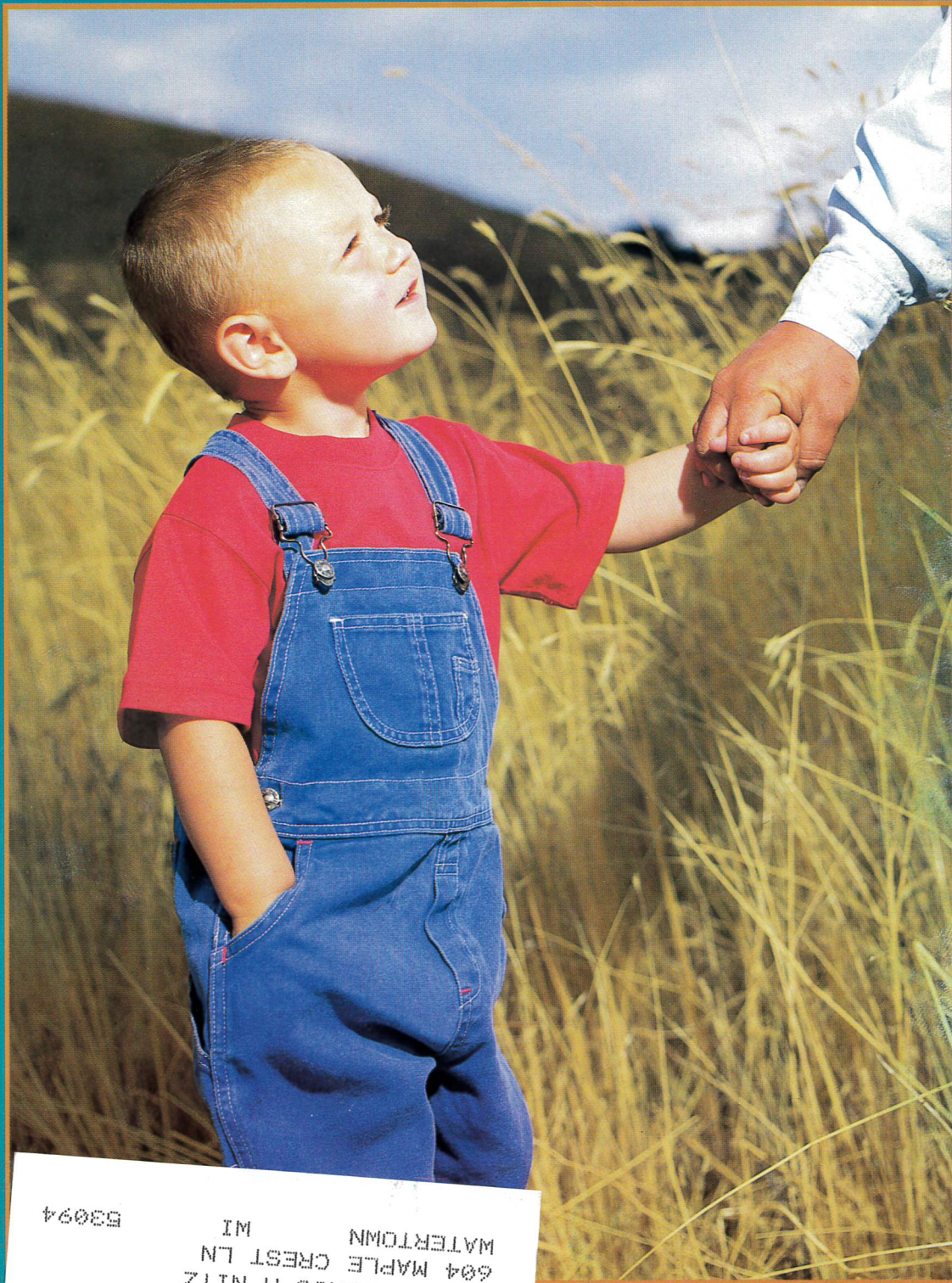


LUTHERAN



Being a child of the king

page 6

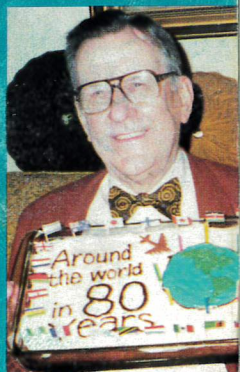
To allusions, through one backyard

page 10

The wrath of God

page 20

NML 19436 0 0
 REV FREDERIC H NITZ 1 2 / 0
 604 MAPLE CREST LN
 WATERLOO MI 53094



Walking a different furrow page 18

Have you been doing your homework?


Home is a good place to begin sharing Jesus.
Lutheran Parent's Wellspring makes it easy!



Inside every issue of *Lutheran Parent* you'll find *Lutheran Parent's Wellspring*, a devotional resource unlike any other. To help families share frequent talks about what God has done for them, each *Wellspring* booklet has—

- two-months worth of fresh, Christ-centered studies
- easy-to-use, brief readings
- topics geared toward families with school-age children
- prayers and prayer suggestions
- a compact 6" x 9" Bible-companion size

Have **Lutheran PARENT** delivered to your home. Become a subscriber and receive *Lutheran Parent's Wellspring* inside every issue for \$19.99 a year.

 Northwestern
Publishing House
1250 North 113th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284

CALL 1-800-662-6093 ext. 8
Milwaukee Area (414) 475-6600 ext. 5 (8:00 A.M.– 4:00 P.M. weekdays)

Homecoming for God's people

Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way. . . . A highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. . . . The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Isaiah 35:3, 8, 10

Richard D. Balge

Do you like to go home? Maybe not. Sooner or later, though, you'll go. If not to stay, then to visit and perhaps relax for awhile. Whether you go soon or late, it's good to know you have a home.

Do you think much about your heavenly home? Maybe not. Sooner or later, though, you will. It will be good to know you have one and can expect to stay there forever—and enjoy it.

Isaiah speaks of a homecoming for God's people. It took place, partially, when some people of Judah went home to Jerusalem from Babylon in 487 B.C. It occurs, completely and perfectly, whenever a child of God goes home to heaven.

Our homecoming will be joyful

On earth, going home is not always a happy occasion. Sometimes there is a funeral. Sometimes there are disagreements to iron out or misunderstandings to clear up. Sometimes people return because they failed to accomplish what they set out to do.

The Lord assures us, though, that when his rescued people come home it will be with singing, not sadness. There will not be sorrow and sighing, but gladness and joy.

Jesus is the way home

How will we get there? Isaiah speaks of a highway called "The



Way of Holiness." The road is straight, solid, dependable. Little children and the mentally retarded can follow it. Great minds and strong people have found eternal joy by walking on it. Those who travel on it will not get lost unless they deliberately leave it. It is the way of salvation, of him who said, "I am the way" and prepared it with his blood and righteousness.

"The unclean will not journey on it; . . . wicked fools will not go about on it." God's way is the only way, but we could not get on the road home as we were. Now, we can because our Savior cleansed and enlightened us. He saw our unclean

and wicked human race, and still he loved us, came to keep God's law for us, and paid the penalty of our sin. Because of him, through faith in him, we are on "The Way of Holiness." We are on the way home.

He gives us strength for the journey

When people on the Lord's road home are discouraged by daily failures, he "strengthens the feeble hands." He repeats the good news of forgiveness so we don't lose our grasp on the hope of a joyful homecoming. If we are tempted to buckle before the pressures of an unbelieving world, with its godless theories and amoral attitudes, he strengthens our spiritual knees with the Lord's Supper.

Alzheimer's disease may be waiting around the next curve, death is always stalking us, and Satan acts as though he had not been defeated. God, however, has never built a road that won't hold up, never issued an invitation he won't honor. He will bring our trip home to a successful end: "The ransomed of the Lord will return."

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



- Fellowship—it's a touchy subject. Families and friends are often affected by the practicalities of applying fellowship principles. In an expanded "Your question, please" section, John Brug goes back to the basics and explores the principles of biblical fellowship and why WELS takes the position it does. (p. 30) Next month, look for Brug to address the differences between Lutherans.
- Many WELS members can trace their physical family line to Germany. All WELS members can trace their spiritual family line back to this land of Luther. However, the land of our spiritual heritage is losing its spiritual footing. Hear from Chaplain Philip Kieselhorst on the state of religion in Germany. Read also what faithful Christians are doing to preserve and restore the true gospel message to this region. (p. 14)
- Are you behaving like a child? You should be. After all, you're God's child. In a new series by John Parlow, he'll explore the different aspects of being a child of God. Parlow's name is new to our pages; we welcome his fresh insights. (p. 6)
- We introduce another new series this month. Wayne Mueller writes about the tough questions facing our society on the topic of family planning. All his articles will address practical issues while focusing on God's plans, purposes, and promises. (p. 12)

—LRB

Cover photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel
Photography

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

Official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
September 1997 / Vol. 84, No. 9

Editorial office: *Northwestern Lutheran*, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>

Editor

Rev. Gary P. Baumler, 414/256-3230

Senior Communications Assistant

Linda R. Baacke, 414/256-3232

Communications Assistant

Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231

Communication Services Commission

R. D. Balge, J. M. Barber, W. F. Bernhardt, M. D. Duncan, J. Sprecher

Contributing Editors

J. A. Aderman, R. D. Balge, W. F. Beckmann, M. E. Braun, J. F. Brug, J. C. Gerlach, E. S. Hartzell, R. E. Lauersdorf, F. E. Piepenbrink, V. H. Prange.

Art Director

Paul Burmeister

Graphic Designer

Melissa Homan

Photographs and Illustrations

Mrs. Kevin Scheibel Photography,
p. 3, 6

Gerry Koser, p. 8

Susan Fink, p. 10

Fran Lee, p. 12

Philip Kieselhorst, p. 14

Gary Baumler, p. 16

courtesy of Irene Lawrenz, p. 18

P. Degginger/H. Armstrong Roberts,
p. 20

Jerry Kiesow, p. 30

Cheryl Barber, p. 36

Subscription services

1-800-662-6093 ext. 8

Milwaukee area 414/475-6600 ext. 5

Northwestern Publishing House

1250 N 113 St

Milwaukee WI 53226-3284

USA and Canada—one year \$9. All other countries—one year, air mail \$40; one year, surface mail \$24. Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates.

Available on audio cassette from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55107.

See select NL articles on the Internet at <www.wels.net>.

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN (ISSN 0029-3512) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Northwestern Lutheran*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. ©1997 by *Northwestern Lutheran*. Printed in the USA.

TO ORDER *Northwestern Lutheran*

Send this coupon with check or money order to:

Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N 113th Street
Milwaukee WI 53226-3284

A subscription
in U.S.A. or Canada

for 1 year at \$9.00

for 2 years at \$17.00

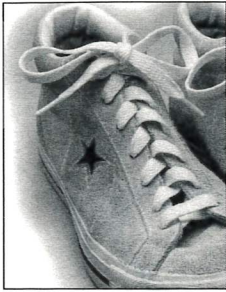
for 3 years at \$24.00

Name (print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

(Note: You can also subscribe to *Northwestern Lutheran* by calling subscription services toll-free **1-800-662-6093, ext. 8**. In the Milwaukee area call **414/475-6600, ext. 5**. Phone weekdays between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM)



