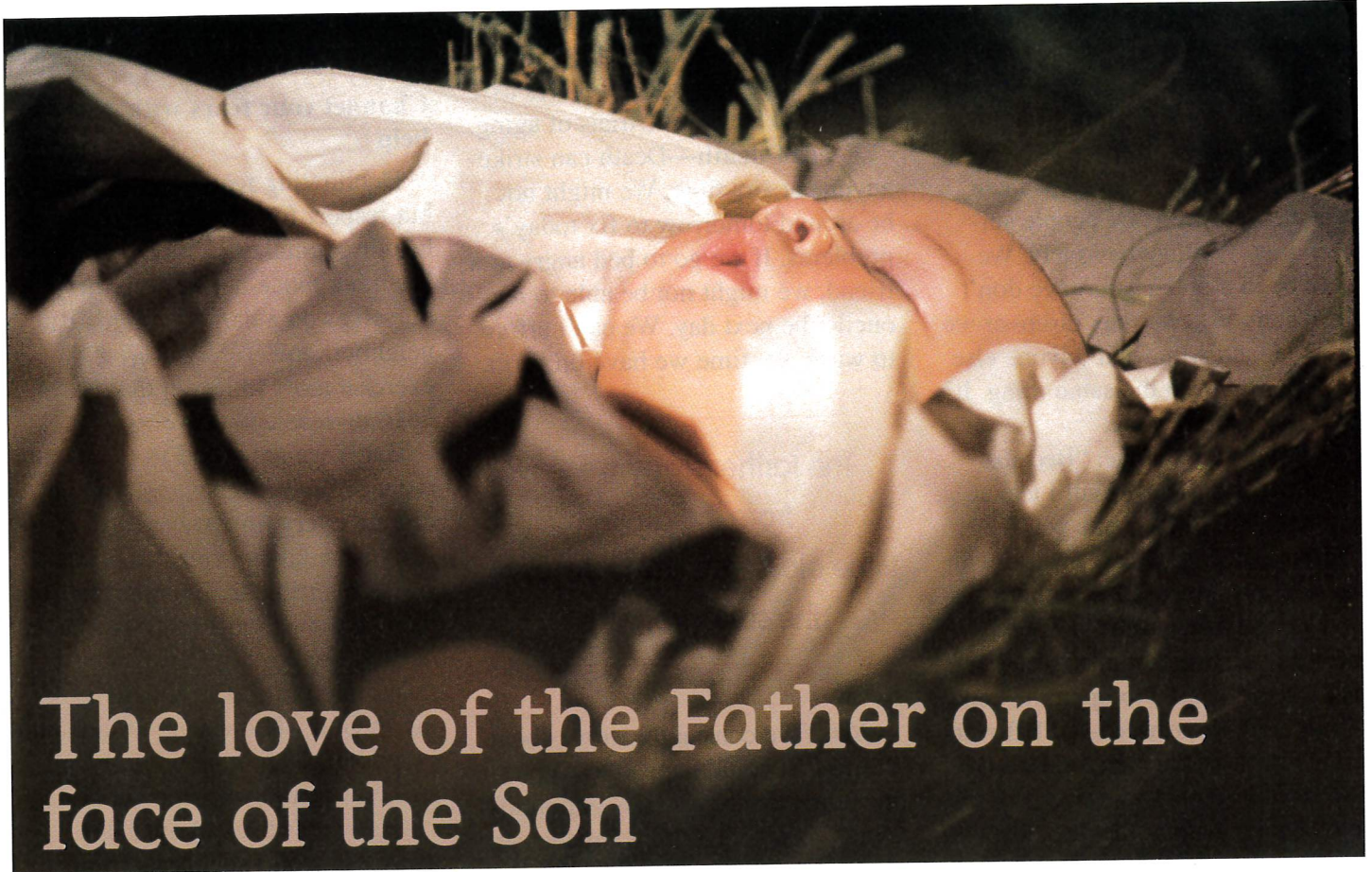
We need to realize that by trusting in God when we are afraid and by praying to him when problems strike, we can overcome our fears.

God won’t take all our fears away. He won’t shelter us from everything that makes us afraid. He may even send scary things into our lives so that we reexamine ourselves and run back to God, clinging to him for strength.

But he also won’t turn his back on us when we ask him for help. He will instead give us the strength to fight our fears and get through difficult situations.

Finally, God will remove us from this world of pain and suffering, and take us to be with him in heaven—where there is absolutely and forever no fear.

This series is based on a Bible study held in summer 1996 at St. James, Milwaukee. Information was developed and presented by Anthony Schultz, pastor at St. Luke, Watertown, Wis., and reported by Julie Tessmer, communications assistant for Northwestern Lutheran and Communication Services. NL



The love of the Father on the face of the Son

The only way to understand God is to get down on your knees and look longingly upon the loving lad lying in a manger.

Carl R. Henkel

What I long to share with you this Christmas, Michael Kelly Blanchard expressed best in the following gospel song:

There's no mark on the wall of the world,
That's worthy of the Word.
There's no dark desperate hall of your soul,
That cannot be lit by the Lord.
There's no good that can pay for the gift of his grace.
No harm that can hurt beyond hope or replace
The love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

Three stanzas end with that phrase: "The love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son."

Christmas makes God real

Though God is a spirit and possesses no facial features, Jesus' birth gave to almighty God a human identity. Jesus is Emmanuel—God with us. Jesus is the embodiment of deity, the eternal God now wrapped up with human tissue. He is the framer of the universe now fashioned on a skeletal frame of bone and muscle.

Jesus, the ageless Creator who

designed the leaping deer with four legs and the crawling spider with eight, now must learn to walk. Jesus, whose powerful word called forth all things into being, must now learn to speak. Jesus, who at his Father's side in heaven was without visible form, now cries human tears from innocent eyes when desiring to be fed, and is gently rocked by his mother when wanting to sleep.

The best way to get to know our heavenly Father's heart is to gaze upon the face of his Son. The view is breathtaking, unmatched. The

only way to know God is to experience the Son. The only way to understand God is to get down on your knees and look longingly upon the loving lad lying in a manger.

Proud parents give careful attention to every expression on their new baby's face. Mom insists her tiny offspring is smiling. The doctor maintains it's only gas. Dad sees a striking resemblance of his image. Others insist: "The baby looks just like its mother." But as baby grows, he or she does smile and bear unmistakable family traits.

There in Bethlehem, wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a trough, is the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Glancing up at the cows and sheep and donkeys, is their Creator. There, looking into the eyes of Mary and Joseph, is their Savior.

Later, rugged shepherds would visit, and magi from the East would bring gifts. Later still, he'd hang suspended between heaven and earth on wooden timbers, bringing heaven's rescue to earth and earth's believers to heaven. God's offspring became the offering—and "there's no good that can pay for the gift of his grace . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son."

Christmas makes God real. Christmas brings the real God down to our real earth and into the real circumstances of our lives. Truly, there's nothing about Christmas that a little child cannot understand. Equally true, however, there's nothing about Christmas that the most learned, pious, and devout theologian can comprehend. The beautiful simplicity of Christmas will always remain the profoundest of mysteries . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

God with us becomes God in us

By faith, "God With Us" becomes God in us. His love becomes our personal assurance and his grace our personal forgiveness. By faith, we ponder the words of the angelic host, travel the starlit trail to the manger bed, and view . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

When you think about God, how do you view him? Is he angry, stern, severe? Unaffected, unfeeling, uncaring? If such is your God, then you need to make another trip to the town of David and view the cooing Christ child.

The beautiful simplicity of Christmas will always remain the profoundest of mysteries.

You need to hear again God's "good tidings of great joy." You'd benefit by a stroll down a country road alongside Jesus and the Twelve, or from seeing Jesus in heaven's light on the mountain. You need only to open your eyes to the pages of Scripture to find . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

The family features are hard to mistake. Jesus reflects his Father. Know Jesus; know the Father. Want to know what God's love is like? Observe your Savior in action. Want to know how much love flows through the Father's heart? Watch the blood flow from Messiah's veins. Want to know how the Father held his Son on the cross? The soldiers wouldn't have needed nails because love would have held him there. Just

want to know what it's all about? Take a look at Mary's baby and contemplate . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

God stays with us

God, who went to great lengths to reveal his passionate love to lost humanity, doesn't give up on us now. Love wouldn't permit him to turn his back on us, even if we turn ours on him.

Jesus summons you to the safety and security of his side. Jesus compassionately calls you to consider his cross. Jesus beckons you to stop running from him, to leave your burdens with him, and to live your life in him. Jesus reassures you, reaffirms you, and reveals to you . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

Recognize God by the smile on the face of his Son. The Christmas gospel takes on a wonderful new dimension when viewed in such a way. Words like peace, hope, and joy suddenly become peace, hope, and joy. No longer just words, they become the reality they proclaim.