Families built to last
page 8



God promises blessing
page 12



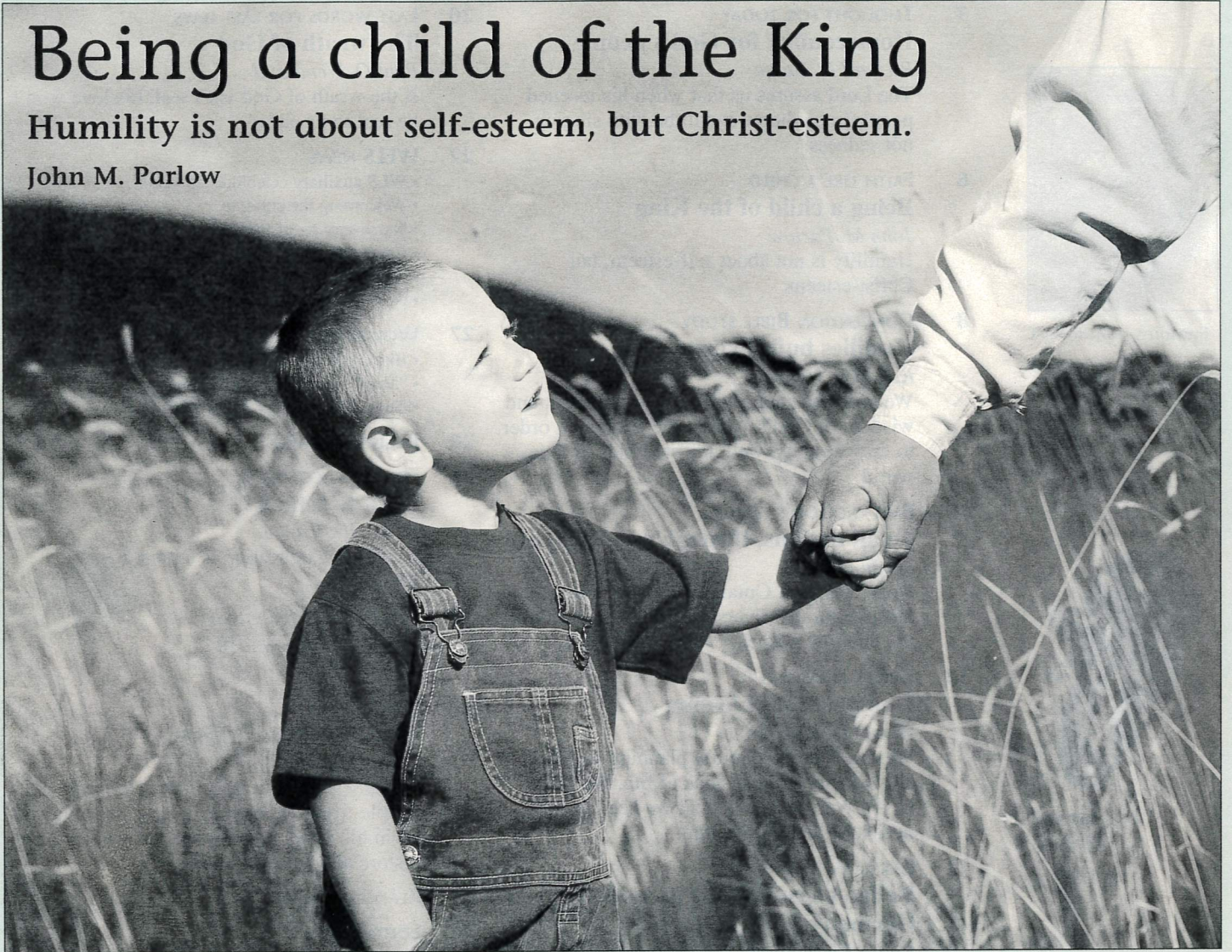
His life—my life
page 16

- 3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY**
Homecoming for God's people
Richard D. Balge
 The Lord assures us that when his rescued people come home it will be with singing, not sadness.
- 6 FAITH LIKE A CHILD**
Being a child of the King
John M. Parlow
 Humility is not about self-esteem, but Christ-esteem.
- 8 CONVENTION BIBLE STUDY**
Families built to last
Randy K. Hunter
 We need the support and encouragement and wisdom of God's Word—the Bible—in order to raise healthy, well-adjusted kids in today's world.
- 10 PART OF GOD'S FAMILY**
To all nations, through one backyard
Susan Fink
 Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, serves the most culturally diverse city in the world with the one true gospel.
- 12 FAMILY PLANNING**
God promises blessing
Wayne D. Mueller
 We can approach family planning as we do all the complex decisions of life. We trust God's Word to provide all we need to make decisions that glorify him.
- 14 GERMANY**
Religious conditions in modern Germany
Philip Kieselhorst
 The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church offers a solid message of hope to a land filled with "empty" churches.
- 16 APOSTLES' CREED**
His life—my life
Wayne A. Laitinen
 Death became its own fatality when it took an innocent man. Therefore it had to give Jesus up on the third day. Death owed Jesus more damages than it could ever repay. So our Savior demanded the release of all his brothers and sisters.
- 18 BY FAITH THEY LED**
Walking a different furrow
Morton A. Schroeder
 Carl John Lawrenz's genius lay not in charisma or rapid-fire word smithy. Rather, he was an example of due diligence.
- 20 LAST WORDS FOR LAST DAYS**
The wrath of God
Paul O. Wendland
 If the wrath of God isn't real, his love won't be real to us either.
- 22 WELS NEWS**
- WLS auxiliary celebrates 25 years
 - Welcoming the children
 - Nurse serving in Africa
 - Lay workers sent to Thailand
 - Teens serve at youth rally
 - New facility assists the elderly
- 27 WORLD NEWS**
- Birthplace of Christianity may outlaw evangelism
 - "Nyet!" to restricting religion
 - Georgian Orthodox quits WCC
- 28 BULLETIN BOARD**
- 29 EDITORIAL COMMENT**
Back to school
Victor H. Prange
 Continuing education is a must for every Christian.
- 30 YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE**
Church fellowship
John F. Brug
- 32 BIBLE STUDY**
Don't show favoritism
Mark E. Braun
 God doesn't show favoritism. He made all people from one human couple, redeemed us all in his Son's holy blood, and wants to restore all of us to himself.
- 33 READERS FORUM**
- 34 EDITOR'S PEN**
Appearances
Gary P. Baumler
 Do people know that the firm positions we hold reflect the awe in which we hold God's Word?
- 36 PART OF GOD'S FAMILY**
 Attending a public school filled with Mormon teachers and students, one girl wished she could go to an elementary school with children of her own faith. But this experience strengthened her faith and her desire to serve. Consider it a . . .
- Trial by fire**
Cheryl Barber

Being a child of the King

Humility is not about self-esteem, but Christ-esteem.

John M. Parlow



Once at a convention, I bought each of my boys a T-shirt that says, “Child of the King!” The shirt was a graphic reminder of who we are and whose we are by faith.

Scripture frequently calls the people of God “children”—children of promise, children of the day, children of the light, beloved children, dear children, and children of God.

In Matthew 18, Jesus focuses on the childlike qualities of believers. His words teach the church, as a group of spiritually imperfect children, how to get along with each other. He explains that everyone

who enters the kingdom does so as a child (1-4).

Why a child? The Lord’s teaching responded to the disciples, who asked him: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

The disciples failed to understand greatness in Jesus’ kingdom. So Jesus gave them an unforgettable lesson: “He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is

the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’” The point was the child’s humility. Humility is a basic Christian virtue.

The world’s lack of humility

Not only the disciples lacked humility. How about us? It is easy to get caught up in a world where we are more concerned about promoting ourselves than serving others. In a society where pushiness and demanding personal rights have become virtues, humility is hard to find. We live in a society of “navel gazers,” people focusing on them-

selves and their accomplishments. "I'm not perfect, but I'm better than most."

Navel gazing often infects a Christian congregation. Sometimes people love themselves more than their neighbor. Being our brother's keeper is not a high priority. Neither is putting the concerns of those who don't know Christ ahead of our own. "Well, I was in this church first!"

Humility means recognizing our own unworthiness, realizing we cannot earn our way to heaven. Living a good life is not good enough for salvation; God demands perfection. Humility means depending on Jesus for forgiveness and salvation. It looks to Jesus, who died for you and me so that we might live with him—forever. Humility is not about self-esteem, but Christ-esteem. Christ makes us valuable and powerful, not our own abilities and accomplishments. "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Jesus' humble service

Jesus' humble service as our Savior motivates us to want to serve him by humbly serving others. Think of what Jesus has done for us. He came down from heaven and became one of us, living and working among common people.

Dare anyone think, "Big deal?" It was a "big deal!" It's significant that common townspeople enjoyed being with Jesus. The Almighty didn't act high and mighty. The One who knew it all wasn't a know-it-all. The One who made the stars didn't keep his head in them. The Holy One wasn't "holier-than-thou." The One who owns all the stuff of earth never strutted it.

He could have. He could have been a name-dropper: "Did I ever

tell you about the time I met Elijah at heaven's gate?" He could have been a smart aleck: "I know what you're thinking. Want me to prove it?" He could have been uppity: "I've got some property on Mars!" He could have been a showoff: "Hey Thomas, want me to beam you into the 21st century?"

The One who knew it all wasn't a know-it-all.

But he wasn't. He came not to show off, but to show up at Calvary. He went to great pains to be as human as the guy down the street. He didn't need to study, but still went to the synagogue. He had no need for income, but still worked in Joseph's workshop. He had known the fellowship of angels, yet went to dinners with despised tax collectors. Upon his shoulders rested the challenge of redeeming the world, but he still took time to walk 90 miles from Jericho to Cana to go to a wedding.

As a result, people liked him. Oh, some chafed under his claims. They accused him of heresy, but never arrogance. He was branded a radical. Yet, there is no hint that he ever used his heavenly status for personal gain. Ever. In humility he carried out our eternal salvation.

Reflecting Jesus' humility

In living out your faith, do you have that same attitude of service and humility that draws people to Christ? Do you reflect our Savior's humble love?

Tony Campolo tells the story of a drunk who was converted at a Bowery mission. Joe had the reputation as a "dirty wing" for whom

there was no hope. Following his conversion to faith in Jesus, everything changed. Joe became the most caring person the mission had known. Joe did whatever needed to be done. There was nothing he considered beneath him. Whether it was cleaning up after a violently sick alcoholic or scrubbing toilets, Joe did it with a soft smile and a seeming gratitude for the chance to help.

Once, when the pastor was delivering his message to the crowd of sullen men with drooped heads, a man came down the aisle crying out for God to change him. The repentant drunk shouted, "Oh God, make me like Joe! Make me like Joe!"

The pastor said to the man, "Son, I think it would be better if you prayed, 'Make me like Jesus!'"

The man looked at the pastor with a quizzical expression and asked, "Is he like Joe?"

The first real chance to share the gospel and direct people to Jesus usually comes through people who show loving Christian humility in their daily lives and especially during life's rough spots. When we share the humble spirit of Christ in the workplace, at school, at home, we point people to the Savior. That humble spirit gives us the opportunity to share the gospel. Our goal is to let people see Jesus. We want to be a reflection of him, so that through our message Jesus would live in them. For "you may be the only Jesus a person ever sees."

What do people see when they look at you? Do they see Christian love, service, and humility? Do they see Jesus? Would they expect you to be wearing the "Child of the King" T-shirt?

John Parlow is pastor at St. Mark, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Families built to last

We need the support and encouragement and wisdom of God's Word—the Bible—in order to raise healthy, well-adjusted kids in today's world.

Randy K. Hunter

“It was good enough in my day, It's good enough for today.” Have you used that reasoning to resist change?

“The only tennis shoes I had were Converse All Stars—that's all my kids need today.” That's true. But it invites mutiny!

The changing world

The world has changed, and in bigger ways than tennis shoes.

Major concerns in public schools have changed. Public school superintendents listed their top seven concerns in 1940 and in 1985.

1940

1. talking
2. chewing gum
3. making noises
4. running in halls
5. getting out of line
6. improper clothing
7. missing wastebasket

Many of us say, “Not in my school!” Thank God, probably not. But it's still our world. And it has changed.

One WELS pastor recently reported that 98 percent of the kids near his church and

school are living in a single parent home. The world has changed.

Researchers from UCLA asked fifth- and sixth-graders, “What thought makes you feel sad?”

1985

1. rape
2. robbery
3. assaults
4. burglary
5. arson
6. murder
7. suicide

Their answers were:

1. my parents divorcing,
2. my parents arguing, and
3. my parents not spending time with me.

Such are the fears of 10-year-olds today. The world has changed.

One mom told me she would like to get all the parents in our town together to call a truce—enough is enough. Is it really a good thing that preschoolers compete for the honor roll and second-graders travel the state to play soccer? It's a kid-eat-kid world out there. The world has changed.

Have you watched MTV or a FOX sitcom lately? Would-be role models for your children are saying, singing, and doing the unimaginable while parents sit in the other room and imagine all is well. All is not well:

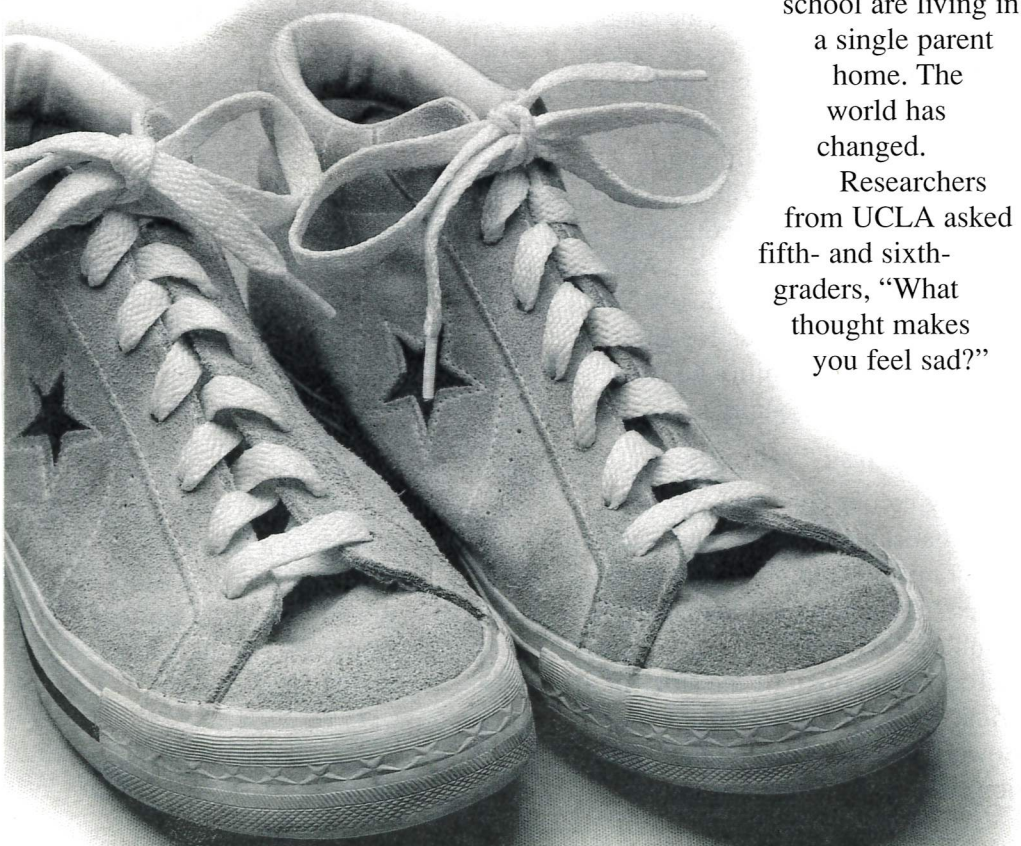
- 90 percent of teens have used alcohol.
- 50 percent have tried drugs.
- An increasing percentage has purchased or rented pornographic magazines and videos that are targeted at an ever younger audience, and it's shaping their understanding of sexuality.

All is not well. The world has changed.

God changes us

But we know that. What can we do? How can we reverse the trend for a world of young and old people who matter to God?

We need the support and encour-



agement and wisdom of God's Word—the Bible—for ourselves. And we need it to raise healthy, well-adjusted kids in today's world. We need to be equipped for life the way only God can equip us. We need changes only God can make. We need to be built to last.

Jesus told us how. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, . . . streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit" (John 7:37-39).

When Jesus kept that promise on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit showed up in tongues of fire. Whimpering, frightened, self-centered men became value-driven and purpose-filled disciples of Christ. They believed in Jesus before; the Spirit had changed them from dead to living. Now he changed them to growing and serving.

We've been there. "You were dead in your sins," God says. Dead people can't do a thing. They can't change their lives. They can't believe in a Savior who died to take away their guilt. They're dead. But the Holy Spirit has changed us from dead to living the way only God can. On Pentecost Sunday, Peter told a group of several thousand how God does that: "Repent and be baptized so that your sins may be forgiven." Later Peter wrote, "This baptism now saves you." Baptism isn't a ritual. Rituals won't change us or our families. Baptism is God's power to build us and our families to last.

Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff tells how impressed he was the first time he went to an American supermarket. "I went down one aisle and saw powdered milk. Just add water, and you get

milk. I went down another aisle and saw powdered orange juice. Just add water, and you get orange juice. I went down another aisle and saw baby powder and I thought, what a country!"

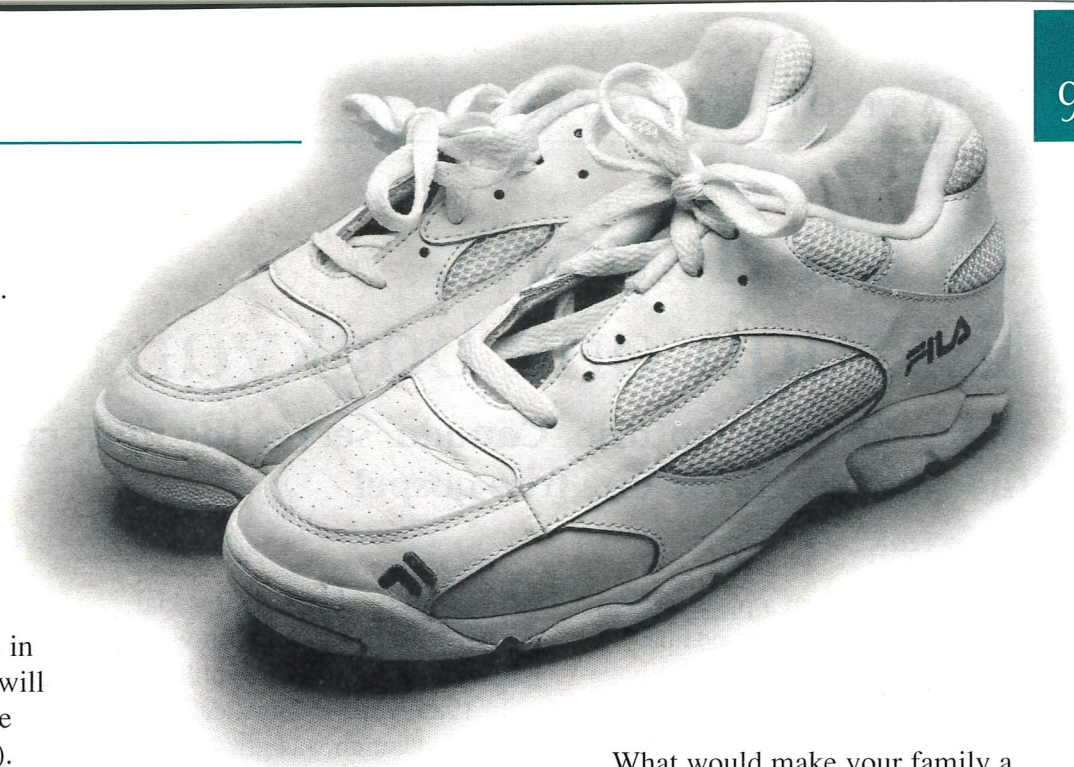
That's the miracle the Spirit performed in Baptism. He changed us from dead in sin to living in God. As if that change wasn't enough, he's still changing us.

He's changing us through his Word and the powerful Lord's Supper. He's changing us to be

- more loving toward our spouse,
- more joyful in our outlook on problems,
- more peaceful when facing trouble,
- more patient with our children,
- kinder in dealing with others,
- more ethical at work,
- more giving when we see what others need, and
- more faithful to the commitments we make, including the commitment to love our spouses and nurture our kids in the faith.

We need to make changes

The Spirit tells us what counts. Then he gives us power to act on it.



What would make your family a success? Kids who don't embarrass you or give you grief? Family is much bigger than that. God gives us family to care for each other. He gives us children to raise for him. He gives us children to invest our all in so that they might invest themselves fully for God's glory and eternity's gain. That's the goal.

Here's the challenge: to build families the Spirit's way, by his Word. That's why daily family and personal devotions are so important. In his Word he shapes our values and gives us purpose so that our families last.

Family devotions don't seem natural to some, I know. Some say, "I'm just not comfortable with that." That's okay. Do it anyway!

Some say, "I didn't grow up in a home with family devotions, and I turned out all right." I know, so did I. But the world has changed. We owe ourselves and our families every chance in the spiritual battles we face.

The world has changed. Thank God, the Spirit changes us. He builds our families to last.

Randy Hunter is pastor at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.

NL

To all nations, through one backyard

Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, serves the most culturally diverse city in the world with the one true gospel.

Susan Fink

“I had never seen a place with as many new houses and apartments. Street after street of new developments. Houses everywhere, close together, row upon row. And no churches to be seen . . . I felt like Jonah being called to Nineveh.”

Pastor Thomas Haar remembered doing exploratory work in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in July 1987. “In a city of over two million people, there were only about 60 Lutheran churches, and none of those were Wisconsin Synod.”

Haar knocked on doors, sent out flyers, organized a telephone canvass, gave a backyard musical presentation, and tried to get Bible studies going for the many unchurched Canadians and immigrants. “I have never been turned away from an immigrant’s door. They are used to walking into stranger’s homes and getting fed. They also have respect for the Bible.”

Haar added caution, “But just because they are friendly doesn’t mean we’re getting through to them.”

Organizing a congregation

According to the United Nations, Toronto is the most culturally diverse city on earth. Canada has the highest immigration rate per capita of any industrialized country: 250,000 per year. This foreign

influx is partly due to their social welfare system and each provincial government’s inclusive health care.

In 1989 Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church was granted multicultural mission status. They worshiped in a public school. A family from St. John’s, Antigua, transferred to the congregation. Debby Haar befriended a young Sri Lankan immigrant as the two volunteered at the school library. From this gospel witness relationship, an extended family joined the church. Another transfer was a young man from the mission congregation in Bulgaria. Two families had been Lutheran in Guyana, South America, before coming to Toronto and joining Hope. Several others from the

Caribbean became members.

Currently, 50 percent of Toronto’s Scarborough community are Chinese immigrants (and prospects) from Hong Kong.

Serving the congregation

For the past 10 years, Pastor Haar and Debby have been stretched in a holistic ministry—helping people with needs related to the whole of their lives—in addition to serving their primary spiritual needs. As Pastor Haar puts it: “Immigrants and refugees are often in need of spiritual and physical hand-holding. The upheaval in their lives creates spiritual opportunities.”

In 1995 the Board for Home Missions started calling for a “nurture-administration” pastor for Hope. Pastor Edgar Herman was installed in 1997. He also assists Doug Priestap, pastor in Bolton, Ontario, by surveying areas for mission opportunities.

Hope consists of 55 communicants—90 souls—and has over 150 on its prospect list. This year’s Sunday school enrollment was 13. Last March Hope held a week-long children’s Bible school with 48 children. They have an active 15-member church choir, a talented steel band (Trinidad “pans”), and a Christian day-care center. Music is a focal point of worship. Members



Participants at the children’s Bible school at Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Toronto is the most culturally diverse city on earth, making Hope’s outreach to their neighborhood a “world” mission.

enjoy non-traditional services with contemporary music and steel band participation.

Challenges to the congregation

“Because of the gregarious nature of Hope’s members, assimilation is almost simultaneous with membership,” said Herman. “The biggest problem facing this congregation presently is the lack of our own facility. Not only has the rent tripled, but we have to share an old, dimly lit ‘Heritage Hall’ with several other church bodies. This leads to lack of identity in the community and having to wait until 11:15 AM on Sunday before getting in the building. The late church time makes it difficult for many people to attend.”

There is a unique mix of cultures, people, and needs at Hope. For a decade, this ministry has been led and encouraged by the Holy Spirit through dedicated servants. This home mission has the challenging

opportunity to share the one sure hope with all nations, merely by reaching around the block.

Susan Fink is a member at St. John, Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

NL



A group of children from the children's Bible school at Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

During a snowy week last March, Hope, Toronto, Ontario held its first children's Bible school. Lay women Barbara Gnirk, from St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb., and Susan Fink, from St. John, Manitowoc, Wis., assisted this multicultural mission congregation. These are a few of the members and prospects they met.

Grandmother of hope—Nobel was raised in Sri Lanka by a Buddhist mother who later converted to Christianity. Her youngest son died at age 10 of leukemia. She was widowed at age 39. Because her husband had been a prosperous contractor, Nobel was told that her misfortunes were because some jealous person had “charmed” her. A person was hired to investigate this black magic idea. A mixture of her husband’s hair, fingernail clippings, and a shingle from his work was found buried in the backyard.

Through Nobel, family members and friends have joined Hope. Her son is the president of the congregation and two grandchildren attended Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, for high school.

“Hindu” hospital calls—Pastors Herman and Haar have spent many hours helping Kaliana, a young refugee from Sri Lanka. She has only one brother in Canada; the rest of her family is caught in her homeland’s civil wars.

Kaliana suffered through three stomach cancer operations since her arrival in Canada the previous year. Although born a Hindu, Kaliana spoke of her desire to be baptized “in Jesus.” When released from the hospital, she went “home”—a small room in her landlord’s apartment. There, because she was too ill to wait for the next Sunday’s service, both pastors baptized Kaliana into Christ’s kingdom.

Chinese immigrant insights—Loretta lived in Hong Kong until December 1996. She is part of the 12 families from Southeast Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) that relocated to Toronto. Loretta came to the Scarborough community because “my husband immigrated here” but “we haven’t decided to settle in here yet.” She confesses the men in her family feel their chances of getting good jobs are very low, but all feel the prospects for the future are “better than in Hong Kong.” What does she miss the most from her homeland? “My family and my dogs.” She used her bilingual talents to help teach the children’s Bible school.

God promises blessing

We can approach family planning as we do all the complex decisions of life. We trust God's Word to provide all we need to make decisions that glorify him.

Wayne D. Mueller

What we'd like is a list. A list with all the do's and don'ts of family planning. A list that labels every contraceptive method "okay," "questionable," or "definitely sinful." A list that prescribes the ideal family size and the youngest and oldest age for conceiving children.

Of course, that list would have to answer those sticky questions about sperm banks, fertility drugs, surrogate parenting, and in vitro fertilization. Christian couples with all the answers would never again wrestle with the morality of tube tying and vasectomy.

A family planning list would be so useful. Pastors could hand it to young couples about to be married. It would be an easy reference for Bible class inquiries. Family counselors would never have to guess about their church's position on issues. We'd all have a yardstick to measure ourselves and others. Life would be simple again.



The big promise

The problem is: God provides no such list. So any list we concoct will be less than divine.

Still, we can approach family planning as we do all the complex decisions of life. We trust God's Word to provide all we need to make decisions that glorify him.

What his Word first provides is not a list, but a promise. Everything we do, including planning families, is responsive to his promise to send our Savior. "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17).

So God examines our motives for family planning before he judges our actions. He wants our decisions to flow from faith in Jesus. "Apart from me," Jesus said, "you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Without faith in his promised Savior, "it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews

11:6). Instead of the "to have or not to have children" decision, faith asks, "How can I best glorify my Savior?"

More promises

By reporting the promise of Jesus fulfilled, God's Word makes our Savior's love the reason behind all our actions. Then, on top of this, God makes specific promises that focus our thoughts about bearing children. Knowing he kept his promise to send Jesus leads us to trust these other promises too.

In this short series, we will discuss three divine promises that pertain to family planning. The first of these is God's promise to bless those who have children. In the beginning, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth'" (Genesis 1:28).

Many have understood these words as nothing more than a fertility command. But note that God's words, "Be fruitful . . . increase . . . fill," are the actual content of his



first blessing on Adam and Eve. A faithful rephrase of this verse would read: "I promise that bearing children will be a blessing to you."

Adam and Eve sinned, and the world is no longer a paradise. But God's promises are unaffected by man's unfaithfulness. God still blesses us through our children. Scripture echoes God's Genesis blessing. "Children a reward from him," the psalmist writes. "Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5). "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord" (Psalm 128:3,4).

Jesus blessed the little children who came to him (Mark 10:13-16). His invitation to bring children to him presupposes that we will conceive the children we ask him to bless. When he tells fathers how to bring them up (Ephesians 6:4), Paul takes it for granted that they will bear and raise children.

God's long-standing promise to bless parents through their children prompts our family plans. Even circumstances that sometimes accompany the birth of children in a sinful world do not void God's promises. God enriches our lives through children we bear—whether they were planned or a "surprise." Even children with disease and deformity bring blessings to those who trust God's promises.

A promise to the married

As you read Genesis 1:28, remember that Adam and Eve were married when God spoke his blessing on having children. Genesis 2 expands the Genesis 1 account of the man and woman's creation on the sixth day. For a correct sequence of events, insert Genesis 2:4-25 between Genesis 1:27 and 28.

Marriage, not the ability to conceive, confers God's blessing on having children.

God blessed children as a part of marriage. Genesis 2:24 teaches that future spouses will leave their fathers and mothers, then unite in marriage. Only after this does their sexual, "one flesh" relationship begin. Only then does the "be fruitful" blessing apply to them.

Marriage, not the ability to conceive, confers God's blessing on having children. God did not promise children as a blessing to single persons or homosexual couples. The flip side of his promise to bless children within marriage is the Bible's ban on sexual contact outside marriage. Conception apart from marriage is sinful, so, unless they are married, Christians don't even think about contraception.

Already before they marry, believers keep God's promise

in view. They know that bearing children, when possible, is one of God's purposes for marriage. So, are you really ready for marriage if you are not ready for children? On the other hand, since children are an after-marriage blessing, it's wrong to conceive before marriage to secure a partner's companionship.

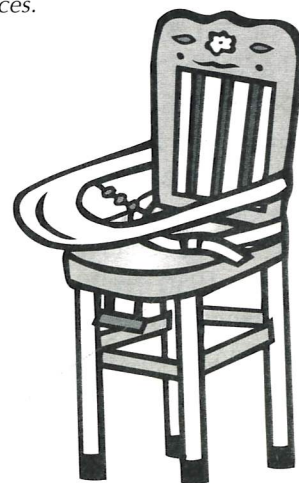
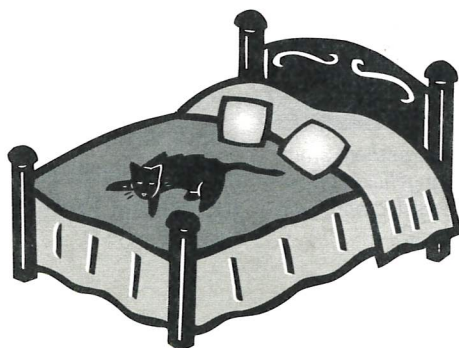
Technology today makes it possible to conceive without sexual contact. This can be a blessing to childless married couples. But we need to be wary of surrogate applications involving sperm and egg donors outside the marriage. These procedures may avoid sinful sexual contact, but do they own the blessing God gave only to married people?

Renewing the promise

A look back at our past family decisions is bound to uncover some false motives. Who can deny crowding out God's promises—both his promise to send Jesus and to bless us with children—with selfish agendas? But thank God, the promises he makes are not voided by the ones we break. In Jesus, he forgives our past. And with his promise to make children a blessing to us, he prompts all our future family planning.

NL

Wayne Mueller is administrator of WELS Parish Services.



Religious conditions in modern Germany

The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church offers a solid message of hope to a land filled with “empty” churches.

Philip Kieselhorst

Germany is riding a tidal wave of change. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall shocked the world in 1989. The unification of East and West Germany has consumed the new German nation's attention and energy in virtually every aspect of life. And now the topic of European Union and a new federal European state is on the minds of most Germans.

In the midst of these drastic changes, a new generation has grown up—a generation further removed from the Nazi legacy and from the work involved in rebuilding the nation after the war. This generation is seeking its identity.

Where will this change carry the nation as the twenty-first century begins?