God is smiling on you. His face is shining on you. He's looking on you with favor. From Bethlehem's cradle to Calvary's cross, through life's darkest disappointments and deepest depressions to our fondest friendships and finest fulfillments, God is smiling on you. From tragedy to triumph, from pain to pleasure, from heartache to hilarity, from dawn to dusk, God is smiling on you. Believe it! Live it! It's . . . the love of the Father as seen on the face of the Son.

Carl Henkel, on leave of absence from Mt. Olive, St. Paul, Minnesota, is serving in Cameroon for one year.

NL

Life—from beginning to end

WELS Lutherans for Life teaches that life is sacred—from conception to eternity.

Linda R. Baacke

“Pro-life is more than anti-abortion,” says Emily Armstrong, advisor of “Teens for Life” at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.

“It affects your attitudes right here, right now, with everyone.”

WELS Lutherans for Life (WLFL) promotes that belief. WLFL focuses on life issues: abortion, infertility, birth control, infanticide, medical directive statements, assisted suicide, and euthanasia.

Branches

WLFL starts at the grassroots. Forty-one WELS congregations have WLFL branches. Branches, educate congregation members about life issues.

Robin and Rob Busch started a branch at St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D. “We began a year and a half ago. People want to get involved but aren’t sure how to start,” says Robin. “We meet once a month, put an article in the newsletter, and distribute bulletin inserts. We also hold a Life Sunday.”

Of the 41 branches, two are “Teens for Life” affiliates. “Teens for Life” exists because young people want to make a difference.

“They want to have an impact, but they can’t vote,” says Armstrong. “They’re energetic and have so much enthusiasm. It’s exciting working with young people.”

Lakeside LHS’s program started four years ago when a group of



A convention attendee visits the display at the WELS Lutherans for Life convention held Oct. 12 at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. The convention featured speakers Congressman Mark Neumann and former Green Bay Packer Bart Starr.

Ann Warner has worked at the center in Livonia, Mich., for over 12 years. One story sticks with her:

One man asked us if we could talk to his sister about abortion. It wasn’t her first abortion, it would be her sixth.

She was Jewish. I was concerned about the baby, but also about her soul. So I told her Jesus is the only way to heaven.

But she still had the abortion.

She came back and told me what she did. Again I told her about Jesus.

One snowy night the girl walked in the shadow of a church’s cross. She looked up and said, “Ann told me I can talk to you and you will listen.” With that, she talked to Jesus. That was her first prayer.

It’s such a joy to see what God can do with broken, crushed people.

Another experience breaks her heart. Through tears, she describes:

One young woman was so far along she felt the baby moving inside her. I saw the baby moving.

I told her, “You feel a life.”

She had the abortion. She said she didn’t have any regrets.

Why does she continue to counsel, even though it breaks her heart?

If I kept a record of those who had abortions, I wouldn’t be a counselor. But you just keep working, doing what the Lord tells you. It’s hard work, but the rewards are so, so great. Actually, the Lord does the work. We do the worrying.

Twelve years ago, what convinced Warner to be a counselor?

I never wanted to be a counselor. My kids were teens at the time. They told me, “Mom, you have to be a counselor.”

I said, “What if I say the wrong thing, and they have an abortion?”

My husband said, “What if you don’t say anything at all?”

friends interested in life issues approached Armstrong.

"Kids tend to be exclusively anti-abortion," says Armstrong, "but life affects every age group."

That's why the group is mainly educational. "We educate ourselves, and then reach out to the rest of the school," says Armstrong.

Chapters

Groups of churches form 27 regional chapters and operate 24 pregnancy counseling centers across the U.S. Approximately 7,000 people visit these centers each year.

"There are a lot of hurting women out there, and a lot sit in our own churches," says Ann Warner, counselor in Livonia, Mich.

Often, women are afraid of losing respect and love.

"Telling one person may help the healing," says Warner, "but we know the only true healing is through Jesus. The world has a lot of bandages, but no true healing."

Counselors don't always know what to say, but "God gives us the words. Somehow they come out right," says Warner.

"And our pastors are wonderful. I call them if I have questions," says Warner. "I've even called Pastor Fleischmann, WLFL national director."

Warner is grateful to be part of a national program. "We're separated by miles, but we can still call."

National

Glen Schaumberg, pastor at St. Matthew, Niles, Ill., was WLFL's first national board chairman. Over the

years he's noticed "it's hard for local chapters to expand beyond helping with post-abortion syndrome.

"But those of us around when WLFL formed in 1983 never dreamed the national level could expand to where it is," he says.

Paul Snamiska, WLFL program services administrator, says, "with the national program, we can accomplish so much more working together than we can separately."

At the national level, WLFL can reach out on a large scale and focus on life—from beginning to end.

The national office houses two life centers, one for adults and one for children. Printed, audio, and video materials help adults learn about issues that interest them. The youth center is a fun, interactive setting for children to learn the sanctity of life from conception to eternity.

Also, WLFL has produced a video, *Life: a Gift of Love*. The video includes a Bible study to help

people as they wrestle with confusing life issues ranging from the role of suffering to end-of-life issues.

"We're able to offer so much information on end-of-life issues," says Snamiska. WLFL has durable power of attorney documents available to provide comprehensive instruction on medical care and also give a clear confession of faith.

And technology isn't slipping past WLFL. Look on the Web at <http://www.wels.net/wlfl> and you'll find "perhaps the most comprehensive storehouse of information on life issues," says Fleischmann.

International

WLFL doesn't work only in the U.S. They also reach out internationally.

WLFL works with WELS missionaries in Sofia, Bulgaria, and operates a life center and store. When women purchase food and supplies, they can receive Christian

witness materials, The People's Bible, and information regarding life issues—all in Bulgarian.

WLFL also operates life centers in Ternopil and Kiev, Ukraine, and manages two mobile medical units in Ternopil.

Looking at everything WELS Lutherans for Life is doing, Glen Schaumberg says, "And all this in our little WELS. These kinds of causes tend to grow, peak, plateau.

"We're blessed. Ours keeps growing."



Officer Scott Leist gives bicycle safety tips to young children at "Bike-for pro-life." The Shoreline chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life, made up of five congregations in the Manitowoc, Wis., area, sponsored the bike-a-thon.

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

NL

The Liturgy: allowing people to participate

By our participation we confess that every Christian has the right to come to God in prayer and praise.

James P. Tiefel

When Martin Luther put his hammer to the church doors in Wittenberg, the walls of medieval worship practices came tumbling down. Since the righteousness of God was a gift, sinners did not need to earn righteousness. Since there was no need to earn righteousness, there was no need for the sacrifice offered in the Mass. Since there was no need for the sacrifice of the Mass, there was no need for a special class of individuals—priests and bishops—to offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. Luther wrote:

The Christian Church knows of and believes in only one sacrifice whereby the sin of the world was put away and paid for. Just so it also knows and believes that there is only one priest, the Son of the eternal God, born of Mary, Christ Jesus.

Because Christ confers his perfect righteousness on all who believe

... every baptized Christian is a priest already not by appointment or ordination from the pope or any other man, but because Christ has begotten him as a priest and has given birth to him in baptism.

Luther joined what he found in Romans 3:23-25 to what he found in 1 Peter 2:8 and began to speak and write about the universal priesthood of all believers. This doctrine

declares that individual Christians may approach God on their own, without the help or mediation of another human being.

Believers do the Liturgy

Luther's rediscovery of the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers had enormous implications for the church's worship. For 1,000 years before Luther's time, the people's primary activity in worship had been to watch the priest do the Liturgy. The priest spoke the words, sang the songs (in larger congregations a choir did the singing), and performed the actions of the Liturgy.

Luther wrote credited hymn replacements for "Lord, Have Mercy" (Kyrie), "Glory be to God on High" (Gloria in Excelsis), the Nicene Creed, and "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Sanctus). He borrowed a hymn setting of "Lamb of God" (Agnus Dei). These are hymns 266, 262, 271, 267, and 268 in *Christian Worship: a Lutheran Hymnal*. He suggested hymn versions of the psalms (*Christian Worship's* hymn 200 is a version of Psalm 46, hymn 202 of Psalm 124). He wrote a hymn to be sung between the Lessons, *Christian Worship* 190. On special Reformation festivals, some congregations have reenacted the service that contained these songs.

The universal priesthood of believers insisted that this "one-man-show" had to come to an end.

Luther's first revision of the historic Liturgy was cautious; the people were unaccustomed to participating actively. But his second revision allowed the people full participation. Luther himself wrote German versions of the songs in the Liturgy with words and music the people could understand and enjoy.

Christian Worship's versions of the historic Christian Liturgy, both the Common Service (page 15) and the Service of Word and Sacrament (page 26), imitate Luther's example. We sing songs he sang. We speak the Prayer of the Church and the Lord's Prayer. We confess our faith in the creeds. Yes, this full liturgical participation has something to do with being Lutheran.

But it has more to do with the fact that, along with Luther, we believe in the universal priesthood of all believers. By our participation, we confess that every Christian has the right to come to God in prayer and praise. We value the Liturgy, therefore, because it allows the people to participate in worship.