Paying members don't participate

We can't judge peoples' hearts, but we can observe the churches and religious movements. Since the Reformation, the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have been the dominating churches in Germany. But they too have gone through changes.

Since 1950, regular church attendance has declined from 55 to 33 percent among the

Catholics, and from 20 to less than 10 percent among Protestants. People officially have been leaving the State Church at a rate of 170,000 a year.

A government welcome booklet explains the role of religion in modern Germany: “One of the main reasons Christian churches continue to

lose members is because the churches are financed by taxes levied by the state. The church tax of nine percent is attached to income tax. Thus, some persons with higher incomes experience a considerable tax savings when they leave the church.”

However, over 90 percent of all Germans still pay the steep tax to the Church every year, even though not paying would save a large portion of their income. Why? Some believe in the importance of the churches to train children and to provide necessary social programs (kindergartens, hospitals, charities). These individuals pay their tax, live good lives, and let the Church use the money to help others. But are they paying their taxes because the good news of Jesus compels them or because of tradition?

Other Germans believe that the churches are old-fashioned and out of touch with modern science. They no longer attend church but remain tax-paying members because they may suffer a severe social stigma. When people leave the State Church, they forfeit any chance of being baptized, married, or buried in the Church to which their family ties reach for many generations. Breaking from the official Protestant or Catholic



The interior of a German church. Although there are “empty” churches in Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church is devoted to keeping its doctrine pure.

Church, especially in smaller communities, is viewed as breaking off and throwing away a large piece of German culture. It doesn't matter whether you believe in the teachings of the Church, but whether you are an official member.

Leaving the State Church has resulted in hard feelings between brother and sister, parent and child, neighbors and friends. Are these hard feelings towards those who leave the result of concern for the truth of God's Word, or are they a reaction to the breaking of tradition?

Sects rush into the spiritual void

Although Germany's religious conditions appear bleak, some observers of German society claim to see a change in the average German's attitudes toward religion. "The churches may have been emptying for their formal services of worship, but the faithful have been turning to other forms of religious expression—not only to secular activism, but to all kinds of informal prayer meetings, Bible readings, charismatic groups, and the like: 'The best Christians today are often not churchgoers,' said one Protestant leader." (*Germany and the Germans*, John Ardagh, 1995).

Since the '80s, there have been positive signs of a modest return to the Church, especially among the younger generation. This generation finds a spiritual emptiness in modern society in addition to the uncertainties and anxiety that come with drastic changes. They are searching for personal fulfillment and spiritual satisfaction. This searching is seen in the wide acceptance of eastern religions and cults like Scientology, the Moonies, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

These cults have made further inroads in Germany than in other European countries.

Christian rallies for youth have also attracted large audiences. Unfortunately the message is far too watered down.

The faithful persevere

Such changes bring hope to those who remained faithful to God's Word and who offer sound alternatives to those seeking spiritual fulfillment. Although the State Protestant Church cozied up to the East German government during its existence, the Evangelisch—Lutherische Freikirche [Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK)] remained separate. Because of this, they endured decades of persecution from those in authority and all who feared the authorities. Their endurance paid off.

Some observers of German society claim to see a change in the average German's attitudes toward religion.

The ELFK realizes that the strong arm of the Lord carried them through. Now they can offer a solid message of hope. They are devoted to keeping their doctrine pure and committed to serving youth. The congregation in Zwickau has 30 young people gathering every Saturday. Likewise, a strong youth program is operating in Steeden.

Gerhard Wilde, ELFK President, summed up their hopes: "Because of the disregard for doctrine, we are surrounded by many empty churches that have lost their power as the salt

and the light of the world. Our mission is, and it will remain, to hold firmly to biblical, Lutheran doctrine and to offer it to others." Although the synod is relatively small in numbers, the opportunities are there.

WELS does not have any established congregations in Germany, but does offer the ELFK support. I (the civilian chaplain) and a part-time assistant live in Germany. Each month I conduct six English worship services at five different locations in Germany. Two of these services are in a small German community, and four take place on military bases. Although the main purpose of the civilian chaplaincy is to serve WELS members living in Europe with the gospel, we pray that in the process we will be able to reach out to Germans (English, Italian, Swiss, . . .) as well.

Luther once predicted, "After our time punishment will come upon Germany and other countries, too, because of the terrible ingratitude and contempt for the dear, saving Word, which was preached to them purely and abundantly."

We American Lutherans who witness the tragic changes that have taken place among the main churches of Germany since the Reformation are reminded that the gospel is always only one generation away from being lost among us and given to another people who will not take it for granted, but will cherish it and be blessed through it. The religious conditions in Germany have many important lessons to teach us. We must learn them well.

NL

Philip Kieselhorst is the WELS civilian chaplain for Europe.

His life—my life

Death became its own fatality when it took an innocent man. Therefore it had to give Jesus up on the third day. Death owed Jesus more damages than it could ever repay. So our Savior demanded the release of all his brothers and sisters.

Wayne A. Laitinen

Years ago in a late night comedy routine several actors sat slumped in a circle of chairs as if they were dead. The master of ceremonies made his entrance to the applause of his studio audience. "This evening," he announced, "we're going to explore the possibility of life after death." Surely no one could be more qualified to answer than those who had been there. So he proceeded to ask his first guest, "Is there really life after death?" He placed the microphone to the mouth of the dead man. No answer. The

studio audience erupted in a long round of belly laughter. When it had subsided, he put the same question to each of the remaining cadavers. Each answered with resounding silence. Each time the crowd roared at the absurdity of it all.

Questioning God's plan

When the comedy routine was over, I felt I had been pummeled by cold logic, bold blasphemy, and loud derision. The doubts my Savior had put to rest came slithering, serpentine, up the basement steps of hell

again: "Yea, hath God said there is life after death?" "When have you seen this happen?" "How can God reconstruct the bodies of those who have died thousands of years ago?" "Could you be following Christ for nothing?" "Look how carefree these people are! They do not share your moral struggles. They prosper in life and laugh at death."

What should I have expected? This is what happens when we allow our darker nature to walk in the counsel of the wicked—even for a few moments.



Trusting God's plan

All the more reason to go to the house of the Lord. There the whole company of the saints sees things as they really are. There we are comforted and strengthened as we hear the people of God confess with one voice, ". . . he rose again from the dead," and "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." These two facts are inseparable: Christ's resurrection and ours.

Unlike the corpses in the comedy sketch, Jesus is qualified to speak about life after death. He's been there and back. "Do not be afraid," he said, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18).

He who holds the keys of death and hell has declared that neither one can have us. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25).

What made Jesus "the resurrection and the life?" Think of it this way: When our first parents sinned, death reigned over all their children. God's justice gave death the right to consume one generation after another. But when the innocent Son of God came down from heaven and was born of the Virgin Mary, death devoured him as well. Death became its own fatality when it took an innocent man. Therefore it had to give Jesus up on the third day. Death owed Jesus more damages than it could ever repay. So our Savior demanded the release of all his brothers and sisters.

These two things go together: Christ's resurrection and ours. Easter Sunday and our resurrection are one. But each in its own time. Christ is the firstfruits of those who sleep. Until we see him return to judge the living and the dead, we confess, "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

Those who ridicule the idea of life after death are blind to the realities of the spiritual world. Dr. Luther once said that they see the world with "cow's eyes." They

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

won't believe in the resurrection until they see some sign or wonder. Jesus gives them only the sign of Jonah (Jesus' own resurrection).

Rejoicing in God's plan

As for us who believe the sign of Jonah, we can face our own death with the confidence that it is the gate to heavenly victory. "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

"He rose again from the dead" and "I believe in the resurrection of the dead"—these two are inseparable. Because he lives, we live. In words and music that can still bring tears to a man's eyes, Johann Sebastian Bach ends his St. John's Passion with this confident crescendo:

"Lord, let at last your angels come;
To Abram's bosom bear me home
That I may die unfearing.
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until your reappearing.
And then from death awaken me
That my own eyes with joy may
see,
O Son of God, your glorious face,
My Savior and my Fount of grace!
Lord Jesus Christ,
My prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise you without end."

(*Christian Worship* 434)

NL

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

Walking a different furrow

Carl John Lawrenz's genius lay not in charisma or rapid-fire word smithy. Rather, he was an example of due diligence.

Morton A. Schroeder

It was the worst of times. Our country was mired in the Great Depression. Street vendors tried to sell fruit to people who lacked the price of an apple. Door-to-door salesmen tried to sell paint to people whose houses needed a coat but whose wallets were as bare as the siding. Children packaged hollyhock seeds in Bull Durham bags and tried to peddle them in other neighborhoods. All failed.

Conditions in the Wisconsin Synod mirrored the depression. Church workers, especially those salaried by the federal synod, went unpaid for months; some were carried by local merchants who were better off. Synod's president, nearly reduced to beggar's habit, visited district conventions to plead for funds to meet the synod's obligations. To make his point, he told a true but hard-to-believe tale: Christmas vacation at the seminary during the 1932-33 school year was extended 14 days because there were no funds to pay the fuel bill.

His calling

It was during these times that Carl John Lawrenz tried to enter the ministry. Like others in his class, and like some of their counterparts at Dr. Martin Luther College, Lawrenz was not assigned. He returned to his parents' farm and awaited the unfolding of the Lord's plans.

The worst of times became the

best of times. Unlike classmates who waited months on end, Lawrenz's delay was brief. The congregation in



March 30, 1908, born to Mr. Herman and Mrs. Katharina Haberkorn Lawrenz, Lomira, Wis.

1925, graduated from Northwestern Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

1929, graduated from Northwestern College, Watertown

1932, graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Thiensville, Wis.

Sept. 18, 1932, ordained and installed

1932-1944, pastor, St. Paul, North Fond du Lac, Wis.

July 16, 1939, married Irene Zabel

1944-1945, attended University of Chicago

1944-1982, professor, WLS

1957-1978, president, WLS

1976, taught one semester at seminary in Lusaka, Zambia, Africa

Oct. 14, 1989, died, Lomira

North Fond du Lac, Wis., 12 miles north of the Lawrenz farm, experienced a vacancy. Three men from the church arrived with call in hand. Charlie, as his friends called him, was working in the fields haying. In spite of sweat, dust, dirt—and hay fever, a lifelong nemesis—he then and there accepted the call. He would trade his overalls for clerical robe; would talk from the pulpit, not the hay wagon; would speak with people, not to horses.

Members who remember the circumstances surrounding the call liken the incident to Elisha's investiture. Elisha and a dozen friends were plowing when Elijah came to the field and cast his mantle about Elisha's shoulders. Like Elisha, Lawrenz left the field to walk a different furrow.

His call

During the 12 years Lawrenz served at North Fond du Lac, members and pastor grew fond of each other. Even today members recall the young bachelor warmly. They remember that for a time he was "sole occupant of a large parsonage," and they cherish "beautiful memories of his visits . . ." One person says, "As a bachelor Rev. Lawrenz had many, many meals with us. Our door was always open. Also a place at our table was always set."

Lawrenz's life changed dramatically during this time. He helped in

the school. And he became an ex-bachelor. An intricate chain of events, beginning with his friendship with the principal of the school, culminated in meeting his future wife.

Seminary years

Lawrenz joined the area pastors' study club. One member was G. E. Bergemann, pastor of St. Peter, Fond du Lac, and an influential synodical elder statesman. President of the Wisconsin state synod from 1908 to 1917 and the federal synod from 1917 to 1933 and then seminary board chairman, he noticed Lawrenz. When a faculty chair in Old Testament and education was to be filled, he remembered the young man.

Lawrenz's entrance into the seminary, like his entrance into the ministry, was not spectacular. His name and 12 others were on the nominating list in *Northwestern Lutheran*. Several issues later, a strange announcement noted that there seemed to be some confusion in the synod about the call. Another notice asking for additional names stressed that the board wanted to call "a younger man." A terse notice in the September issue stated that Lawrenz had been called.

The boyish-looking Lawrenz, his young wife, and their small son were a seminary novelty. The incumbents, ranging in age from 50 to 72, had served a total of 52 years; their children were mostly grown and gone. The new kids on the block captured the campus; it became their range to roam, explore, and do new things to.

Lawrenz remained on the seminary faculty for 38 years, his tenure surpassed only by that of the venera-

ble John Meyer who, when the tyro arrived, offered to swap housing with him. During the Lawrenz years, 24 of which paralleled the synodical presidency of his friend, Oscar J. Naumann, some 1,200 students, including members of the present faculty, fanned out across our country and reached into some of Earth's far and dangerous corners.

Lawrenz's assignments increased in importance, and eventually he was a member or chairman of some of



Carl John Lawrenz on his 80th birthday. The flags on the cake represent the countries he visited in his lifetime.

the synod's most prestigious committees. Added prestige brought this gentle man added pain. A case in point is his work on the Commission on Inter-Church Relations during the time when the Synodical Conference, almost a century old, split over doctrinal differences. Another is the parting of the ways with a respected seminary colleague and the subsequent formation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Interesting facts

In spite of a rigorous schedule and many varied obligations and duties, Lawrenz enjoyed numerous outside interests: books and stamps, flower and produce gardening, woodworking and "fixing things," travel, horses, spiffy clothes. He was a busy man who found time to indulge in extracurricular activities that helped him recharge his batteries.

A delicious irony in Lawrenz's life is its geography. The first part was spent on a small sliver of Wisconsin land that can be covered with a dollar bill on the state's official highway map. The second made him a world traveler. He went to Europe at least 12 times; Africa, five; Hong Kong, Japan, and Israel, two each; Taiwan and Australia. He told a reporter, "In this nice house and this traveling, we've been able to live like millionaires without having the money."

Lawrenz's genius lay not in charisma or rapid-fire word smithy. Rather, he was an example of due diligence as he approached the mike—deliberately, his disciplined mind as orderly as his stamp collection. All the while the cursor in his brain searched for the exact word, the proper analogy, the correct fact: the ones he would use to state his position in the most precise manner possible. When he finished, people knew they had grown.

NL

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

The wrath of God

If the wrath of God isn't real, his love won't be real to us either.

Paul O. Wendland



In modern consciousness, hell is more of a joke than a reality. We've seen it in Far Side cartoons; we've heard David Letterman give us hell's "Top Ten Headlines" (Ice Water Canceled—Again!). And we've heard folks say they won't have to go to hell when they die—they've already suffered it here. Ha, ha! So even though a scattering of news articles tout hell's "comeback in the '90s," it seems that talk about hell has about the same impact that warning labels on cigarette packages have on teenagers: "Maybe it's bad, but it'll never happen to me."

Not that people have no fears. The popular culture is saturated with anxieties. Some folks are afraid of things that go bump in the night, of demons and aliens.

Politicians fear increasing tension between races as our land becomes more diverse. Intellectuals fear chaos and meaninglessness.

Boomers fear dying, growing old. They don't shudder at death so much as the thought of being warehoused in some forgotten wing of an old folk's home, or wired for observation in an intensive care ward. Busters, still deluded of their own immortality, ride the rails of risk, certain they'll never fall off. All the while, their cynical "whatevers" mask their sense of hopelessness.

In short, our culture shows every sign of having lost its nerve. Folks don't know whom to blame. Most do not fear God's wrath, nor hell. And they do not connect what they fear with God's anger against those

who do what he hates. They wanted to be free of God. So God has let them go their own way, free to be tormented by a thousand demons of dread. If they think of spiritual things, they prefer the ridiculous to the sublime, remaining open to every concocted truth of man but closed to God's amazing grace.

The big chill

Early in this century, August Pieper, one of our synodical fathers, wrote about the wrath of God he saw poured out on lands that had largely forgotten about heaven or hell. He saw God's judgment writ in the headlines of our newspapers, in the convulsions caused by world war, and in the lack of shame even then in sexual matters. He saw



God's wrath in the easy conscience people had towards sin, and in the legalism at work in our own circles. When people will not listen in heartfelt repentance to sin and grace, they will either experience the judgment of a dulled conscience or of a cramped, law-driven soul.

Commenting on God's wrath in Romans 1 and 2, Pieper wrote: "God's judgment will be so much the more terrible than that passed on the ancient pagan world, since the world of today has not only resisted the testimony of *creation* and *conscience*, but, in addition, *the testimony of the Spirit of God in the Gospel of Christ.*"

Sobering words. Even more so are these from Moses: "Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath

is as great as the fear that is due you" (Psalm 90:11).

Wrath beyond knowing

God harbors against sin a wrath as great as the awe each one of us owes him, a Being infinitely holy, infinitely mighty, and eternal. If anyone on earth could lay claim to knowing the strength of God's fury, Moses could. He saw its power when the mountain was covered with smoke, and the Lord descended on it in fire. He experienced God's judgment both in the general way we all do as we feel our bodies aging, and in personal ways when he failed to honor God as God. He heard the words, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God," not rattled off as some dry recitation in confirmation class, but thundered down the mountain in the voice of the Almighty himself!

But even he had to admit, "I don't know the depth of your anger against my sin, O Lord! I cannot grasp it, because it's something that goes beyond my powers of understanding. It's as infinite as the reverence that I, a poor sinner, owe to a just and holy God."

God's wrath against humanity's sin is not a matter for religious debate. Human beings are not to set the boundaries to what God can do or how God should punish. To try is the height of irreverence. God clearly teaches us that there is a place of eternal fire, where those who stubbornly spurn his verdict of grace in Christ will go. Created for the devil and his angels, it will be a place of everlasting torment. Those who hear the command, "Depart from me," will know the horror of an existence forever empty of God's loving presence. People can joke about it, but it is there, and it is real,

as real as those judgments of God we experience in time.*

If you doubt hell's existence, look at your own face in the mirror. Are there wrinkles? Do you feel the increasing pressure of time passing? There's nothing natural about the process of aging, and there's nothing normal about death. We don't just die because stuff happens. We die because God says so, because we live in a moral universe where things fall apart because we have sinned. We die because of God's wrath. "All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan" (Psalm 90:9).

Love beyond telling

If the wrath of God isn't real, his love won't be real to us either. Only when we see that we—both by what we are and by what we've done—have provoked a good and just God to a most holy anger, only then can we begin to glimpse the depth of love that moved him to send Jesus to atone for us all. Until God breaks down our stubborn pride, we are unable to see him in his true glory, and we will never be open to that heedless love that didn't spare a Son, but gave him for us all. Only then can we begin to thank God that his wrath does not move him to speak his last word to us.

His love did.

Paul Wendland is a professor at NL Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

* Besides, saints are subject to death and all general afflictions. As Peter says, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). And although these afflictions are for the most part punishments of sin [*Pön und Strafe sind über die Sünde*], in the godly they have a better end . . . Ap.VI, 54.



Lay workers sent to Thailand

Anne Press and Heidi Loescher, teachers at St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif., resigned their calls so they could serve the Lord as lay workers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, through a three-year project funded by WELS Kingdom Workers.

The first year will be almost exclusively devoted to learning the language and understanding the culture. Then they will work with youth through music, religious instruction, counseling, and teaching English as a Second Language and assist in the operation of the Christian Information Center.

Dan Koelpin



Anne Press (left) and Heidi Loescher were commissioned as lay workers to Thailand. From left: Ronald Waterstradt, pastor at Citrus Heights, Calif.; Waldemar Loescher, Heidi's father and pastor at Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.; and Daniel Koelpin, administrator of the Board for World Missions.

rē · li · giõn

Defining religion

conversion: The bestowal of faith. The act of God by which he turns people from sin and unbelief to faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit works through the gospel in God's Word and the sacraments to convert sinners and preserve them in faith.

Nurse serving in Africa

On May 4, Kathy Rishell, a member of Good Shepherd, Novi, Mich., was commissioned by Pastor Tom Schroeder for service at Mwembezi



Kathy Rishell

Lutheran Rural Health Center, located 45 miles from Lusaka, Zambia. Rishell left for Africa that same day. She will serve for 18 months to fill a vacancy.

Rishell brings 18 years of experience to

the field. Prior to serving in Africa, she developed and coordinated the hospital's trauma department in Ann Arbor, Mich.

The medical mission is supported entirely by special gifts. The synod has entrusted this project to the women of WELS, but it is also supported by schools, church groups, and other friends of the medical mission. It has an annual budget of about \$200,000.

The need for single nurses and married nurse couples continues. Those interested in learning more about the challenges and joys of this ministry should contact Kathie Wendland, 414/682-5694.

Welcoming the children

In La Ladrillera and Sonora, two poverty-stricken Mexican villages, children live in run-down homes without water, electricity, or sewer. But worse than that, most live without a knowledge of their Savior.

Mission to the Children is working to change that. This outreach takes seriously Jesus' words: "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me" (Mark 9:37).

During monthly visits, WELS volunteers teach the Bible to about 40 to 50 adults and to even more children. In April, two children were baptized. People come from over an hour away to hear the gospel, and they continue studying God's Word in between the visits.

During these visits, volunteers also provide food, clothes, blankets, vitamins, and medicine. An emergency medical fund is set up to supply health services and medical check-ups for the little ones. These efforts are coordinated with local Mexican doctors and clinics.

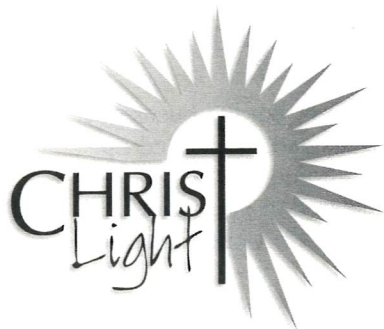
Once a year, Mission to the Children also provides shoes. This

March, 90 pairs of tennis shoes were handed out. For some children, these are the only new shoes they will ever own.

Mission to the Children began in 1988. It is an independent program that reports to WELS world missions. Efforts are funded by special gifts from individuals and organizations.



This Mexican boy holds his first-ever new pair of shoes. The gift was made possible through Mission to the Children, an outreach program from WELS members to the children of Mexico.



Christ-Light™ FAQ

Christ-Light™, the synod's new coordinated religion curriculum for cradle roll through grade 12, will be phased into congregations over four years, starting in 1998. Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator, answers frequently asked questions (FAQ) about Christ-Light.

Won't church and school copy machines be running off a lot of copies from the black line masters?

Every A and B lesson will be accompanied by approximately four copy masters. One of the features of the new curriculum is the flexibility that copy masters provide. Copy machines will be used to run off classroom quantities of lesson copy masters. There are, however, more copy masters provided than can be used with a single lesson. The lessons also include additional activities that do not involve copy masters that can be used for discussion and class projects.

Are area Lutheran high schools and prep schools going to change their present religion curriculums to use Christ-Light? If so, how? Aren't they already quite diverse and structured?

The impetus for a coordinated religion curriculum originated with area Lutheran high schools and preparatory schools. The principals and religion department heads are interested in coordination and uniformity among their students in the area of biblical knowledge. Federations of congregations will need to reach consensus and coordinate nurturing efforts between parish schools and the area Lutheran high schools.



The students of St. Paul, Riverside, Calif., with the help of their art teacher, Brian Dietz, designed and painted this mural on the school playground wall to witness their faith. St. Paul re-opened its school in the fall of 1996 with 15 students. At the end of the school year, there were 17 students with more expected for the fall of 1997.

WLS Auxiliary celebrates 25 years

The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary will celebrate its 25th anniversary on Oct. 4 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

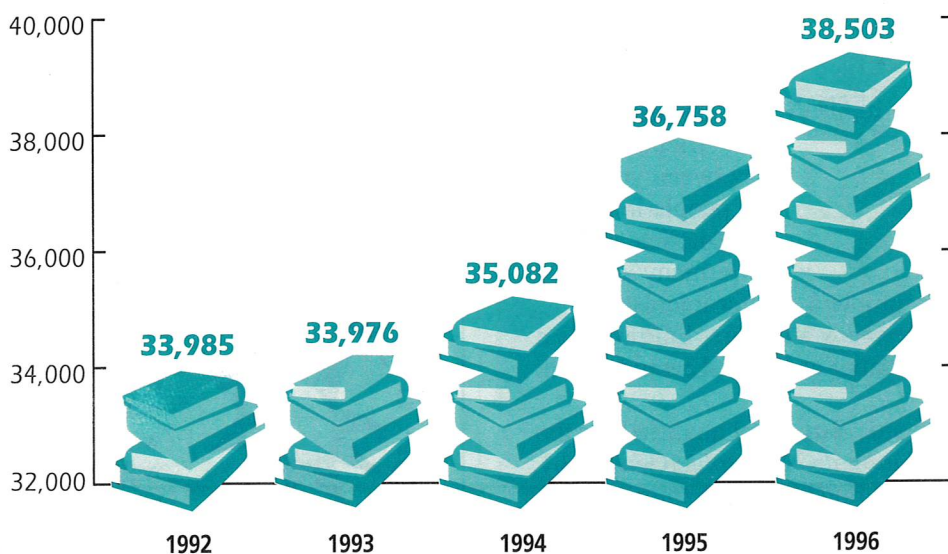
The WLS Auxiliary provides special-projects support for the seminary and promotes increased interest in the school.

The day's events include a special anniversary service, a presentation on

the seminary's early field experience program, student speakers, music, and reflections on the past 25 years.

Registrations should be sent by Sept. 22 to Barb Bergquist, 8023 Red Arrow Ct, Wauwatosa WI 53213; 414/476-2384 (home) or 414/961-3765 (work). Make checks (\$7.50, includes lunch) payable to WLS Auxiliary.

WELS Bible class attendance



Since 1992, WELS Bible class attendance has increased by 4,518 members. In only one year (1995-96), attendance jumped by 1,745. Attendance is expected to continue to increase as congregations place more emphasis on getting members into God's Word.



YOUTH NEWS

Monique Matson, a senior at Titusville High School, Titusville, Fla., participated in the 1997 Miss Teen of America Scholarship & Recognition program in July. This program recognizes young women for academic excellence, involvement in their school, and their support of their community. Matson is a member of New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla.

Heather LaPrairie, a senior at Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich., was one of 50 grand prize winners of the 1997 Daimler-Benz Award of Excellence. LaPrairie competed with over 200,000 students nationwide in knowledge of contemporary Germany. The winners toured Washington D.C. and

GERMANY

Germany for three weeks. The trip's purpose was to raise global awareness and friendship between young people in North America and Germany and to

promote a greater interest in Germany's culture. LaPrairie is a member at Peace, Livonia, Mich.

Louis Burnoski qualified for the *National Geographic* Geography Bee, finishing 10th among five million initial competitors. The 13-year-old from Louisville, Ky., represented his state in the national competition. Burnoski is a member of Hope, Louisville.

Teens serve at youth rally

Some teens helped clean parks. Others did repair work for the city.

Some helped clean a college campus. Others assisted with basketball clinics.

Some canvassed for churches. Others visited nursing home residents.

This sounds like a list of jobs that teens would put on their "How I spent my summer" essays.

Actually, you could call it: "How I spent my youth rally."

Wait a minute, aren't youth rallies supposed to be Bible studies and concerts and pizza parties? Yes, but they can be so much more.

"Teens are a valuable yet untapped resource for serving the church and the community" says Jerry Kastens, youth discipleship administrator. "We need to tap into their energy."

So for the first time at a WELS international youth rally, participants were given the chance not only to grow in their faith, but also to put that faith into action.

The rally, held in June at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, gave all 1,765 rally-goers the opportunity to serve area congregations and the Murfreesboro community.

Alissa Rath learned more than she thought she would from her service. She was supposed to help

clean up a park, but the buses got mixed up. Instead, she ended up at a nursing home.

"I was scared to go in there," Rath said. "I didn't know what to expect."

Once there, she painted women's nails, did their hair, and played bingo. The teens also sang Christian songs for the residents.

"The women thought it was great, and it was a neat experience for me," she said. "It helped me get over my fear."

And while it was a good experience for the teens, their service also made a positive impact on those they helped.

The Director of Parks and Recreation was impressed with how hard the volunteers worked. One bus driver was impressed that youth from around the nation would come to his city and offer community service. "It restores my faith in our youth," he said.

More importantly, the youth rally increases faith in our youth.

Throughout the rally, teens studied God's Word, held devotions, and helped participate in worship.

"It's so neat to see almost 2,000 people who believe the same thing you do," says Rath, a member at Zion, Winthrop, Minn. "It's something you don't forget."



I asked my granddaughter, Olivia, age 4, what she learned in preschool:

"Oh Grandma, it was the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed and prayed, and he kept going over to wake up those three guys, but they wouldn't wake up, and he ran over there three times to wake them up, but they just wouldn't get up.

So he went back and prayed some more.

"Grandma, he did this all for us—yes, because he loves us! Oh yes, those three guys were Peter, James, and John—I remember now!"

This explains why it is so important to start them young.

Barb Gonzalez

On June 15, **Gaylin Schmeling** was installed as president of **Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minn., the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.** He replaces Wilhelm Petersen, who retired from the presidency after 17 years.



Gaylin Schmeling

A 1978 graduate of Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Schmeling served as an ELS pastor for 18 years, most recently at Holy Trinity, Okauchee, Wis.

Bethany Lutheran Seminary had 17 students for the 1996-97 school year.

Two WELS pastors have accepted calls to join Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) mission work in Eastern Europe.