The Liturgy is designed for people

The order of service that evolved in the early Christian Church purposefully imitated the interaction that occurs every day between God

and his people. The Liturgy was designed to be a dialogue between the presider (as the representative of God) and the people. The presider speaks: "In peace let us pray to the Lord."

We respond: "Lord, have mercy."

The presider speaks: "Lift up your heads."

We respond: "We lift them up to the Lord."

The presider reads and preaches on the Scripture lessons; we respond with psalms, alleluias, hymns, and the creeds. As in life, so in worship: God acts, people react; God speaks, people respond. The Liturgy, therefore, both summarizes our Christian life and sets a pattern for it.

Since the Liturgy is for people, it also recognizes what people are like. The words of our Liturgy are simple, not trivial or silly, but simple enough even for children. The music of the Liturgy is simple, too, simple enough that most people can sing along and focus their attention on the words without being distracted by the music. The music isn't designed for one generation or culture; it wants to find a middle ground so people from every culture and generation can be involved. The Liturgy includes actions and repetition because that reinforces truths people believe. Just as people stand every time the National Anthem is sung, for example, standing every time the gospel is read reminds people of their love for the Savior's words and works.

Worship is not a spectator sport

What would happen if we no longer used the Christian Liturgy? Would people stop being involved in worship? Not necessarily. Some non-liturgical churches allow people to participate actively in worship.



However, some churches that once used the Liturgy, but put it aside for something more contemporary, adopted a style of worship in which worshipers are little more than spectators. All of the action takes place on "center stage," where preachers, actors, singers, and musicians do the work of worship. The buildings designed for this kind of worship are more like theaters than churches. This seems to be the kind of worship some Americans look for—worship that allows them to be passive and non-committal. Attendance statistics at non-liturgical mega-churches bear this out.

We want our churches to grow, but we also want to participate when we come together for worship. We want to be more than spectators. We want to come to God in prayer and praise. We want to respond to the God who has made us "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation." We want to "declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light." And that's why we value the Liturgy, for it compels us to praise and proclaim.

NL

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



Winter Texans find home in Rio Grande Valley

Most churches' attendance drops slightly in summer and jumps slightly in winter. But not as drastically as at Abiding Savior, Weslaco, Tex.

At Abiding Savior, winter attendance jumps to seven or eight times as many as in summer. Abiding Savior is situated in "Snowbird" territory. Winter visitors flock into South Texas each October and into April.

Weslaco, in the middle of the Rio Grande Valley, is a perfect spot for WELS visitors from Zapata, Mission, Edinburg, and McAllen on the west, and Harlingen, San Benito, Brownsville, and South Padre Island on the east.

To better accommodate these visitors, the congregation increased seating, purchased pews and an organ, built a fellowship hall, and, through Builders For Christ, built a balcony. More improvements are planned.

Some who live in the north have been so taken by what Abiding Savior means to them that they have become permanent members even though they are away a number of months.

Heading south into the Rio Grande Valley? See you at Abiding Savior.

Gene Wendorf

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Defining religion

remission of sins: forgiveness of sins. God does not count our sins against us because he counted them against Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:19-21). Jesus redeemed us from the punishment we deserved for our sin by being punished in our place (Isaiah 53). Our sins are therefore remitted or forgiven.

WELS chaplains meet

On Sept. 30, 12 WELS chaplains met at Luther Haven, Milwaukee. They told their stories—describing their ministries, their greatest challenges, and what resources they found helpful.

These WELS pastors and one deaconess serve as full-time chaplains in nursing homes, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities, and related institutions.

"Because our ministries are different from our brothers in the parish, we feel somewhat alone and isolated," says John Zickuhr, chaplain at Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center (WLCFS). "It was good to meet with others who have similar ministries and often face similar problems."



Those attending included chaplains from The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.; Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association, which serves residents in Minnesota; Northern Wisconsin District Institutional Ministry; Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center (WLCFS), Milwaukee; and Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry, Milwaukee.

Bulgarians committed to evangelism

The first-ever Bulgarian voters' meeting was held on Sept. 15. Two items discussed show the commitment of this young church body to share the gospel.

Because English-speaking people from Indonesia, England, America, and Zambia attend worship, the congregation will reach out to Sofia's

international community with an English language service.

They also voted to open a Lutheran seminary and Bible institute. On Sept. 17, the program began. The first two students are Mr. and Mrs. Bunkin. Vasil is enrolled in the pastoral course, and Maria is studying to be a deaconess.



On Sept. 17, the Lutheran seminary and Bible institute opened with two students—Maria and Vasil Bunkin (center). Rev. Arno Wolfgramm (left) and Missionary Kirby Spevacek held the opening service.

School receives national award

Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Downers Grove, Ill., won second-prize in an annual reading incentive program—BOOK IT!® “100% Enrollment Sweepstakes.”

The sweepstakes offers public, private, and parochial school principals

the opportunity to win funds for their school libraries and other resources by enrolling 100 percent of eligible kindergarten through sixth-graders in BOOK IT!®. More than 35,000 elementary schools from across the country entered the sweepstakes contest.

“We were absolutely thrilled to hear that our school won second place. The \$5,000 and CD ROM programs we won will be just what we need to equip the computer lab we built last summer,” said Scott Schmudlach, principal at Good Shepherd.



The kindergarten through sixth grade at Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill., with their \$5,000 check. The school children took second place—out of 35,000 schools entered—in a national reading incentive program.



One year ago, the military moved our family to Italy. In 14 years of military life, we always had easy access to church. Every time we transferred, a WELS pastor would call to welcome us.

When we arrived in Naples, there was no call (we had no phone), no church, no Sunday school, no potlucks. For a moment I thought, “Where did God go?”

One day, I realized: God is not about a church or a Sunday school or potlucks. God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent.

It's against military regulation to hold lay services in government quarters because numerous services are offered under the religious pro-

gram. We attended one military chapel service and realized we didn't belong when our daughter poked me during the sermon saying, “Mom, that's not right!” Out of respect we remained quiet. We never returned.

Now we hold services for over 30 people in our home. With military and synod approval, my husband, Terry, conducts services, using sermon tapes. Our daughter, Laura, 12, plays the organ. Our son, Jesse, 10, works the computer version of *HymnSoft* to play more difficult songs. We conduct a “Communicating Christ” class, a Sunday school, and a Christmas Eve program. A traveling pastor comes as often as possible. It's been a challenging, yet rewarding, year. What a comfort to know that no matter where we are, there God is, even in Naples, Italy.

Cheryl Konell

WELS in the '90s

A telecommunications and technology task force has been created for WELS. The task force will study how WELS can use technology to further its ministry.

Through technology, the task force will assist WELS in communicating the gospel to the unchurched; in providing direct support to WELS churches, organizations, and members; and in enhancing the ability of WELS to educate future called workers and to provide continuing education.

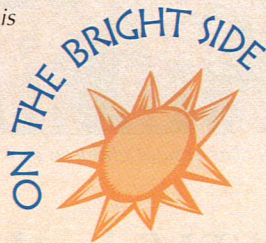
At the end of October, Wayne Borgwardt left his post as administrator for ministerial education in order to be the task force's director. He has been working part time for the task force since August. As director he will lead the way in creating a technological infrastructure to assist WELS in its mission.



News briefs

- Through AAL's 1996 Network Grants Program the **Commission on Youth Discipleship** received \$15,000 in support of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries.
- **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon** received \$25,100 in grants for student financial assistance, faculty development, and continuing education for WELS pastors, world missionaries, Lutheran high school teachers, administrators, and elementary school teachers. The grants were made possible by Aid Association for Lutherans.

The following is taken from Princeton Times-Republic. The article featured Scott Mund, vicar at St. John, Princeton, Wis.



Vicar Mund's education includes four years in college in Watertown at Northwestern. He earned a liberal arts degree with learning experiences in Greek and Hebrew. . . .

"Apparently the reporter thought Northwestern College was an institution of higher learning for televangelists," writes Mund.



Graduates and speakers at the second graduation ceremony of South Asian Lutheran Seminary.

South Asian Lutheran Seminary graduates eight

Graduation ceremonies for our Hong Kong mission are few and far between. That's why Sept. 22 was eventful for the eight graduates of South Asian Lutheran Seminary (SALS). SALS is the seminary of South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission, WELS sister church in Hong Kong.

This year's graduation ceremony was only the second in the school's 12-year history. The last graduation was in 1988.

Three students received a Diploma of Religious Studies and a Bachelor of Theology degree. This degree culminated 10 years of seminary study. Five other students also received diplomas. Among them were women

from the seminary's deaconess training program.

SALS uses "training with ministry." Seminary students have their own full- or part-time ministries in churches while studying part time. There are 30 students in SALS. Over 100 others have studied in the Seminary's Bible Institute during recent years.

Besides programs in theology and religious educations, SALS has also offered extension courses in music theory, pianist training, and conversational Mandarin. Cantonese Chinese is the language of instruction at the school.

*Roger Plath, president
South Asian Lutheran Seminary*

Obituaries

Leonard G. Bernthal 1923-1996

Leonard Bernthal was born Apr. 21, 1923 in Clare, Mich. He died Sept. 17, 1996 in Missoula, Mont.