Joel Rakos, former pastor at St. Paul, Amherst, N.H., is serving as a missionary in Ternopil, Ukraine, with four other missionaries. Mark Grubbs, former principal of West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn., joined three other missionaries in Plzen, Czech Republic.

This mission work in Ukraine and Czech Republic is conducted by an independent mission organization called "Thoughts of Faith," a group affiliated with the ELS.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod dedicated a new seminary and synod office building in June at its 80th annual convention in Mankato, Minn.

The building, on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., houses administrative offices for the synod and classrooms, offices, a library, and chapel for Bethany Lutheran Seminary.

This building doesn't bring construction to an end at Bethany Lutheran College. Ground was broken for a new college library, and plans are being laid for a men's dormitory.

The ELS also reported at the convention that 36 ELS congregations have adopted its new hymnal, the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, with nearly 10,000 copies sold.

Thomas Nass



The new ELS seminary and synod office building houses administrative offices for the synod, and classrooms, offices, a library, and chapel for Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minn.

rē·li·giōn

Defining religion

efficacy of Scripture: The Bible has the power to accomplish God's purposes of convicting people of sin, bringing them to faith, and bringing forth good works in their lives. Because the Holy Spirit always works through God's Word, his Word never returns empty, but achieves the purpose for which God sent it (Isaiah 55:10,11).

One Labor Day in 1968 we were visiting friends whose son had come home for a short stay.



Andrew graduated from Harvard, spent a few years in Vietnam, and now was a long-haired hippie whose philosophy was that being a good, loving person entitled him to society's benefits. My husband questioned his value system, and Andy countered with: "And what do you do for society? Place one brick on top of another?"

My husband, a carpenter, replied: "Yes. My hands are calloused and permanently dirty, my back and knees usually hurt from the pounding, bending, and lifting. I might die or get hurt from the heights at which I do my work. But, no, I do not merely put one brick on top of another. I build homes for families to live in, schools for them to learn in, town halls for them to vote in, and churches for them to worship in. You see, God uses the labor of my hands to distribute his blessings to his children."

Labor Day—a special holiday when we pay tribute to the uncommon laborer—the people who perform their assigned tasks, each according to their God-given talents.

Lois Smith
 Oconomowoc, Wisconsin



Share it!



District news

Minnesota

In April, **St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.**, resolved to start a school. Now St. Peter has a preschool and kindergarten. They will add a grade each year until grade three is added in the 1999-2000 school year. . . . **West Lutheran High School, Hopkins, Minn.**, dedicated its new school facility on April 27. Enrollment for the 1996-97 school year at West LHS was 107 students. . . . **Thomas Henning**, pastor at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., celebrated 40 years in the ministry on July 6.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Hope, Louisville, Ky., opened its Precious Lambs Christian Child Care in a former center located across the street from the church. Congregation members share the good news of Jesus with 75 neighborhood children and their families each day.

George Ferch

Western Wisconsin

Earl Brassow, principal at St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis., celebrated 40 years of service on June 8. . . . St. John, Baraboo, Wis., celebrated teacher **Delores Hahn's** 30th year in the teaching ministry on April 13. . . . **Ronald Glock**, teacher at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis., celebrated his 25th year of service on June 1.

Elton Stroh

CORRECTIONS:

- The television show *Touched by an Angel* is on CBS, not NBC as was stated in August's "Editor's Pen."
- Contrary to what was written in the WELS news story "Pastor caught in crossfire" (July), Pastor M. Scott Martz and his family have not received any personal threats from members of the criminal's gang.

New facility assists the elderly

Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Inc., (WLCFS) opened the doors of Wisconsin Lutheran Living Center, a new residential service facility, in July.

The facility, located in Milwaukee, serves as a bridge between independent living and 24-hour skilled nursing care.

"As an individual ages, total independence may not be possible anymore. Yet 24-hour care is not necessary. We are looking forward to fulfilling the needs of these families and their loved ones," said Pastor Richard Raabe Jr., deputy chief operating officer of WLCFS.

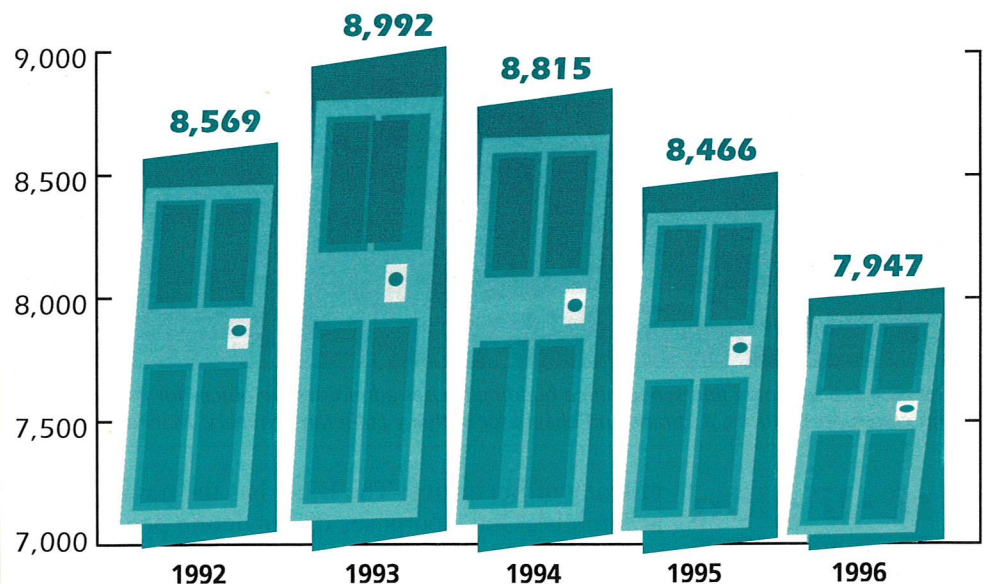
The elderly living at this facility receive some assistance, including three daily meals, housekeeping, medication monitoring, daily grooming, and recreational and specialty trips. Qualified personnel are available 24 hours a day.

For more information contact the facility at 414/365-0545.



The Wisconsin Lutheran Living Center opened in July. At the center the elderly maintain some of their independence, yet receive help in their daily lives.

WELS back door losses



Back door losses in our WELS churches hit a low of 7,947 since this statistic was first provided in 1992. Back door losses are defined as members who joined another church body or were removed by their congregation.

Georgian Orthodox quits WCC

The Georgian Orthodox Church in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia withdrew its membership from the World Council of Churches (WCC), saying the international ecumenical body fails to take Orthodox interests into account.

It is the first time since the 1948 founding of the WCC that an Orthodox church has left the 330-member Geneva-based ecumenical agency. The church said it was also withdrawing from the Conference of European Churches, a regional European body that mirrors the WCC.

Orthodox denominations have long criticized the WCC for what the churches say are the WCC's vague concepts on church authority and organization, and their concern over developments in Western Protestantism, including the ordination of women as priests, the revision of conventional views on homosexuality, and the use of inclusive language in Bible translations.

Fast fact

According to a survey performed by the Emnid-Institut of Bielefeld for the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, 45 percent of Germans believe in God today—although 70 percent of them belong to a church. Only 26 percent of Germans believe in Jesus Christ.

In former West Germany, 51 percent believe in God. In the former East Germany, only 20 percent believe in God. The number of outright atheists has increased from 20 percent in 1992 to 28 percent today.

[*The Religion and Society Report*, May 1997]

Birthplace of Christianity may outlaw evangelism

The Holy Land is considering outlawing the spread of the gospel. A bill introduced in the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) would prohibit possessing materials intended to induce religious conversion. The bill carries a one-year prison term for violators.

A member of the Knesset and a member of the opposition Labor Party introduced the bill earlier this year after hundreds of thousands of Jewish Israelis received a mailing sent by a San Diego-based televangelist who urged them to believe in Jesus.

Christians and Messianic Jews—those who believe Jesus is the Messiah and maintain they are still ethnic Jews—view the proposed legislation as a violation of religious freedom and an attempt to stifle missionary activities among Israeli Jews.

Opponents claim the bill would make it illegal to even possess a copy of the New Testament. The bill's sponsors deny that, and say they only want to halt well-financed, large-scale missionary activities intended to bring

about mass conversions.

The bill has received the first of four approvals in the Knesset.

In a letter, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opposed the bill and said, "I would like to assure you that this bill does not have the support of the Israeli government. . . . The government strenuously objects to this bill and will act to ensure that it does not pass."

However, Baruch Maoz, chairman of the committee that is leading the opposition to the bill, said that Netanyahu as yet has done nothing to sidetrack the legislation.

Netanyahu's opposition might be tested if the Orthodox political parties that account for one third of his ruling coalition refuse to withdraw their support. However, evangelical Christians—because of their belief in Israel's central theological role—are among the Jewish state's staunchest foreign supporters and most frequent tourists, providing the bill's opponents with some political counterweight.

"Nyet!" to restricting religion

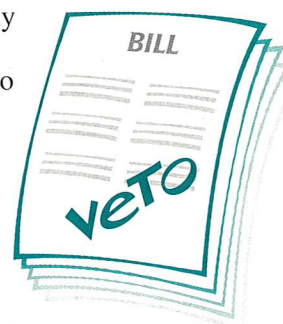
Under the threat of loss of financial aid from the United States and in response to strong international opposition, President Boris Yeltsin vetoed a law passed earlier this summer by the Russian parliament that would have severely restricted the activities of foreign missionaries and religious groups not "traditional" to Russia.

The bill recognized four faiths as traditionally Russian: Russian Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. Other faith groups would be required to operate in Russia for 15 years before they could apply for state approval to own property, establish bank accounts, or conduct other routine matters—making mission

operations extremely difficult.

Had it passed into law, the bill almost surely would have forced all of WELS missionaries out of Russia and seriously disrupted our work that God has so richly blessed there.

But the issue is not dead. Supporters of the bill, including leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church, insist they will bring it back and ultimately prevail. We all need to pray that they are wrong.



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

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

CHANGE OF MINISTRY

Pastors

Berger, James C., from WLCFS, Milwaukee, to retirement
Biedenbender, Thomas W., from Mt. Olive, Detroit, Mich., to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
Cox, Jon N., from Beautiful Savior, College Station, Tex., to St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Cox, Raymond G., from Christ, Keystone Heights, Fla., to retirement
Freier, Ronald F., from Grace, St. Joseph, Mich., to retirement
Kannenberg, Delmer F., from Zion, Denver, Colo., to Cameroon
Kom, Brian R., from St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., to Ascension, Rochester, Minn.
Laude, Donald D., from Faith, Russell/St. Mark, Salina, Kan., to retirement
Lockman, Steven M., from Cutler Ridge, Miami, Fla., to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.
Reichel, David D., from Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Mandan, N.D., to Calvary, Sheboygan, Wis.
Schmeling, James A., from St. Paul, Stratford, Wis., to Faith, Monroe, Mich.
Thrams, James A., from LPS, Watertown, Wis., to retirement
Treptow, Earle D., from Amazing Grace exp., Langley, British Columbia, Canada, to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Wichmann, Donald P., from St. Paul, North Platte, Neb., to St. Mark, Salina, Kan.
Wierschke, David D., from St. Paul, Gladstone, Mich., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Wilde, Philip P., from Trinity, Englewood, Fla., to St. John, Wrightstown, Wis.

Teachers

Beck, Cindy R., from Friedens, Kenosha, Wis., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.
Biesterfeld, Laura A., from Gloria Dei, Milwaukee, Wis., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Buch, Kevin M., from St. John, Princeton, Wis., to First German, Manitowoc, Wis.
Carter, Paula F., to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
Caskey, Elizabeth K., from St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.
Dast, Shirley L., from St. John, Pigeon, Mich., to Bethel, Bay City, Mich.
Fregien, Rachel A., from Holy Cross, Madison, Wis., to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.
Hackbarth, Todd A., from Mt. Calvary-Grace, La Crosse, Wis., to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Huebner, Scott R., from St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis., to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Kaiser, Harold A., from LPS, Watertown, Wis., to retirement
Kempky, Jessie L., from Resurrection, Aurora, Ill., to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.
Kolosovsky, Gail S., from St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis., to Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis.
Lambrecht, Jessica, to Our Savior, Naples, Fla.
Lettner, Lauri A., to Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis.
Manderfield, Marlene, from Trinity, Marinette, Wis., to retirement
Marowsky, Dawn M., to St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.
McClelland, Kathryn, from St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
Mess, Nancy A., from St. Matthew, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement
Mueller, Helene J., to Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, Ariz.
Mulinix, Beverly M., from Zion, Toledo, Ohio, to retirement

Nelson, Pennie L., to St. James, Milwaukee, Wis.
Neyhart, Kathryn A., from St. Paul, Tomah, Wis., to St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.
Peasall, Pamela K., from Peace, Reedsburg, Wis., to Faith, Reedsburg, Wis.
Plocher, Michael D., from Eastside, Madison, Wis., to Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Pohlman, Suzanta M., to St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Sadlovsky, Kelly, from Shepherd of the Hills, Inver Grove Heights, Minn., to Emanuel, West St. Paul, Minn.
Schuster, Sarah L., from St. John, Wood Lake, Minn., to Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis.
Southard, Daniel E., from Trinity, Marinette, Wis., to retirement
Wagner, Julie D., from St. John, Mukwonago, Wis., to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
Wichmann, Elizabeth C., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
Wilt, Margaret A., to Christ Our Savior, Rockford, Mich.

ANNIVERSARIES

Harrison, Mich.—Faith (25). Sept. 7. Dinner, 1 PM; service, 3 PM. Townline Lake and Wilson, Harrison MI 48625; 517/386-7216.
Mankato, Minn.—St. Mark school (20). Sept. 7. Service, 9 AM; dinner, program, picnic follows. 502 W 7 St, Mankato MN 56001; 507/388-2013.
Red Wing, Minn.—St. John school (50). Sept. 14. Services, 8 and 10:30 AM; dinner, noon. Reservation needed for dinner. 421 East Ave, Red Wing MN 55066; 612/388-2611.
Loretto, Minn.—Salem school (50). Sept. 21. Service, 2 PM; refreshments follow. 9640 Cty Rd 123, Loretto MN 55357; 612/498-7281.
Tulsa, Okla.—Mount Olive (25). Sept. 21. Service, 4 PM; dinner following. 12435 E 31 St, Tulsa OK 74146; 918/663-2356.
Kekoskee, Wis.—St. Peter (125). Oct. 12. Service, 10 AM; catered meal follows. 23 Main St, RR 2, Mayville WI 53050; 414/387-4043.
Weyauwega, Wis.—St. Peter (125). Oct. 18—service, 4 PM. Oct. 19—services, 8:15 and 10:30 AM; lunch, noon. RSVP for lunch. 312 W Main St, Weyauwega WI 54983; 414/867-3169.
St. Paul Park, Minn.—St. Andrew (50). Oct. 12. Services, 8 and 10:30 AM. 1000 Portland Ave, St. Paul Park MN 55071; 612/459-2569.

Libertyville, Ill.—St. John (100). Oct. 12. Service, 3:30 PM; dinner, 5 PM. Call church for tickets for dinner. 501 W Park Ave, Libertyville IL 60048; 847/362-4424.

Buffalo Grove, Ill.—New Life (10). Nov. 9. Service, 9:30 AM; catered brunch and program at 10:45 AM. New Life, Twin Groves Jr. High School, 2600 N Buffalo Grove Rd, Buffalo Grove IL 60089; 847/520-9176.

COMING EVENTS

Pastors Institute—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Five Mondays beginning Sept. 22, 1:30 to 4:30 PM. Topics: Acts 1-5; Pietism and education. \$25. Send reservations to WLS, Office of the President, 11833 N Seminary Dr, Mequon WI 53092.

WELS Lutherans for Life national convention—Oct. 4. Paper Valley Hotel and Convention Center, Appleton, Wis., 414/774-1331 or 1-800-729-9535
Meeting—of the MLC ladies auxiliary. Oct. 8 at Martin Luther College, New Ulm. Coffee, 9 AM; devotion and program, 10 AM; luncheon, noon. Babysitting provided. Eunice Reese, 612/923-4531.

Seminar—for members of area WELS churches. "More than Conquerors." Various topics. 8 AM to 3:15 PM, Oct. 11. Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. Registration forms available at home churches.

WELS-CLO meeting—church librarians' organization. Oct. 18 at Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis. Registration, 8:30 AM. Fee: \$7 (includes lunch). 414/256-3222; <usr4@sab.wels.net>

Women's retreat—Nov. 8. Trinity, Minocqua, Wis. Sue Bowman, 715/356-7542.

Retreat—Christian Women Today retreat. March 20-22, 1998. Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Brochures mailed by mid January. Jan Kneser 414/781-1955.

Retreat—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. April 17-19, 1998. Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866.

NAMES WANTED

San Angelo, Texas—Bob Sawall, Our Redeemer, 1201 Koberlin St, San Angelo TX 76903; 915/223-1269; <rlsawall@gte.net>

Clifton Park, N.Y.—former members of King of Kings for 25th anniversary celebration in November. 1593 Crescent Rd, Clifton Park NY 12065; 518/371-9544.

Benton Harbor, Mich.—former pastors, vicars, principals, teachers, students, and members of St. Matthew for 100th anniversary celebration. Thelma Stubelt, 6870 Meadowbrook Rd, Benton Harbor MI 49022; 616/944-1819; or Amy Brenner, 5966 Naomi Rd, Eau Claire MI 49111; 616/944-5040.

Watertown, Wis.—past members of St. Luke for 150th anniversary in 1998. Board of Outreach and Fellowship, St. Luke, 1509 S 3 St, Watertown WI 53094

Prescott, Ariz.—student prospects attending one of the four colleges in Prescott, Ariz. Prescott Campus Ministry, 231 W Smoketree Ln, Prescott AZ 86301. Kent Schaefer, 520/445-3053; <kschaefer@yavapai.cc.az.us>

Myrtle Beach, S.C.—Pastor David Pries, 910/868-1907; <DavePries@aol.com>

Bend/Redmond, Ore.—Pastor David Leistikow, PO Box 6149, Bend, OR 97708-6149; 541/389-6649; <schmo@coinet.com>

Crown Point, Ind.—student prospects from Valparaiso University. For start of a campus ministry program. Peter Goetsch, 1515 W 93 Ave, Crown Point, IN 46307; 219/663-5853.

AVAILABLE

Books—Rupprecht Bible History Reference books (vol. 1 & 2). \$21.95 for the set. Schlicht Memorial Lutheran Home, 520 W Main St, Belle Plaine MN 56011; 612/873-5666.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bend, Ore.—Christ Our Redeemer, 62910 O.B. Riley Rd, Bend OR 97708. Located off Hwy 97 two blocks north of Shilo Inn in the McKay Office Building; 541/382-7387. Mailing address, PO Box 6149, Bend, OR 97708.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Deferred giving counselor—for Bethany Lutheran College (ELS). Salary commensurate with education and experience. Benefits include medical, dental, and life insurance; an institution contribution to pension after one year of service; and social security and a flex plan for pre-tax benefits for certain health or child care costs. Send resume to Paul Tweit, Bethany Lutheran College, 734 Marsh St, Mankato MN 56001; 507/386-5312.

Back to school

Victor H. Prange

The population of the United States is about 270 million people. Of these an estimated 66 million are full-time students.* That means nearly one out of every four citizens of our nation is heading back to school. This will be the first year of school for some; others will be looking forward to graduation and what follows.

Many students will enroll in public schools, but a large number will be students at private schools including our synod's Lutheran elementary schools, 21 area Lutheran high schools, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, and four ministerial education schools: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

That 25 percent of all Americans are off to school is an impressive figure. It tells us that education is important. Government knows that; our synod and congregations know that; parents know that. We are willing to devote large expenditures of time, money, and energy to the cause of education.

That 25 percent of all Americans will be going back to school these days is significant. But I won't be one of them. And many of you who read these words won't be going back to school either. We're part of the majority, the 75 percent, the 200 million, who won't be full-time students this school year.

Does that mean that we non-students should not be concerned about learning, that our education is finished? Hardly. Ideally schools should equip pupils with the tools necessary to continue their education. Graduation was never intended to be the end of study; rather graduation

should be the commencement of a lifetime of learning.

That has special application for us. As a pastor, my graduation from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, which marked the end of my life as a full-time student, did not mean that my education was finished, that I knew it all. Continuing education is a must for every pastor.

Continuing education is a must for every Christian. Confirmation does not mean that our Christian education is complete. Ideally, confirmation instruction should equip the baptized child of God for a lifetime of growth in faith and life.

The Christian has many opportunities for such continuing education. Regular worship is priority number one. In worship God comes to us in Word and sacrament to keep our faith flourishing. Most congregations offer opportunities for group Bible study. Every confirmed Christian has the privilege of private or family devotions and Bible study.

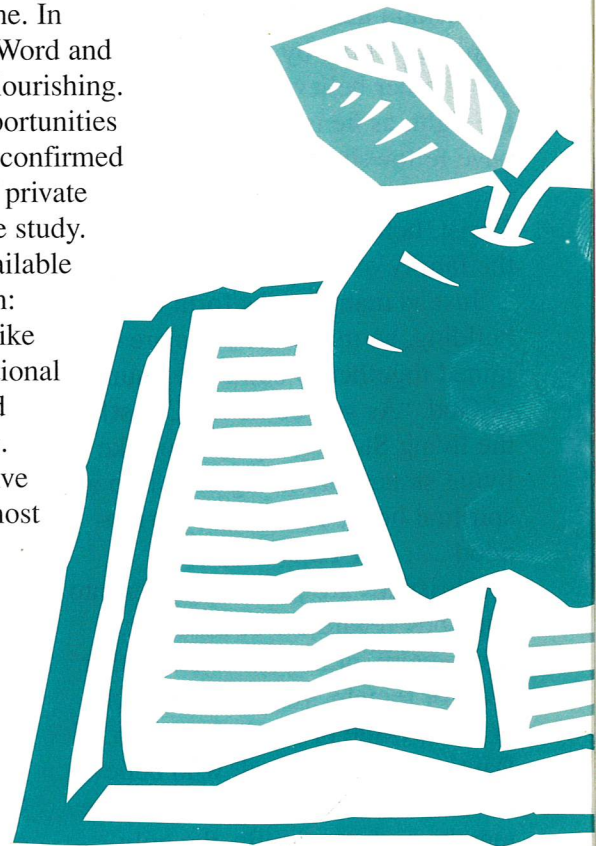
There are various tools available for such continuing education: study Bibles, commentaries like the People's Bible, and devotional booklets like *Meditations* and *Lutheran Parent's Wellspring*. Your pastor will be able to give advice as to what might be most helpful for your situation.

Learning is a lifetime adventure. May that be true especially for us who are disciples (learners) of Jesus Christ.

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

** Figures supplied by Janesville Public Library's reference department.*

*Continuing
education is a
must for every
Christian.*



Church fellowship

John F. Brug

What is the WELS position on church fellowship and why?

Few joys are greater than Christian fellowship. "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! . . . For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" (Psalm 133). Christian fellowship is a blessing to celebrate and to cherish.

The foundations of fellowship

Fellowship and the unity of the church begin with faith in Christ as our Savior. The Holy Spirit uses the gospel to bring people to faith one by one. But individual Christians do not remain alone. Everyone who is joined to Christ by faith is joined to every other believer. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another . . ." (1 John 1:7). Through faith in Christ, believers are adopted into the family of God (Galatians 3:26).

Just as many bricks form one building, so many believers are joined together to build one church of God. "As you come to [Christ], the living Stone . . . you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood . . ." (1 Peter 2:4,5).

Christians are joined together into one body regardless of their sex, age, wealth, or nationality. Whether male or female, young or old, rich or poor, white or black, Lutheran, Baptist, or Catholic, all who believe in Jesus as their Savior from sin are members of one family, the holy Christian church. How wonderful

to know that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:5,6). All believers are joined in the fellowship of saving faith.

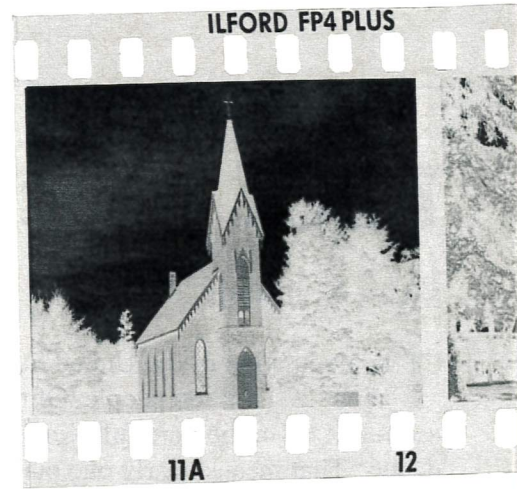
The definition of fellowship

"Fellowship" means "sharing" or "partnership." Fellowship may refer to friendly relationships between people, as well as to all the activities in which they join together to advance the goals they share.

"Christian fellowship" refers first to the spiritual relationship we have with God through faith in Christ. With John we confess, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Christian fellowship may also refer to the spiritual tie we have with all believers as members of the invisible church. We confess, "I believe in the holy Christian Church, the communion [i.e., the fellowship] of saints" or "We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church."

Although church fellowship is defined as "working together," not every sort of working together is God-pleasing church fellowship.

We cherish this fellowship with God and all believers. We recognize every baptism performed in the name of the Triune God and accord-

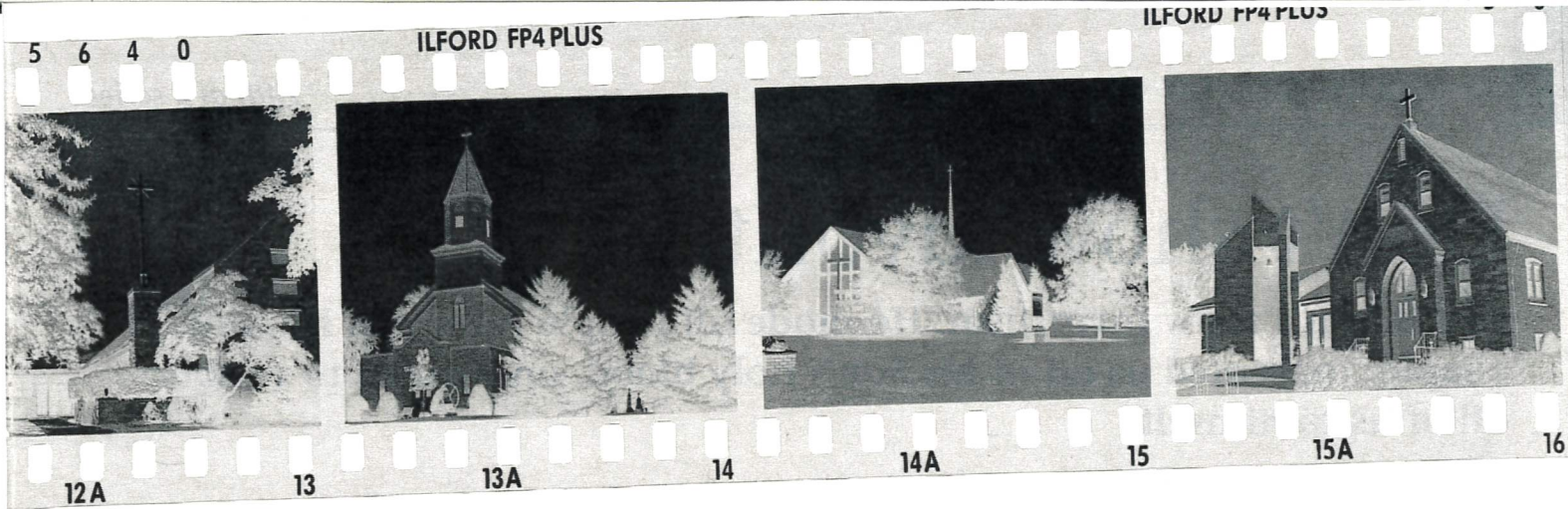


ing to Christ's institution as a valid baptism, which makes the recipient a child of God. We rejoice when people are brought to saving faith through the gospel preaching of churches outside our fellowship. We eagerly look to the time when we will enjoy the inheritance of heaven with all believers, and when all divisions in the church will be healed.

The practice of fellowship

Unfortunately, we cannot yet practice church fellowship with all Christians because false teaching has divided the visible church. Since all teachings of Scripture are from God, no one has a right to add or subtract from them (Deuteronomy 4:2). The practice of church fellowship must, therefore, be based on agreement in all the doctrines of Scripture. Persistent rejection of even one teaching of Scripture breaks church fellowship between Christians. Some doctrines, such as justification or the means of grace, are more critical for our salvation than others, but we have no right to reject any teaching of Scripture.

As the WELS theses on fellowship say: "A Christian confession of faith is in principle always a confession to the entire Word of God. The denial, alteration, or suppression of any word of God does not stem from faith but from unbelief" (WELS Theses, B,2). God's Word is a unit.



We must preserve it as a whole.

The outward expressions of church fellowship also must be dealt with as a unit. Activities such as doing mission work together, celebrating the Lord's Supper together, exchanging pastors, transferring members, and praying together are merely different ways of expressing the same fellowship of faith. All forms of church fellowship, therefore, require the same level of doctrinal agreement, namely, agreement in all doctrines of Scripture. Partial agreement in doctrine does not permit partial practice of fellowship.