A 1949 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served at Clarkston, Wash.; St. Louis, Mo.; Missoula, Mont.; Globe, Ariz.; and Lovelock, Nev.

He is survived by his wife Bianca, two sons, three daughters, and six grandchildren.

Herbert Fredrick Muenkel 1913-1996

Herbert Muenkel was born Oct. 14, 1913 in Caledonia, Minn. He died Sept. 19, 1996 in Zumbrota, Minn.

A 1937 graduate of Wisconsin

Lutheran Seminary, he taught at Trinity, Nicollet, Minn. He then served Our Redeemer, Wabasha; Trinity, Dexter Township; and Christ, Zumbrota, all in Minnesota. He also served as the Minnesota District Mission Board chairman.

He is survived by two daughters, six grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, a brother, and two sisters.

Communicating Christ to the world

Communicating Christ, a video Bible course covering basic Christian doctrine, is now available in seven different languages. The Japanese translation was completed this December.

The series was written by Pastor Carl Leyrer, now professor at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., when he was a missionary to Colombia.

The series, produced by WELS Kingdom Workers, covers law and gospel teachings. It also reviews topics

such as marriage and divorce, roles of men and women in the church, the doctrine of fellowship, and differences between Lutheran church bodies.

The course, designed for use in adult information class, Bible study, and confirmation class, is also successfully taught by lay people in the homes of relatives, neighbors, and friends—reaching out with Christ one-on-one.

The Communicating Christ package consists of an introductory tape, a law/gospel presentation tape, eight unit



tapes (four lessons on each), two student workbooks, and a teacher's guide.

Other translations available include English, Spanish, Portuguese, signed, Russian, and Bulgarian. Cantonese, Russian signed, Albanian, and Thai are in the works.

For more information, contact WELS Kingdom Workers, 414/771-6848 or 1-800-466-9357.

Neil Hankwitz

WLCFS adds Alzheimer's program

Besides celebrating 30 years of long-term care and Christian counseling this year, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, Inc., (WLCFS) celebrated the beginning of the Hope Alzheimer's program at its Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center (WLCC), Milwaukee.

In October, over 200 people attended the open house, which included a guest speaker and tours of the addi-

tion to WLCC as well as the adjoining WLCFS offices.

The remodeling project, which added a 14-bed, 4,000 square-foot unit, began in February. The first residents were admitted in May.

In addition to its Milwaukee headquarters, WLCFS has eight area offices, located in three states.

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Defining religion

apostle: one who has been sent out with a message or commission to speak with authority. At times the Bible uses the term in a broad sense to include prominent Christian teachers (Romans 16:7). In common use, the term refers to those who were directly commissioned by Christ after his resurrection as his special witnesses.

Melissa Ribbe joined Milton Berle and other celebrities at the Famous Poets Society convention, Anaheim, Calif., in September, where she presented her poem "Time Sands." Ribbe, a junior at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minn., is a member at St. Paul, St. James, Minn.

The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) awarded **Nebraska Lutheran High School (NELHS)**, Waco, with the 1996 AVCA Team Academic Award. The award honors teams that display excellence in the classroom by maintaining a team cumulative 3.3 grade point average for the 1995-96 school year. The NELHS varsity volleyball team has a cumulative grade point average of 3.69.

YOUTH NEWS

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



The Echoes from Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., performed at this year's Wisconsin State Fair. They were also featured on the morning news broadcast of a Milwaukee TV station as a promotion for the fair. The Echoes are directed by James Grasby.



Arizona-California

After 50 years in Apacheland, **Arthur Guenther** retired on Aug. 31. His retirement was featured on Phoenix TV station KPNX. . . . **Messiah, Whiterock, N.M.**, celebrated its 20th anniversary in September. . . . **Ernest Zimdars** is celebrated his 30th anniversary in the pastoral ministry. . . . **Steven Spencer and James Connell**, pastors serving in El Paso, Tex., both celebrated their 15th anniversary. . . . **Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.**, dedicated a 3,000 square foot school addition on Sept. 1. Members built it themselves at an estimated savings of \$73,000. . . . **Beautiful Savior, Carlsbad, Calif.**, held a seminar on Sept. 28 focusing on challenges of the Christian and the church in the 21st century.

Kenneth Pasch

Nebraska

Shepherd of Peace, Norfolk, Neb., dedicated a new fellowship/educational addition on Oct. 6.

Keith Petersen

North Atlantic

Living Hope, Midlothian, Va., started a "Fishing Club." Members meet once a month for lunch, devotion, prayer, and then go door-to-door canvassing. After an hour of "fishing" for the unchurched, everyone returns to church to share experiences. . . .

Churches in eastern and central Virginia held a retreat on Sept. 28. The 40 attendees talked about what God says in his Word and how it relates to their lives.

South Atlantic

Gloria Dei, Memphis, Tenn., confirmed Charles Edward "Chuck" Reining, a 45-year-old Christian with Downs Syndrome, on Aug. 18. . . . It's time to promote our **district directory, Coming South**. Copies have been sent to northern congregations. If you're visiting our area, you

District news

Western Wisconsin

St. Luke, Millston—5E, Wis., celebrated its 100th anniversary in September. St. Luke forms a dual parish with St. Matthew, Warren, Wis. . . . On Sept. 8, **Bethany, Fort Atkinson, Wis.**, dedicated a new

education wing. . . . **Buffalo Lutheran School, Cochrane, Wis.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary on June 9. . . . **Jehovah, Altura, Minn.**, celebrated its 100th anniversary on Aug. 18.

Elton Stroh



Twenty organizations of Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis., set up displays to inform members how each group serves the church. Displays were a part of the "Spirit of Peace," a weekend celebration in September. Sunday services focused on the blessings of active church membership.

can look up the location and service times of our nearest congregation. Or if you're retiring to someplace warm, those who already have been through the process can offer advice.

Philip Wilde

Southeastern Wisconsin

Atonement, Milwaukee, celebrated **Mary Prange's** 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry on Oct. 13. . . . On Sept. 29, Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis., celebrated the 25th anniversary of teacher **Jean Herrian**.

George Ferch

Northern Wisconsin

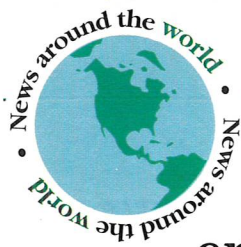
On Sept. 15, **Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.**, dedicated a school addition. The school has a commons area, a gymnasium, and five of 13 classrooms finished. Classes started in

1991 with pre-kindergarten and added a grade per year.

Joel Lillo



In September, Mike Buchanan, chairman of Salem, Escanaba, Mich., presented Marcie Filteau a plaque, honoring her for teaching Sunday school for more than 50 years.



Catholic parents don't encourage church vocations

A survey of 6,000 active Catholic youth shows that many remain open to the notion of entering the religious life or working full-time for the church, but receive virtually no encouragement from their parents.

The survey, "New Direction in Catholic Youth Ministry," covered issues from Mass attendance and involvement in parish life to values and attitudes toward family.

Among its key findings is that more than half of the teens involved in parish youth groups have considered working for the church in jobs such as youth ministry without taking lifetime vows. About 36 percent of males and 24 percent of females have thought about becoming a priest, brother, or sister.

Bryan Froehle, lead researcher for the survey, said that's about the same level of interest in religious vocations as a generation ago. But now, instead of being pressured, prodded, or gently nudged into religious life by their parents, there is little parental encouragement.

Only 26 percent of males and 15 percent of females report parental encouragement to consider a religious vocation.

"What's surprising about this," said Froehle, "is that this is coming from kids and families who are more involved than most in church life, from parents who are way above the norm in Mass attendance and parish involvement."

In brief

- Ever hear that 50 percent of U.S. marriages are headed for divorce? It started when somebody at the Census Bureau noticed there had been 2.4 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces. Comparing those two figures without taking into account the 54 million marriages already in existence gave birth to a highly inaccurate, statistic. **The fact is only about two percent of existing marriages will fail, and in any given year only one out of eight married couples divorce.** As pollster Louis Harris says, "The idea that half of American marriages are doomed is one of the most specious pieces of statistical nonsense ever perpetuated in modern times." [*Leadership*, Summer 1996 quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, October]

Church attendance drops

Church attendance has suffered a five-year decline and sunk to its lowest level in two decades, according to the Barna Research Group.

"From the early '80s to the early '90s, there has been a definite change," said Rev. Bruce Hose, former director of Sunday school programs for the Alabama Baptist Convention. "Not only has attendance gone down, but it is a graying culture, a graying congregation."

In telephone surveys of 1,004 U.S. adults 18 and over, Barna Research Group said 37 percent of Americans now report going to church on a given Sunday. Attendance peaked in 1991 at 49 percent and dropped to 47 percent in 1992, 45 percent in 1993 and 42 percent in 1994 and 1995.

"If his data is right, it's even worse than what we think we've found," said Samford University researcher Penny Long Marler, who has taken part in studies showing that actual church attendance is only about half of that indicated by telephone polls. "It may be where we're heading."

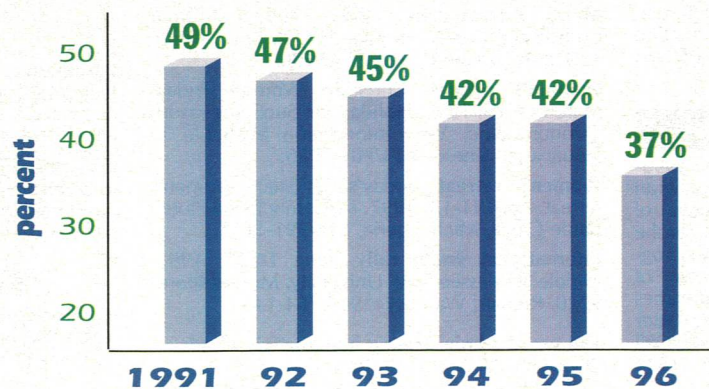
Many churches have been lulled into a false sense of security for years

by Gallup poll figures that appeared to show church attendance remaining constant, Hose said.

Gallup polls have remained steady for three decades in reporting that about 43 percent of people say in telephone surveys that they attended church the previous week, Marler said.

With the increasing population, a steady 43 percent church attendance should have resulted in a massive influx of people for the nation's churches. "That's clearly not been the case," Marler said. "Something has been fishy about the polling."

To reverse the trend, churches must have faith in what got them started. "The power of the gospel is still relevant," Hose said. "The truth of the gospel cuts through."



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:

Haag, Gerhardt E., from Peace, Cottonwood, Ariz., to retirement

Herman, Edgar M., from St. Mark, Flat Rock, Mich., to Hope, Markham, Ontario

Leistekow, David W., from St. Paul, Mauston, Wis., to Christ our Redeemer, Bend, Ore.

Limpert, Jeffrey E., from Abiding Faith, Pinehurst, Tex., to Christ Our Rock, Rochester, Minn.

Naumann, Paul S., from St. John, Riga, Mich., to Good Shepherd, Benton Harbor, Mich.

Naumann, Thomas S., from Our Savior, Hart, Mich., to Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.

Sawall, Robert L., to Our Redeemer, San Angelo, Tex.

Teachers:

Casper, Denys C., to Trinity, Woodbridge, Va.

Congregation treasurers

The cutoff date for Congregational Mission Offering (CMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 1996 lock box offerings will be credited as 1996 receipts through Jan. 9, 1997, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as "December" offerings on the remittance coupon. Offerings must be mailed to the lock box rather than delivered to the synod offices.

Randy Matter, controller

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 54th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 28-Aug. 1, 1997 at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Details will be announced later. Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BoRaM) must be submitted to the president's office by Feb. 1, 1997.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Board for World Missions invites the voting members of the synod to nominate candidates for the position of administrator. Because of realigned office responsibilities, the BWM, at its administrator's request, is seeking a new administrator. Candidates must be ordained ministers, have administrative experience and skills, good "people" relationships, effective communication abilities, some financial acumen, mission vision, and initiative. Send names with pertinent information by Jan. 15, 1997 to Pastor David Dolan, 52 E First St, Fond du Lac WI 54935.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Prof. Paul Nitz will retire at the close of the 1996-97 school year. Therefore, the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Board of Control, with the approval of the Board for Ministerial Education, requests the voting members of the synod to nominate theologically-trained candidates to serve as professor of church history and practical theology. Send names with pertinent information by Jan. 6, 1997 to Pastor Paul Manthey, 8419 W Melvina St, Milwaukee WI 53222. For a list of nominees, contact WLS, 11831 Seminary Dr, Mequon WI 53092; 414/242-7200.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Synod Nominating Committee will meet at 7 PM, Jan. 15, 1997, at the synod administration building, Milwaukee. The committee will propose three candidates for each position:

- Board for World Missions executive committee members: Latin America (layman); Native Americans (pastor & layman); Central Africa (layman); Japan, Europe, Asia (pastor & layman); Southeast Asia (two laymen).
- Board for Parish Services: board member (layman); chairman (pastor); commission chairmen for Youth Discipleship and Adult Discipleship (pastors).
- Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor & two laymen).
- Board for Ministerial Education: three board members (layman, teacher, pastor); chairman (pastor).
- Provisional nominations for the Coordinating Council (two laymen).
- Martin Luther College Board of Control chairman (pastor).

The list of nominees will be published in spring 1997. The delegates will elect one candidate for each position at the synod convention in 1997.

Any synod voting member is invited to send names with pertinent information by Jan. 1, 1997, to Pastor Douglas Bode, 1515 S 15 St, Prairie du Chien WI 53821; phone/FAX—608/326-4899.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Martin Luther College Board of Control invites voting members of WELS to nominate candidates for vice president for student life and possibly religion or Hebrew. This is pending BME approval. Send nominations with pertinent information by Dec. 20 to Philip Leyrer, secretary, 3209 Nightingale Ln, Middleton WI 53562.

COMING EVENTS

Dedication—Morning Star church and school. 3:30 PM, Dec. 1. Potluck follows. N171 W20131 Highland Rd, Jackson WI 53037; 414/677-1377.

Concert—Lutheran Chorale, Dec. 1, 3 and 7 PM, Atonement, Milwaukee.

Men's retreat—Jan. 10-11, 1997. Willmar Conference Center, Holiday Inn, Willmar, Minn. \$30. Joel Thomford, 612/235-5996.

Women's retreat—Christian Woman Today. March 14-16, 1997. Holiday Inn SunSpree resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Information available in January. Jan Kneser, 414/781-1955.

Women's retreat—Today's Christian Women's retreat. April 11-13, 1997. McCamly Plaza Hotel, Battle Creek, Mich. Laurie, 810/391-1133.

International youth rally—June 18-21, 1997. Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro. \$220. Richard Warnecke, 904/784-1455.

The synod administration building will close: December 24 & 25—Christmas
Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888; FAX—414/256-3899.

ITEMS AVAILABLE

Organ—Hammond, model 2182 with upholstered bench. Leslie model 710 speaker. In working condition. Free to WELS/ELS congregation for cost of shipping. Divinity, St. Paul, Minn. 612/776-1786.

Organ—two keyboard Hammond. Full pedal and speaker. For church or school. Free for cost of shipping. Barbara Luedtke, 414/836-2732.

White paraments—Superfrontal, pulpit, and Biblemarker. Good condition. Free for cost of shipping. Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn.; 612/825-5375.

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

POSITION AVAILABLE

Faculty positions—Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn., for 1997-98 academic year.

Instrumental music and fine arts administrator. Direct and develop the instrumental music program, coordinate fine arts activities, and serve as academic advisor.

Communication instructor. Teach communication courses, help develop curriculum for communication major, serve as academic advisor and advisor for extracurricular activities.

Social science instructor. Teach courses within social science division including anthropology, sociology, geography, and political science, and serve as academic advisor.

Director of Christian education. Teach education classes for students and recent graduates interested in synod certification, provide continuing education opportunities for synodical teachers, promote concept of Christian day schools within the synod, and advise potential synod teachers.

A minimum of a Master's degree required. Ph.D. or willingness to pursue a terminal degree desired. Send nominations or résumé and transcript information by Feb. 1, 1997 to Ronald Younge, vice president for academic affairs, Bethany Lutheran College, 734 Marsh St, Mankato MN 56001.

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.

NEEDED

Paraments—Small congregation. Altar and lectern. All colors (green, purple, white, and especially red). St. John, 600 S Park, Montrose CO 81401; 970/249-0635.

Church anniversary plates—Donations of plates to be displayed at the synod administration building. Send to Lois Brunner, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3888.

CHANGE OF LOCATION

Plymouth, Minn.—West Lutheran High School, 3350 Harbor Ln N, Plymouth MN 55447; 612/509-9378. Effective Dec. 9.

The commercial racket

Vernon Gerlach

Several decades ago C. S. Lewis complained about how Christmas is observed. He had no objections to the Christian, the truly religious, festival. Nor did he say anything about the popular holiday, the occasion for merrymaking and hospitality. What he objected to was what he labeled the “commercial racket.” For three reasons:

- Lewis was overwhelmed by the irony of the giver’s struggle in overcrowded stores, by the irony of the mental fatigue stemming from the effort to recall who gets a gift and what is suitable.
- He abhorred the involuntary nature of exchanging gifts. He heard the wail of despair, resentment, when the unwanted present from Aunt Bertha and Uncle Henry arrived at the last moment, forcing one back to the dreadful stores for another purchase.
- He despised the gift of gaudy and useless novelties, the kind that one would never consider purchasing for oneself.

But is there really any reason why commercialism should turn our thoughts in the wrong direction, why it should pollute our observance of Christmas? Look at commercialism from God’s side. For three reasons:

- Who belongs on the gift list? Who gets a gift? That’s easy, even though incomprehensible. Only sinners! God put them on the gift list because human beings changed from heirs who had everything to orphans who have nothing, who need a gift. Each of us, every sinner that ever lived or ever

will live, gets the gift. And what’s a suitable gift for all those on that gift list? Only a Savior bringing the gift of salvation, the only gift that can crush the head of the evil deceiver.

- What do we do about that gift? God wasn’t on our gift list. What should we buy him? Where do we go? That’s easy, too. We go nowhere, we buy nothing. We can’t. God’s gift is beyond reciprocation. Anything we try to do only magnifies the difference between God and us. So away with wailing in despair and resentment. Let’s take the gift, shamelessly. It’s ours. It’s free. It can’t be matched with a gift in return. “How can we thank you properly, Who gives us all?” we ask with hymn writer Christopher Wordsworth. “What can to you, O Lord, be giv’n, Who gives us all?” And we answer with Paul Gerhardt, “To you alone, dear Lord, I live; Myself to you, dear Lord, I give.” Not very much of a gift, but it’s all God wants for Christmas.
- What good is that gift from heaven? Of what value is a God who became fully human? And a very low-class human, at that! No powerful potentate’s prince. No heir to a financial empire. Just the son of an ordinary carpenter from a second-rate village in a captive country. But that useless-appearing gift, that gift that we’d never think of buying for ourselves, is the difference between a commercial racket and the celebration of our Savior’s birth.

Vernon Gerlach is a member at Emanuel, Tempe, Arizona.

*Is there
really any
reason why
commercialism
should turn
our thoughts
in the wrong
direction?*

Samuel: a judge in Israel

Concentrating on the Lord is daunting when dangers clamor for attention.

James A. Aderman

Think back 300 years before Samuel. Following the death of those who carved a Jewish homeland out of Canaan, “another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).

To awaken his spiritually-anesthetized people, God enlisted neighboring nations to harass, enslave, and terrorize Israel. Slapped to consciousness, God’s people recognized their sin, pleaded for forgiveness, and prayed for relief. God then raised up leaders—judges—who with the Lord’s power pushed back the oppressors. Moral and spiritual health flourished. But “when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers . . .” (Judges 2:19).

Repenting to God

This cycle of godlessness, oppression, repentance, freedom, upright living, and a return to godlessness repeated itself until Samuel. Remember Eli and his sons? **1 Samuel 7** brings us to a repentance and freedom section of that cycle and to Samuel as Israel’s final judge.

The Ark of the Covenant remained in the border town of Kiriath-Jearim for 20 years after the Philistines captured it and then returned it to stem a Lord-induced plague. During those two decades “all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord” (7:2).

To confirm that renaissance of faith, Samuel summoned his coun-



FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. List examples of the Lord showing that success is “not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6).
2. What Ebenezer stones have you established in your life (or might you establish) that encourage you to trust God because of his track record?
3. How can you always be assured of victory from God (Matthew 6:33, 1 John 5:4,5)?

trymen to a spiritually essential, but politically provocative, act—national purification and rededication. Israel was not a free country. Philistine overlords kept close watch. When their surveillance noticed huge numbers of Israelites staging at Mizpah (literally, “look out point”), their early-warning alarms wailed. Mizpah was a military gem mounted in hills about eight miles north of Jerusalem.

Soon the sound of Philistine marching boots, the clank of armor,

and the bellow of war trumpets echoed off Mizpah. “When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid . . .” (7:7). No doubt. Concentrating on the Lord is daunting when dangers (dare we add personal problems or financial difficulties) clamor for attention.

Victory through God

Samuel, however, urged Israel to fasten on God. “Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us” (7:8). Strength was not in their military might, but in the Lord’s omnipotence.

God confirmed that. With Israeli knees bent in prayer and without an Israeli sword unsheathed, God’s deafening thunder routed the Philistine army. Panicked, the troops stumbled south toward safety. Their backs made easy targets.

The Philistine losses that day did not completely free Israel. We await Saul and David to accomplish that. Israel, however, did enjoy a season of peace with Philistia and, as a fringe benefit, with the Amorites.

To mark the victory, Samuel set up a monument called Ebenezer (“stone of help”). Ebenezer stones (church cornerstones, wedding anniversaries, birthdays) remind us, “Thus far has the LORD helped us.” But our most conclusive proof that there’s always an upside in our downside world is Jesus, “the stone the builders rejected [that] has become the capstone” (1 Peter 2:7).

James A. Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.

A Christmas gift exchange

Karl R. Gurgel

From the time we entered kindergarten, many of us have participated in gift exchanges for Christmas. Names are drawn so we can get an appropriate gift for the person. Usually, there is a suggested dollar limit so all gifts will be relatively equal in value.

In spite of precautions, however, Christmas gift exchanges do not always go well. Often, some people are disappointed. The gift is not what they want or can even use. Or, they calculate, what they gave someone else is worth far more than the gift they received.

The first business day after Christmas is a time most store employees dread. The longest lines are in front of the return tables. "I want to exchange it. It's the wrong size, wrong color, wrong style. Or, I just don't want it or need it. Give me the money." Is anyone satisfied with what they got in their Christmas gift exchange? Many, it seems, question whether they received a fair exchange.

But are gift exchanges always meant to be fair? Do the gifts have to be of equal value? Think of the gifts we as children gave to our parents when we were young and the comparative worth of the gifts they gave to us. Recently, when going through my mother's things, I found the first gift I ever made for her. She had kept this crudely made, plywood horse's head all these years. Hardly worth comparing with the lifetime of love she had given me!

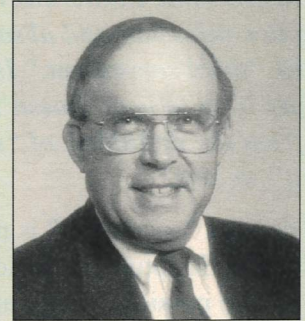
More to the point, think of the gifts we bring to Jesus and the Christmas exchange he makes with us. God's Son came to earth; we can go to heaven. The forgiveness the Father gave us through the suffering and death of

Jesus, wouldn't ever have to be exchanged because it's the wrong size. When it comes to forgiveness, one size fits all. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23,24).

In addition, forgiveness is a gift that will not lose its usefulness or "wear out" as we use it. Even if we live 100 years, we still need and enjoy God's pardon. In truth, its usefulness will continue uninterrupted forever.

Is this Christmas gift exchange between God and us fair? Everything he gives us outshines anything we might give him. We bring him our repentance, the acknowledgment of our misdeeds. He gives us his forgiveness. We bring him our heavy hearts, burdened with sorrow or suffering. He grants us enduring joy and endless relief. We bring him our sin. He freely bestows upon us the gift of eternal life.

No wonder, at this Christmas gift exchange, there is to be only smiling satisfaction. God gives us all we need forever, all of it purchased for us at the price of his Son's blood. For everything we bring to him, he always gives us something better. And so, the only proper return for now—forever—is thanks and praise to God for his Christmas gift exchange.



Karl R. Gurgel is president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Think of the
gifts we bring
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Sacraments and psalms

John F. Brug

We heard some Lutherans refer to confession and absolution as the “third sacrament.” Is this a proper term to use? Doesn’t it differ from the definition of “sacrament” we use?

The term “sacrament” is not defined in Scripture, so various definitions are possible. Lutherans have used both wider and narrower definitions. In the New Testament, however, we find two acts in a class by themselves—baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These rites share three characteristics: 1) Christ commanded the church to observe them until he returns; 2) both offer forgiveness of sins; 3) both have visible, material elements (water, and bread and wine). No other acts share these characteristics. We have therefore chosen to reserve the word “sacrament” for these two acts.

Some Lutherans define “sacrament” using only the first two points listed. According to this definition, confession and absolution could be called a “sacrament” since it was established by Christ and offers forgiveness of sins. This use of the term “sacrament” occurs in our Lutheran Confessions in Article 13 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Triglotta, p. 309-313; also p. 261,41 and p. 751,74). This article also allows ordination to be called a sacrament in the loose sense of the word since God has com-

manded the public ministry of the Word (Triglotta, p. 311,11-12). In the Large Catechism, however, Luther included only baptism and the Lord’s Supper as sacraments (Triglotta, p. 579,20). In fact, the first editions of Luther’s Large and Small Catechism did not include a section on confession (Triglotta, p. 87-88).

In the New Testament, we find two acts in a class by themselves—baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

We have chosen to follow Luther’s stricter definition, which limits the sacraments to two. But we do not reject the possibility of using a wider definition of “sacrament” as long as the correct biblical teachings are preserved.

We cannot, however, accept Roman Catholicism’s system of seven sacraments for the following reasons: They demand that everyone accept their definition, even though Scripture has not defined the term. They place human customs like confirmation on the same level as divine institutions like baptism. They use their sacraments as means of meriting forgiveness, rather than as channels for receiving God’s free forgiveness.

In some psalms the title includes the name of the tune. Do we have any of these tunes? What were their musical accompaniments like?

Notice in these psalm headings (for example Psalm 75) the words “To the tune of” are in half brackets, indicating they are not in the Hebrew text. In other words, we do not know for certain that these phrases are the titles of tunes, although this seems to be the most likely explanation. Although musical notation was known at the time of David, we do not have a record of any original melodies of the psalms.

The present Hebrew text of the psalms includes musical signs that have been given varying interpretations, but we do not know how ancient these melodies are or if any interpretations successfully recover the original meaning of these signs. These signs yield a type of music similar to medieval Christian chants. These Hebrew chants may preserve chants that originated in ancient synagogues. In the temple the psalms were performed with orchestral accompaniment, so the original melodies may have been quite different from those used in synagogue worship.

The musical settings used with the psalms in *Christian Worship* are of recent origin.

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; FAX—414/256-3899; e-mail—nl@sab.wels.net.**

The greatest praise chorus

Victor H. Prange

In recent years it has become customary in some churches to begin the service by singing a series of "praise choruses." One popular praise chorus has the refrain:

"Let there be praise, let there be joy
in our hearts.

Sing to the Lord, give him the glory,
Let there be praise, let there be joy
in our hearts.

Forevermore let his love fill the air,
and let there be praise."

Down through the ages believers have praised the Lord. Many Psalms are expressions of fervent praise. The Hebrew word "Hallelujah," meaning "praise the Lord," has come into our English language. So has the Greek and Latin word "Alleluia," which means the same thing. The Revelation to John transports him to heaven and allows him to hear an endless chorus of praise.

There is no greater praise chorus than the one that the church has been singing for centuries. This is the song titled "Glory be to God on High" (Gloria in Excelsis). In Western Christian churches this song is part of the communion liturgy (Common Service). In Eastern Christian churches it serves as the climax of the service of Morning Praise.

Luther said of this song that it "did not grow, nor was it made on earth, but it came down from heaven." He was referring especially to the song's opening words, first sounded by the mass choir of angels on the night that Christ was born:

"Glory be to God on high, and on
earth peace, good will toward
men."

The song continues by piling up words of praise:

"We praise you, we bless you, we
worship you,

we glorify you,
we give thanks
to you, for your
great glory."

The contemporary praise chorus quoted in the introduction above is addressed to human beings. It exhorts the worshiper: "Let there be praise." Far superior is the Gloria in Excelsis, which actually praises the Lord God, the heavenly King.

But there is more than praise in this glorious song of the liturgy; there is also prayer and confession. We implore the Lamb of God:

"Have mercy on us; receive our
prayer."

And in defiance of all rivals who might claim our allegiance, we confess:

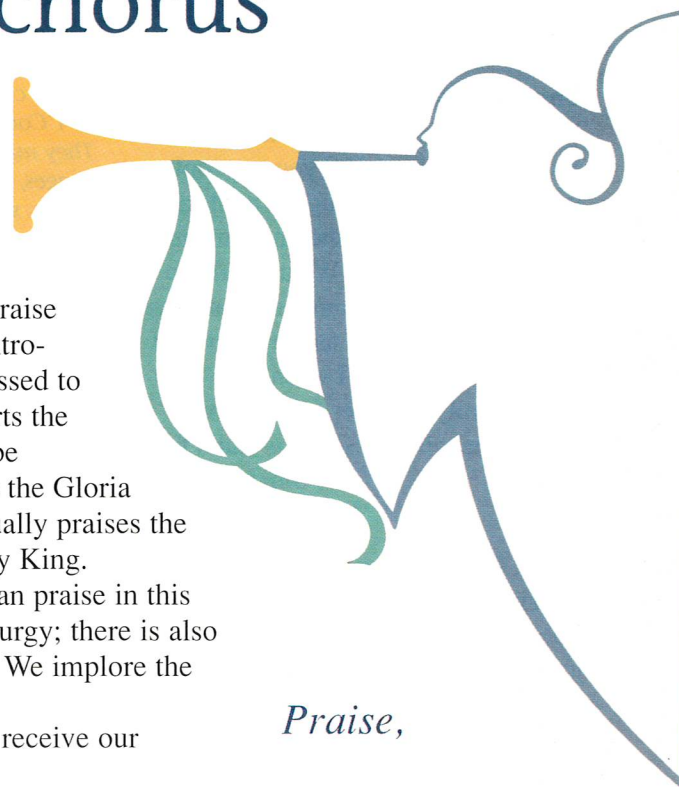
"For you only are holy; you only are
the Lord.

You only, O Christ, with the Holy
Spirit,
are most high in the glory of God
the Father."

Praise, prayer, confession—this is the church's response to the astounding grace of God. This excellent song of praise is especially meaningful on the day of the nativity of our Lord. Even as the angels sang their praises on the plains of Bethlehem, so we join the whole church on earth and in heaven celebrating the Father's gift of his one and only Son.

One sometimes hears that the liturgy is boring. It is hardly boring when one pauses to reflect on such a praise chorus as "Glory be to God on High." It's the greatest!

*Victor Prange is pastor at Peace, Janesville,
Wisconsin.*



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The marching band parade season is over, at least for the Lutheran Vanguard. About 160 young people from eight Lutheran high schools and a sprinkling from Lutheran elementary schools participated. What a thrill to hear these Christian ambassadors play "A Mighty Fortress" as they marched in parades. I'm sure I wasn't the only proud family member to tell people next to me what these teens stand for.

*Shirley Kasten
Maribel, Wisconsin*

Mark Braun wrote about the charismatic movement [Aug., Sept.]. These articles were written in a non-judgmental manner, as if for information only. This may be fine for a comparative religion paper in a secular college, but I would hope as an official synod publication, NL would present articles in light of God's Word.

Christians are not to be nonjudgmental on doctrinal issues. We are to be discriminating, going to Scripture to find answers to life's questions. Our synod's school system produces ministers capable of doing studies in the original languages for the purpose of settling questions of where we stand on theological issues.

In future issues I hope a clear statement of where we stand is included in articles about church theology.

*Mark Bannaff
Saginaw, Michigan*

Mark Braun replies:

I share Mr. Bannaff's desire to have all our questions concerning the charismatic movement "nailed down."

We could say, "All modern tongues-speaking is clearly contrary to God's will," if we could demonstrate: 1) that every instance of tongue-speaking in the New Testament is speaking in recognizable foreign languages, unlearned by the speaker; and 2)

that all genuine tongue-speaking came to an end at the close of the Apostolic Age.

Episodes in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 are clearly recognizable foreign languages, but it is not as clear whether the tongues discussed in 1 Corinthians 12-14 are the same gift. They may be recognizable foreign languages, but they may be an ecstatic language, similar to tongues charismatics claim to speak. Conservative, confessional Lutheran exegetes do not agree on the nature of the tongues spoken in Corinth.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8, Paul says tongues will be stilled, but doesn't say when. Douglas Judisch argues persuasively they must end after the death of the last apostle. But if we accept his interpretation of 13:8, we must also accept his understanding of 13:12—"Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." In his view, this refers not to life in heaven, but to life now with the completed New Testament. Most Lutheran exegetes, however, including scholars from our seminary, do not support that interpretation.

I agree we should go to Scripture to find answers to life's questions. We must be careful, however, lest we find things in

Scripture that just aren't there. We should say no less than the Bible says, but we should also say no more.

Thank you for addressing the oftentimes unseen sin of abuse—physical and verbal [Oct.]. These Christians may be neighbors, friends, children in our schools, or even family. They may be victims or offenders.

Are we turning away those desperately in need of Christ's love and forgiveness? Discussing the problem over dinner isn't enough. Our pastors should seek out and embrace victims with the comfort from our Lord. The offender should be disciplined and led to the foot of the cross where forgiveness is complete and absolute. Fellow members should speak up and encourage their brothers and sisters.

The cover and article offer a clear message—with our Savior's work, what is broken can be mended.

Name withheld

The following is a response to the editorial "Please, help us." in the October issue.

To Anonymous:

I have never written to any magazine, but your letter to our editor touched my heart like nothing else. You see, I was "Anonymous" too.

The road you walk will be difficult. You must cling to Christ for your sanity. When I was verbally abused, from the beginning of the tirade to the end, I would recite the Lord's Prayer. For every negative word, say to yourself, "No, I'm a child of God. That's not true."

If you are screamed at because you are "stupid and dumb or no good," reply: "With Christ in my life, I don't feel that way." Answer calmly and rationally. Never speak in anger, for this incites the abuser. Do it in the attitude Christ used for his abusers. Let the abuser see you reading the Bible and praying.

I am a 38-year-old survivor with three beautiful daughters and a wonderful marriage. Mom is still alive and mean as ever. But I have a large family that loves and accepts me. I laugh with my husband and daughters as they laugh at themselves for some shortcoming, a forgotten appointment, not waking up on time, fighting with each other, and all the wonderful things that make us a family.

Realize the ultimate gift of love and family sacrifice from God and his son, Jesus. That love is timeless and will swallow up every cruel word thrown at you. You will survive.

By the way, I didn't like Mom. But I love her and still do. Some would say, "That's just like an abused person." I call it forgiveness.

*Once Anonymous now
Rebecca in Christ*

**I applaud *Northwestern Lutheran* for addressing domestic violence**

[Oct.]. Unfortunately too often the pastor has to deal with the problem after damage has already been done. The real issue is about the God-given roles to men and women. It is my fervent prayer that our WELS men exert their headship and implement strategies to prevent this violence against our women and children.

For women caught up in the cycle of violence—do not be deceived. This was not what God meant when he spoke about being submissive.

*Susan Gehrke
Mequon, Wisconsin*

The October cover is tasteless, and the title even worse.

“When Dad hits Mom” presupposes that Dad *does* hit Mom. Now kids are wondering “just when does Dad hit Mom?” Please refrain from championing causes that categorize Christianity’s message of sin and grace and damage the catholicity of our gospel message and our Lutheran magazine. We would get the idea of the tragedy without the rude picture on the cover. Thanks for the mostly helpful article, but keep the covers blessed in hope.



*Thomas Schultz
Davenport, Iowa*

I was disappointed with the cover

[Oct.]. It is in poor taste to put an abusive picture on a Christian magazine. We hear and see enough about abuse without putting it on the cover of an official synod publication. These magazines are displayed in our churches. What does this say to visitors? We are aware these things go on, but is it necessary or expedient to vividly portray violence?

*Carol Stuebs
Platteville, Wisconsin*

I agree with the cliché, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” The picture of a battered woman spoke volumes. I read the article and gained knowledge from its insights. However, my immediate reaction was that of fear, and a flood of hurtful memories. I have dealt with abusive episodes in my life. All were painful—as your picture reminded me.

The picture was inappropriate because of its graphic nature. I have small children who shouldn’t need to ask what the picture portrays. Please, in the future, remember those of us who live with haunted memories that we try to shield from our children.



Name withheld

I just finished reading “When Dad hits Mom.” Thank you ever so much for printing this article and for the help it will provide.

*Kerry Binnington
Coloma, Michigan*

A comment on your cover. I don’t think you need to treat domestic violence this openly, having it on the cover for children to see. My four-year-old grandson seemed disturbed, asking what was wrong with the lady. Many young children, thank God, are not exposed to violence, and parents should not have to explain it in those early years.

*Judy Koch
Cleveland, Wisconsin*

“What’s in a name?” [Oct., p. 33] says, “It happened because years ago virtually all Wisconsin Synod members lived in the Northwest part of our country, now called the Upper Midwest.” Consider this from *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 31. Bading, Koehler, Reim, and Sauer “made a team in the old Northwest-

ern Conference that embraced . . . an honored term in the Wisconsin Synod. . . . The overuse of the term tends to obscure the real significance of ‘Northwestern’ in Wisconsin Synod history. Originally that term implied a deep commitment to a more confessional Lutheranism than was available elsewhere.” It appears the origin of the term is not primarily geographic in meaning.



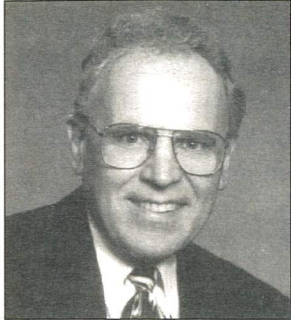
*Daniel Haag
Globe, Arizona*

Through my Bible in 3 years

January 1997

1. 1 John 1:1—2:2
2. 1 Jn. 2:3-27
3. 1 Jn. 2:28—3:10
4. 1 Jn. 3:11—4:6
5. 1 Jn. 4:7—5:3
6. 1 Jn. 5:4-21
7. John 2, 3
8. Isaiah 40
9. Is. 41
10. Is. 42:1—43:13
11. Is. 43:14—44:23
12. Is. 44:24—45:25
13. Is. 46, 47
14. Is. 48
15. Is. 49:1—50:3
16. Is. 50:4—51:16
17. Is. 51:17—52:12
18. Is. 52:13—53:12
19. Is. 54
20. Is. 55
21. Is. 56, 57
22. Is. 58
23. Is. 59
24. Is. 60
25. Is. 61:1—63:6
26. Is. 63:7—64:12
27. Is. 65
28. Is. 66
29. Matthew 1
30. Matt. 2
31. Matt. 3

All I want for Christmas I have



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

The gifts under the tree are "bonus" gifts from a gracious God and from caring friends and relatives.

Christmas is a time for gifts—to give them, to receive them.

Children make lists and conjure up visions of awesome toys and games they will find under the tree (please, not all clothes!). Parents save and shop, eager to indulge them. Adults become like children again, except clothing is okay now—a new dress, a sweater, even some ties. Some worry about disappointing a loved one because they simply cannot afford expensive gifts. Others worry about what to get the person who has everything.

The merchants understand the mood. They create fetching displays of new "things," and ads everywhere insist you can't live without their latest product. The economy heats up at the beeping of cash registers everywhere. Love is shared. Joy is spread. And, sad to say, lesser motives and emotions beg for equal time.

I like the dreaming part. "Toys" intrigue me. And who doesn't like gifts? I fed my fancies on a recent airplane trip. The gift catalog promised me "the best, the only, and the unexpected." Right off the cover, a Variable Attitude Submersible Hydrofoil flaunted its sleek lines. No ordinary boat this! It can go under the water, over the water (at 85 mph), and "leap" 30 feet into the air. I can have it for \$139,000. A minivan TV/VCR entertainment center intrigued me for a more modest \$769.95 (all I need is the van to go with it). For the person who has everything, there's the world's smallest digital camcorder



(\$2,499) or a natural wake-up-to-light alarm clock (\$99.95).

I also like the giving part. Not the indulging, mind you, although I've been guilty of that, but giving as an expression of Christian love. God, in love, gave his Son—"the indescribable gift"—to this undeserving, self-indulgent being. He gave me the gift of his Spirit in bringing me into his family and in charging me to be his witness. God's love creates love in me. God's giving creates a spirit of giving in me. When I can give in that spirit, I am filled with real Christmas cheer.

Gifts, the toys and things, are fine and have their place. They don't have to be expensive or unusual. I hope you are able to give and receive some that you treasure. I imagine a Variable Attitude Submersible Hydrofoil is out of the question, but other dreamed for prizes can become yours. And what can be better than receiving love itself?

Just remember, the gifts under the tree are "bonus" gifts from a gracious God and from caring friends and relatives. The gift you and I need the most we already have—the gift of God's love. We grow in that love again as we ponder the miracle of Bethlehem. We share that love with family and friends who know and trust in Jesus, and we look for ways to share it with others too. We live in that love—forever.

All I want for Christmas I already have.

Gary P. Baumler



A PROMISE MADE A PROMISE KEPT

*“The virgin will give
birth to a son, and
they will call him
Immanuel—
God with us.”*

Mt 1: 22-23

For information and a listing of personal witness helps and resources, call, fax or write:

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WELS Evangelism/Mass Media Ministry • 2929 North Mayfair Road Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398

"Doing" Christmas

Christmas, regardless of what we do or don't do, is special already.

Kenneth A. Cherney

Back in my seminary days, I worked as a gardener/caretaker on a large estate. It was great. I was out in the fresh air. I had the run of the grounds, which were spectacular. I worked hard, but the pay, by my standards, was outstanding.

Enduring Christmas

Apart from the ministry, I couldn't imagine a better job—except during November and December. From the beginning, the staff warned me that those were the months to stay away from the "boss lady."

From November on, the boss lady prepared to "do Christmas."

Not "celebrate Christmas."

Do Christmas.

On this estate, Christmas was the main event on the social calendar. The Christmas parties were legendary. The boss lady was ordinarily fairly tolerant, even with her gardener (who to this day loves to garden, but can hardly grow bread mold). But at Christmas, she became a woman possessed. Hordes of guests—the most fashionable people in town—were on their way. The grounds and decorations had to be perfect.

The kitchen staff was kept baking 'round the clock. Shopping excursions departed and arrived on the hour, and the bills were prodigious.

In that house, Christmas was not meant to be enjoyed. It certainly was never pondered or reflected upon. It was an obligation to be met, a problem to be solved, an ordeal to be endured. Those people "did" Christmas. And in the process, they did it in.

Enjoying Christmas

I hope you're not "doing" Christmas, too.

I hope you're not running yourself ragged and spending yourself

into poverty in a misguided attempt to make Christmas "special." Not only will that ruin your holiday. It's totally unnecessary.

Christmas, regardless of what we do or don't do, is special already.

That's because Christmas is about what God did. It remembers the kindest, most loving, most unselfish thing anyone has ever done: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16).

It astonishes us with the greatest mystery ever: "The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

And it invites us—not to bury ourselves in stress, commotion, and unpaid bills—but to relax and enjoy God's gifts to us in Christ: peace on earth, good will to men.

Please enjoy your holiday. But don't "do" Christmas.

Stop. Come and listen, again, to the story of Jesus' birth. Reflect. Take your time.

And let God's Word "do" Christmas to you.



Kenneth Cherney is pastor at Living Hope, Mandeville, Louisiana.