A scriptural description of fellowship

The apostle John defines church fellowship when he says his goal is that he and his readers may "work together for the truth" (3 John 1:8). This definition shows that church fellowship is first a positive concept. Church fellowship is "working together." The primary goal of this doctrine is to lead us to work together with fellow Christians, not to separate from them.

We confess with the Scriptures that the practice of church fellowship is something positive: fellowship is "working together." Faith produces the desire to join together with other Christians in worship, prayer, and the Lord's Supper. Christians will gladly use their gifts

to support the church's mission with their offerings and time. Christians' concern for church fellowship focuses on finding opportunities to practice fellowship with like-minded Christians.

Still, we must also learn how to recognize and avoid dangers to the true unity of the church.

The practice of church fellowship must be based on agreement in all the doctrines of Scripture.

How can we identify those Christians with whom we may safely practice fellowship? Since we cannot judge the faith in a person's heart, we must base our outward fellowship with another Christian on how that person's confession agrees with biblical doctrine. Although church fellowship is defined as "working together," not every sort of working together is God-pleasing church fellowship. John defines God-pleasing fellowship as "working together for the truth." We, therefore, cannot work or worship together with anyone who departs from the true teachings of Scripture or who persists in sin.

In two short letters, John men-

tions "truth" a dozen times. He warns that those who work together with false teachers, either by giving them financial support or by wishing them well, are enemies of the truth, who are guilty of sharing in the false teachers' sin: "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work" (2 John 9-11). Supporters of the truth cannot work together with supporters of falsehood, "for we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8).

For this reason the WELS belief is that Christians should not worship, pray, or join in any spiritual work with people who promote or support false teaching.

A fuller discussion of the biblical basis and the practical application of the WELS doctrine of church fellowship can be found in the book Church Fellowship: Working Together for the Truth, available from Northwestern Publishing House.

NL

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

Don't show favoritism

God doesn't show favoritism. He made all people from one human couple, redeemed us all in his Son's holy blood, and wants to restore all of us to himself.

Mark E. Braun

A college student went to a jewelry store wearing a T-shirt, old Reeboks, and a pair of torn jeans. Two clerks ignored him, a third steered him to their cheapest rings.

The same student visited the same jewelry store the next day, but this time he wore a dark blue suit, starched dress shirt, and power tie. Salespersons eagerly waited on him and displayed their more expensive settings.

Not in church?

What happened in that jewelry store would never happen in church—right? Yet James seems to describe a real occurrence:

“Suppose a man comes to your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you,’ but say to the poor man, ‘You stand there’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet,’ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” (2:2-4).

One family comes to church in a gleaming Lexus, another in a

rusted-out Yugo. This couple wears stylish suits, but that man's clothes don't fit right, look outdated, or smell bad. He talks funny. Her skin is dark. They aren't like us.

The world's way is to be nice to people who can do things for us, but to brush aside those who need our help. It isn't only jewelry stores or country clubs that have a problem with favoritism; Christian congregations are susceptible too.

Rich or poor?

Is it a sin to be rich? No, financial wealth is one of God's gifts. God loves rich and poor alike. It's not that Jesus doesn't care about the wealthy or mighty, but too often they don't want (or don't think they need) him. The rich face “foolish and harmful desires,” and they may be terribly poor in the things that really count. The rich man in Jesus' story, with all his crops squirreled away in bigger and better barns, lost everything when he died because he “was not rich toward God.”

Sometimes the rich cause others' poverty. “Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?” James asked (2:6). The wages the rich failed to pay their workers are crying out to God, and he has ears to hear (5:4).

Jesus was poor: born to humble parents, his first bed a feedbox. He had no place to lay his head. He died without even the clothes he wore to his trial. His lifeless body was laid in a borrowed grave. For our sakes he became poor, and through his poverty we've been made rich.

Jesus loves rich as well as poor, but the poor gladly heard him. They welcomed a gospel that says God saves sinners by grace and mercy, not by human achievement, wealth, or status. Lazarus showed greater interest in this good news than the rich man, and Paul's congregations contained “not many of noble birth.” There is a rich harvest of souls among the poor. Who better to love them than Christians? Who better to reap the talents and treasures they bring than God's family of believers?

Prejudice, class arrogance, and racism aren't understandable attitudes or justifiable personal opinions. They're sins. They anger the God who made all people from one human couple, who redeemed us all in his Son's holy blood, and who wants to restore all of us to himself.

God doesn't show favoritism; neither should we.

Mark Braun is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

real faith for real life
james



The May *Northwestern Lutheran* recently arrived in Lilongwe, Malawi. Of interest to us was the article written by the gifted author and dedicated missionary, Pastor E. H. Wendland, "Aids intervention—is there hope?" While the article is well written, there is no mention of the ongoing AIDS education, which is part of the Primary Health Program of the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in neighboring Malawi.

The Lutheran Mobile Clinic has been operating in Malawi for over 27 years and serves 35,000-plus patients at four clinic sites. AIDS education began several years ago through the nurses working for the Central Africa Medical Mission in Malawi. Since our arrival in 1994, AIDS education has been accelerated utilizing the Lutheran Church of Central Africa gospel worker who provides devotions and incorporates God's Word into the teaching done by our staff. Clinic use of African Health Education Bands and Community Drama Groups have brought the topic to the forefront, and community worker programs have emphasized AIDS education.

The May cover doesn't show a member of the Mwembezi Rural Health Center in Lambda (as reported) but rather the Lutheran Mobile Clinic's Christine Maliseche, at rural Suzi clinic in Malawi. Maliseche is an enrolled nurse midwife who specializes in Christian family planning and AIDS counseling.

*Nicholas and Kerry Laper
Lilongwe, Malawi, Africa*

Pastor Wendland conducted his research in Zambia and therefore focused his article on the work done there.—ed.

As a reader of over 30 years I've appreciated NL to enhance my knowledge and faith in Christ.

In November and December, I look forward to encouragement for Advent and Christmas. In March and April, I appreciate the help preparing for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. But I seldom find help to celebrate the Ascension of our Lord. I believe the Christian church, as a whole, has practically deserted one of the important events of our Lord's life. We confess it boldly in our creed, but do little or nothing to celebrate.

And how about Pentecost? Sure, we have a Pentecost Sunday along with our regular services. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is an important part of our creed.

I would welcome input on the issue in NL. I am requesting the NL staff schedule these important events for 1998.

*Audrey Endrecca
West St. Paul, Minnesota*

Morton Schroeder is to be commended for his article "Eccentric man, faithful Christian" [July].

Yet, I take exception to using of the word "eccentric." There is an ugly connotation to that word: odd or whimsical behavior. Wouldn't "creative" have been a better choice?

I'm presuming the author picked up the term from some article of past decades. Many creative people in years past were stifled and put down by a few who feared to be the first by which the new was tried. If Harders was eccentric, we need more of those types of God-driven men.

Also, *La Paloma* [may be out of print, but it] is still read! I know of teachers who still read this novel to their students. I did. In 45 years of teaching, I have not found a more

gripping, Christ-centered novel. This book is a WELS gem!

*Les Kehl
Marinette, Wisconsin*

Through my Bible
in 3 years

October 1997

1. Psalm 119:1-24
2. Ps. 119:25-48
3. Ps. 49-80
4. Ps. 119:81-104
5. Ps. 119:105-128
6. Ps. 119:129-152
7. Ps. 119:153-176
8. Ps. 120, 121
9. Ps. 122, 123
10. Ps. 124-126
11. Ps. 127-129
12. Ps. 130, 131
13. Ps. 132
14. Ps. 133, 134
15. Ps. 135
16. Ps. 136
17. Ps. 137, 138
18. 2 Chronicles 1, 2
19. 2 Chron. 3:1—5:1
20. 2 Chron. 5:2—6:11
21. 2 Chron. 6:12-42
22. 2 Chron. 7, 8
23. 2 Chron. 9, 10
24. 2 Chron. 11, 12
25. 2 Chron. 13, 14
26. 2 Chron. 15, 16
27. 2 Chron. 17, 18
28. 2 Chron. 19, 20
29. 2 Chron. 21:1—22:9
30. 2 Chron. 22:10—23:21
31. 2 Chron. 24

Peter the Barber once asked Martin Luther how he, an ordinary kind of guy, could read the Bible and benefit from it.

Luther answered:

Ask yourself:

1. What does God tell me here?
2. What makes me glad?
3. What makes me sad?
4. What do I want to pray for?

Try it in your Bible reading.

Appearances

*Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!*

—Robert Burns



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

**Do people know
that the firm
positions we hold
reflect the awe in
which we hold
God's Word?**

Another anonymous message! It's hard to take it seriously if the writer doesn't have the courage to identify himself. Still, I wonder: "Why does this writer have such a low opinion of WELS Christians?"

In free verse, the writer depicts WELS people as thanking God "that we are not as other men are," as bent on associating only with "doctrinally-pure people," and as self-serving—all "to earn some points for our salvation." In brief, the unidentified critic sees us, or at least the leaders among us, as vain and self-righteous.

I'm not writing to refute the allegations other than to say they are an unfair caricature of who we are, and are written in a spirit that belies the very humility the writer seems to beg from us. I'm more concerned with what we might be doing to leave such an impression.

When, for example, we stand up for God's truth against errors perpetuated by some, do we speak the truth "in love" (Ephesians 4:15)? Do we adequately distinguish between error, which can harm saving faith, and the faith that saves, even when it's weak? Do we stress the "whoever" of John 3:16 without reference to WELS?

Do people know that the firm positions we hold reflect the awe in which we hold God's Word and not some bullheadedness born of Germanic dyspepsia? Do they know we recognize, too, that God's kingdom exists wherever his Word is at work? Does our zeal to share that Word show?

Are we friendly, or do we stand aloof from those who aren't "of our kind"? Do we properly distinguish between not joining in worship because of unresolved doctrinal differences and cooperating in externals outside of worship? Do we rejoice at each confession of faith in Jesus Christ as much as we sadly judge confessional statements that err from God's Word?

Do we care and show it? Do we "rejoice with those who rejoice [and] mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15)? Do we see each person on earth as a blood-bought soul of Christ and exhibit an urgency about reaching those who don't yet know it? Are we willing to "get our hands dirty" for the Lord?

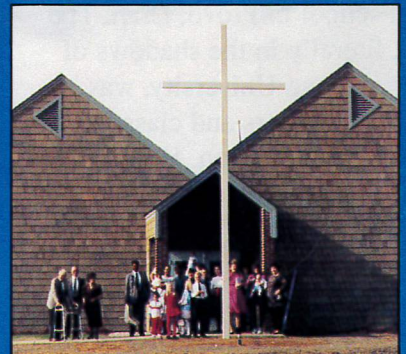
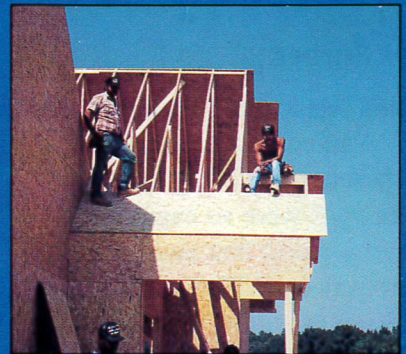
Does all we do grow from the knowledge that our salvation is already secure in Christ Jesus and not from the desire to gain some points with God? Do we count others more worthy than ourselves?

We know what the answers to these questions should be, don't we? To the extent we live out the preferred answers, praise be to God. To the extent we fall short—and we will fall short—God, and you who are offended, forgive us. To the extent we strive in faith for the ideal, may we be wise to see that some people still won't like what they see in us.

The unnamed writer suggests that we must be praying for God to come and "take our little group to heaven with a big brass band." No, but we do pray for the day when Jesus will come with the sound of the trumpet to take all his faithful followers to heaven with him.

Gary P. Baumler

*You can help
Build
His
House*



Through the Church Extension Fund your gifts and investments can help new mission congregations acquire their first permanent worship units.

To remit a gift or request an Offering Circular write:

Charles Skeels
VP-Investment Communications
WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.
2929 North Mayfair Road
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

Or you may call:
1-800-729-9357 or 1-414-256-3896

Attending a public school filled with Mormon teachers and students, one girl wished she could go to an elementary school with children of her own faith. But this experience strengthened her faith and her desire to serve. Consider it a . . .

Trial by fire

Cheryl Barber

It seems just a short while ago that Carly walked into her first day of kindergarten. Carly's big brown innocent eyes were so eager to explore the world that awaited her.

There was no WELS school in our area, so that day I watched with much emotional trepidation as she entered school in Provo, Utah. The school, literally in the shadows of Brigham Young University, was filled with teachers and classmates of one faith—Mormon. How I wished I could protect her.

This past spring Carly finished eighth grade, and I can't help but reflect on her school days of the past nine years.



Carly and Pastor Michael Quandt at Carly's confirmation in 1997. Carly is a member at Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City.

Her trials

The tears in her eyes come to mind first. The lack of understanding as to why she was left out because of what she believed in—or didn't believe in. The fear in her eyes when she came home after being told her mommy and daddy wouldn't be going to heaven because they drank coffee. The deep hurt she felt after the slumber party when the girls said their parents would never let them babysit for a non-Mormon family. My feeble attempts to explain it without causing further bitterness. The tears I fought back in front of her only to come at night. The prayers of forgiveness so often asked after times of not hiding my sinful anger and bitterness. The hope that no harm had come from my weak parenting.

Her faith

I also think back to when we watched her come home excited to tell us of an opportunity she had to share her own faith with a classmate (granted, sometimes this excitement was tinged with spite). The keen desire she had to study and know the Bible so she was prepared to defend her faith, share the true gospel, and talk the religious talk that surrounds the kids living in this state.

She has a spiritual growth beyond her years. I heard the true agony in



Carly Barber, kindergarten.

her heart—after she got beyond the personal hurt and pain—of concern for the many lost souls around her. The bedtime prayers that always included the mass of people being deceived by the culture in which she lived. The constant wish that she could go to school with children of her own faith.

I watched with humble heart as the Lord walked beside her through nine difficult years and gave her a love and assurance that will take her far beyond my years with her.

This fall Carly began at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. There she will prepare to be a teacher at a WELS school—her goal since third grade. And though she will start the school year without us by her side, we send her with great confidence, knowing that the same strong hand that led her through these past nine years of school will never leave hers empty.

And while she starts her first day of school 2,000 miles away from me, I will stand at the threshold of Prince of Peace watching the wide eyes of the five-year-olds. I will be giving praise and thanks that they are entering the first day of kindergarten at the new WELS school in the heart of Salt Lake City.

Cheryl Barber is a member of Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah.