

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

April 1998

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



**An Easter
without joy?
Impossible!**

page 6

**Building
through
faith**

page 10

**Even calls
me by my
name**

page 29

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From gloom to glory page 36





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Whiter whites

His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Mark 9:3

Eric S. Hartzell

You'd almost think that the words are from a first century laundry soap advertisement. "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." But actually, they talk about Jesus' clothes on the mountain where he revealed his glory to his disciples.

We clean our clothes

Maybe you think the commercial with the two ladies at the laundromat is overdone. One lady admiringly pulls blazing white things out of the dryer and holds them up to the light. The other lady sighs in despair because her whites are dingy. A billion dollar detergent industry proves we all like white clothes to be dazzling white.

Human beings have a preoccupation with the whiteness of white clothing. Ring around the collar sends us scampering to find better detergent and bleach. We shy away from wearing blazing white because it "shows the dirt" easily. There is only one way we will be happy with white clothing—it must be white! Absolutely and dazzling white. The more dazzling the better.

And that is the problem we have with white. Our whites always rub up against things less white that sully and spoil them.

Jesus cleans our lives

God likes white clothing. He dressed his Son in white clothes, and they were whiter than any bleach in this world could bleach them.



When Jesus came into our world to assume our sinfulness, he also assumed our ability to tarnish and taint the color white. He was wrapped in strips of cloth at his birth, but these were not in the dazzling white of the Mount of Transfiguration. The pathetic pile of clothing at the foot of the cross was not this blazing white either. He was buried in grave clothes. These were lying in disarray when the disciples came. They were visible in the dim light of the tomb, but they weren't blazing white. The Shroud of Turin, even if it should be authentic and is the very shroud that covered Jesus, is not known or seen today for its whiteness and brightness.

Jesus came into our world with a massive cleanup of dirty clothing in mind. He came with the bleach that is "out of this world." He came to make the filthy rags of our righteousness bright and clean. He came to wash us and our spiritual clothes and to give us spotless clothing so that we can stand in the seering light of God's judgment and be found faultless. When the elder in heaven asks his question of Revelation 7:13: "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" we know the answer. "These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

We yearn for the place where we don't get dirty any more. We look forward to that place where clean clothes are absolutely clean and stay clean through each long eternal day.

This is what the author of *Amazing Grace* had in mind: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun."

Without a doubt, that will be one of the joys and one of the surprises of that last day. We will be amazed at how white our clothing is and how good it finally feels to have the same kind of clothing Jesus wears.

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



NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

Official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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- ✦ He is risen! Nothing else gives Christians more joy, comfort, and hope. Our Easter articles explore different facets of our joy, but focus on the same thing—our Jesus is alive!
 - ✓ Jesus, not traditions, is our reason for true joy. (p. 6)
 - ✓ Jesus knows us—personally. (p. 29)
 - ✓ Journey from Good Friday to Easter, from sorrow to joy. (back cover)
- ✦ Fortune telling. The occult. Witchcraft. These evil forces are becoming more mainstream everyday. As Christians, we can't run away—we need to be witnesses to the truth. In a new series, "Exposing the darkness," Pastor John Parlow will teach us more about this evil and help us stand against it. (p. 12)
- ✦ This month you'll find an article on Pharisees—but don't expect a simple history lesson. Pharisees weren't only historical religious leaders; we all have a little Pharisee inside of us. Paul Kelm shines God's light into the pharisaical corners of our hearts. (p. 8)
- ✦ Wayne Mueller ends his series on prayer. We thank him, not for teaching us the mechanics of prayer, but for delving into our motivation and strength for prayer. (p. 16)
- ✦ He is risen, indeed! From all of us at NL, we wish you an Easter filled with joy because Jesus is alive and rules—now and forever.

—LRB

Cover photos by Gary Baumler and Paul Ehlke

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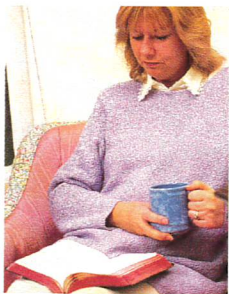
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Pharisees—then
and now
page 8



Darkness out
in the open
page 12



Praying in Jesus' name
brings answers
page 16

3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Whiter whites

Eric S. Hartzell

Jesus came into our world with a massive cleanup of dirty clothing in mind. He came with the bleach that is "out of this world."

6 EASTER

An Easter without joy? Impossible!

Peter H. Kruschel

Jesus is not limited to our time-honored Easter traditions. His resurrection transcends our best efforts to commemorate the occasion.

8 INSIGHTS

Pharisees—then and now

Paul E. Kelm

Has Pharisaism infested our church today?

10 FAITH IN ACTION: MALAWI

Building through faith

Joel R. Spaude

Faith cries out to be loving, doing, serving, helping, sympathizing, encouraging, praying, hoping, believing.

12 EXPOSING THE DARKNESS

Darkness out in the open

John M. Parlow

The once-hidden world of the occult is taking an overt place in society. As Christians, we need to shine the light on the darkness of this world.

14 MARRIAGE

Our marriage mechanic

James A. Aderman

Determining, "Who's to blame?," requires spouses to be on opposing teams. Husbands and wives become teammates when they ask, "What exactly is wrong, and how do we fix it?"

16 ASK IN JESUS' NAME

Praying in Jesus' name brings answers

Wayne D. Mueller

The power of prayer lies in God's Word, not in the many words we utter.

18 INSIGHTS

Lessons from a four-year-old

Stephen L. Merten

What began as a way to get out of going to sleep turned into an education for Molly and her parents.

19 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Inter-act

Randy K. Hunter

20 WELS NEWS

- Christmas—and more—for kids
- A boost for staff ministers
- Work in St. Lucia grows
- Forty years of praising with song
- Gathering and sharing the Word in many languages
- Opportunities in Indonesia

26 WORLD NEWS

- Poll: America ambivalent on abortion
- Number of Lutherans worldwide increases
- U.S. church aid workers expelled from Laos

28 BULLETIN BOARD

29 PERSON TO PERSON

Even calls me by my name

Karl R. Gurgel

As unbelievable as it may seem, our Jesus knows us all. Personally, by name.

30 BIBLE STUDY

Omission and obedience

Mark E. Braun

Our first and most durable defense against accusation is, "I didn't do anything wrong!" But maybe we didn't do anything right either.

31 EDITORIAL COMMENT

When love is seen as hate

Joel C. Gerlach

A serious problem arises for Christians when expressions of concern about moral aberrations become punishable as hate crimes.

32 YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE

Questions about Holy Week

John F. Brug

33 READERS FORUM

34 THE EDITOR'S PEN

Worlds apart

Gary P. Baumler

The Bible-blurring scholars offer us unbelief masquerading as scholarship, and their findings are, sadly, predictable.

36 EASTER

From gloom to glory

Robert F. Raasch

An Easter without joy? Impossible!

Jesus is not limited to our time-honored Easter traditions. His resurrection transcends our best efforts to commemorate the occasion.

Peter H. Kruschel

Although we try, we can't truly grasp the shock, pain, sorrow, and disappointment of the women when they heard the angel say, "I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here" (Matthew 28:5,6). Overwhelming despair must have rushed over them. This is not the way it was supposed to be!

But the angel was not finished: "He is not here; he has risen!" It may have taken some time for them to comprehend the truth and profound meaning of those words, but eventually Mary and the others believed and rejoiced in that incomprehensible message of grace and life.

Celebrating Jesus' resurrection

Easter is a profound experience for us too—and not because of the traditions or pomp that surround our celebration. You've heard it said that Easter is the most exceptional event

found in any of the world's religions because no other religion has a living Lord and Savior. For that reason the world outside Christianity does not know what to do with the resurrection. Easter doesn't have the worldly glitz and glitter that have grown up around Christmas.

That is not to say we don't have our own Christian traditions to go with Easter. We certainly do. In North America it is difficult to envision Easter without lilies gracing our altars and chancels. Can an Easter season pass without raising our hearts and voices to the inspiring hymn "I Know that My Redeemer Lives"? In some places Easter would not be the same without a sunrise service followed by breakfast served at church. In other places, Easter has come to mean outdoor services held in a park or on the church grounds.

Jesus isn't in our traditions

Is a joyous Easter celebration possible without these fine traditions? Of course it is. Well, we think it is. Maybe. Be honest. Haven't some of the "trappings" surrounding Easter celebrations come to be as fundamental as the hallmark of Christianity itself?

I remember an Easter in central Florida when we had unseasonably warm weather (even for Florida) the week leading up to Easter Sunday. No one thought much about it until we picked up the lilies on the Saturday before Easter. The heat caused the lilies to bloom too early and too quickly. Dozens of churches were left with plants that had the look and aroma of aging banana peels. It was disappointing. Easter would be different this year. But the risen Jesus was not in our Easter lilies.



A good friend, a pastor in one of our exploratory missions, told me about his group's first Easter service. He knew that many in his fledgling flock were new to Lutheranism, not to mention Christianity itself. So he kept the service simple. He chose only one hymn, "I Know that My Redeemer Lives," reasoning that this was about the easiest, most common Easter hymn there is. Imagine his surprise (and disappointment) when it became obvious during the singing of the hymn that only he and his family knew the song. The others had never sung this hymn before. Easter was different that year. But the resurrected Jesus was not limited to that hymn.

One Easter, our mission congregation decided to hold services outdoors. We had heard that a growing number of congregations across the southern tier of states had found this to be an effective way to reach their neighbors. It seems the unchurched are not as intimidated by the prospect of attending an outdoor service as they are with actually entering a church building.

Because we had ample space on our church property, we decided to hold the service there instead of at a park. Members worked feverishly

to get everything ready. The ground was smoothed, holes filled. We even laid outdoor carpeting in the aisles and the "foyer." We secured extra chairs and a sound system. On Saturday we had a run-through of the service. Nothing was left unchecked.

He has risen. That is the essence and heart of Easter.

Sunday dawned bright and beautiful. It was a perfect setting for the perfect service—but for one thing. We hadn't anticipated that a gusty wind would wreak havoc with the microphones. Each time the wind blew it sounded like a freight train was bearing down on us. That was disappointing. Sure, everything else went well, but that wind. . . .

Still, Jesus and his empty tomb weren't dependent on our microphone system.

Jesus is the heart of Easter

Jesus is not confined by our best laid plans for the celebration of Easter. He is not limited to our time-honored traditions. His resurrection transcends our best efforts to commemorate the occasion. That isn't to say he isn't pleased by our

efforts or that he doesn't guide our plans. He is just not limited by them. To quote the angel, "He is not here." He is in his Word, that wonderful, glorious Word that speaks life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins: "He has risen!"

He has risen. That is the essence and heart of Easter. No lilies? No breakfast? Less than perfect services? Don't be disappointed. Each of those may be a notable part of our Easter celebration, but they are not the heart of it. "He has risen." That is the heart. It always has been and always will be.

The women at the tomb were devastated by their fear and sorrow and disappointment because an empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning was not what they were looking for. Should we be disappointed if Easter is different this year than last? Should one Easter be less incredible, momentous, or amazing because someone is gone or something is missing? There is no greater joy this side of heaven than hearing the joy-filled message of the angels, "He is not here. He has risen!" And no one can ever take that away from us.

NL

Peter Kruschel is associate administrator of the synod's Board for Home Missions.



Pharisees—then and now

Has Pharisaism infested our church today?

Paul E. Kelm

Pharisee . . . you almost hiss the word, with lips curled into a sneer. The name has become a synonym for self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Jesus made Pharisee a dirty word. One chapter, Matthew 23, has become the Pharisees' legacy.

Before Jesus exposed the heart of Pharisaism, this sect was widely admired. We, too, might have admired the Pharisees. They came from middle-class laity primarily and applied their religion in everyday life. They were education-minded, with a genuine respect for Israel's history and tradition.

Unlike the Herodians and the Zealots, they practiced a separation of church and state. They differed from Jews who'd accommodated themselves to Roman rule and Greek culture.

A little Pharisee dwells in each of us.

In contrast with the Sadducees, they believed that the soul survived death and the body will be resurrected, that angels and demons are real, and that their God was the Lord of all—not just the Jews.

The Pharisees took religion seriously.

Still, the Pharisees demonstrate the premise that "religion" may be the greatest enemy of Christianity. Traditionalism, legalism, and separatism are the hallmarks of pharisaical "religion."

Traditionalism



For the Pharisees, oral tradition had equal status with Scripture. Hair-splitting logic and the arguments of revered rabbis eventually obscured the meaning of God's Word. "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions," Jesus charged the Pharisees (Mark 7:9). With Scripture-twisting reason, the Pharisees set aside the fourth commandment's care for parents and the sixth commandment's intent of life-long marriage. They made themselves the sole interpreters of Scripture with obscure applications. "Woe to you, blind guides!" Jesus thundered. "You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath'" (Matthew 23:16).

History suggests that traditionalism is an inherent weakness of "religion." Medieval scholasticism obscured the gospel in a maze of reason and ritual. Church fathers made tradition equal to Scripture and ecclesiastical authority necessary to interpret God's Word. Liturgical "smells and bells" together with the trappings of tradition shaped the people's religious life.

The Reformation corrected the errors but could not eradicate the

tendencies of traditionalism. "Dead orthodoxy" is the historical term in Lutheran circles for tightly reasoned dogmatism at the expense of spiritual life. Quoting favorite fathers of the synod to argue disputed doctrinal applications suggests the rabbinical mindset fostered by the Pharisees. Members who reduce the faith to baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial in the church testify to the danger of traditionalism. And whoever labeled "We've never done it that way before!" as the seven last words of the church understood the power of traditionalism.

Legalism



Legalism focuses on law rather than gospel, on how people live instead of how God forgives. It binds consciences with moral rulings and religious

sanctions beyond what God's Word requires. Legalism loses the spirit of the law—God's intent—in the hypercritical letter of the law. It seeks to control people with religious guilt and obligation rather than free people to serve God from the heart.

The Pharisees were legalists. Their 600-plus regulations governing the Sabbath distorted God's desire to give people rest in Jesus into nit-picky neuroses that destroyed spiritual rest. Listen to Jesus: "Woe to

you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23).

To be “in the world, but not of the world,” as the Savior has called us, means getting our hands dirty in mission while keeping our hearts pure in Jesus.

The Pharisees condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath and for associating with “sinners.” They accused him of blasphemy for forgiving sins. Of them Jesus said: “They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them” (Matthew 23:4).

The Pharisees could not recognize their Savior because legalism is inevitably self-righteous. Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector is introduced by Luke this way: “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else . . .” (Luke 18:9).

Legalism is the natural inclination of “religion” because self-righteousness is the inherent conviction of human nature. A little Pharisee dwells in each of us. We’d like a case book of religious laws that is black and white. Life was easier when dancing and gambling and alcohol were just wrong, period, especially if those weren’t our weaknesses. We feel better about

ourselves and our church when comparison makes us look good. “God, I thank you that I am not like other men . . .” is, after all, the Pharisee’s prayer.

We believe in gospel motivation, whatever that means; but when you need to meet the budget or fill an office, appeals to loyalty, duty, and pride in your church are effective. Even when we know we are saved by grace alone, we are inclined to think that being good people should get us ahead with God—here and now at least. As our culture becomes less godly and less moral, the church faces subtle pressure to become more legalistic. That is a lesson we’d better learn from the Pharisees.

Separatism



their hands dirty in the practice of their faith. Their exclusivism barred the doors of repentance to the fallen and the “uncircumcised.” Not only did they reject Christ, they bitterly tried to keep Gentiles from learning about him.

Christian sanctification means to separate from evil and error. In today’s climate of tolerance for every religious system and moral lifestyle, God’s call to separate is especially critical. The pharisaical temptation, however, is to isolate ourselves from the very people to whom God has sent us with his law and gospel, to create a church only for the pure and the well-bred. In

The name “Pharisees” means literally “the separated ones.” First century Pharisees carefully distanced themselves from anything unclean. They literally did not want to get

our zeal to preserve truth, we may isolate ourselves from Christians whose error needs our confessional testimony. In our insistence on moral absolutes, we may turn our back on people who are grieving over an abortion or struggling with homosexuality.

To be “in the world, but not of the world,” as the Savior has called us, means getting our hands dirty in mission while keeping our hearts pure in Jesus. It would be easier, I suppose, to be an exclusive church, for “good people” and “our kind of people.” It would be easier if our schools were free of the disciplinary problems caused by “other” kids, if the pastor’s time weren’t drained away into counseling the weak, if “new” people didn’t raise “different” ideas. It would also be deadly. It would be the church of the Pharisees.

Jesus warned his disciples: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). The traditionalism, legalism, and separatism of pharisaical thinking spread, like yeast, through hearts and churches. And it is hypocrisy, a shell of religion empty of the love of God in Jesus Christ. “Whitewashed tombs” Jesus calls Pharisees of any generation.

NL

Paul Kelm is a parish consultant for WELS Parish Assistance.

Building through faith

Faith cries out to be loving, doing, serving, helping, sympathizing, encouraging, praying, hoping, believing.

Joel R. Spaude

“What are we going to do?” Mr. Mwanancho asked the group assembled in front of him. “How will we worship? The rains will soon be here.” Mwanancho, chairman of Chiyembekezo Lutheran Church, was worried because this congregation was worshipping under a mango tree. When the rains came in full force they would not be able to continue worshipping their Lord.

Faith builds church buildings for the rainy season.

Chiyembekezo started in 1994 as a small group of people meeting at a member's house.

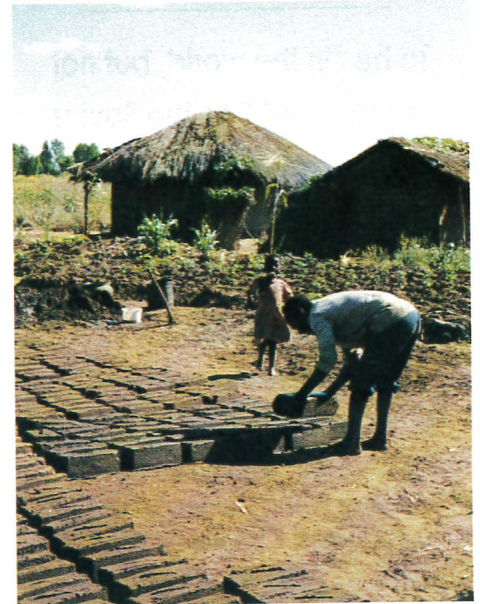
The mango trees outside the house provided necessary shelter from the sun so the small number could gather each week. Soon the small group grew to many under the leadership of Pastor Deverson Ntambo and lay-leader Mwanancho. When over 30 people were regularly gathering, the congregation began to think about the rainy season that would start in a matter of months.

Malawi's rainy season usually starts in December and lasts through April. Little rain falls during the rest of the year. That shortfall is more than made up for when the rains come. Up to four feet of rain will fall during those five months. Often it rains for a week or more at a time with little let up.

This small congregation knew they had to have some type of building so they could continue to worship their newfound Lord during the rains. An elaborate cement block and roofing sheet building was out of the question at this time. The congregation did not have enough money to pay the down payment needed for these materials. (WELS subsidizes the buildings that the Lutheran Church in Malawi and Zambia construct. Generally, WELS contributes the majority of the cost, and the congregation pays a small down payment to receive the grant.)

Most villagers in Malawi live in mud brick huts with grass thatch roofs. They use mud for mortar and poles for rafters. This type of construction is cool in the hot season and sheds water well from its sloped roof. The congregation knew they had the means and the materials to build this church. The materials were free for the taking from the forests and fields right in their backyard. The means was the labor, of which there were many hands.

But, most important, they had the motivation. That came from their hearts, overflowing with response to the gospel message living in them. Even in the early beginnings of their faith they realized that they were “to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). The faith the Holy Spirit created in their hearts spurred them into action.



Members made these mud bricks, poured them into wooden molds, and then laid them out in the sun to dry. Members then used the bricks to construct the church walls of Chiyembekezo Lutheran Church, Malawi.

The task before them was not easy. The mud bricks needed to be molded. This required digging large quantities of mud. Water was not piped into the village, so it wasn't readily available. It had to be carried in. This job fell to the women of the congregation, who carried large containers of water on their heads to the building site. After mixing the water and mud, they poured this mixture into wooden molds and set the molded bricks in the sun to dry.

The dry bricks were used to construct the church walls, with mud as the mortar. Wooden 2x4s became the door and window frames. Poles found in the forests were trimmed into rafters. Then

grass was tied to the rafters to form an adequate roof. Flowers and shrubs planted in front of the building finished it off.

Our every activity and thought becomes an offering whose sweet-smelling aroma lifts up to God.

I suppose that money could have been found and a contractor hired to build an expensive building of concrete and roofing sheets. But then the members of Chiyembekezo would have been robbed of an opportunity to worship their Lord. In building their church themselves, they were able to offer their bodies in service to God. This was their spiritual worship of him.

We who are reconciled to Christ offer sacrifices to him every day. Like our brothers and sisters in Malawi, we in America have opportunities each day to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. When we have family devotions, live in peace with our neighbors, work to make a marriage last, or display patience and kindness, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to the Lord.

Our every activity and thought becomes an offering whose sweet-smelling aroma lifts up to God.

Faith not only encourages but demands such sacrifices in our lives. "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey," Paul reminded the Christians in Rome (Romans 2:13). Faith cannot be faith unless it is in action. Faith cries out to be loving, doing, serving, helping, sympathizing, encouraging, praying, hoping, believing. Faith builds church buildings for the rainy season.

Chiyembekezo members now joyfully worship their Lord in their new church building. One day they hope to raise enough money to secure the down payment to build a new and larger church. And when they do so that will be yet another sacrifice they offer to their Lord.

NL

Joel Spaude is a missionary in Malawi.



Members in front of Chiyembekezo Lutheran Church. Their faith caused them to construct this building so they would have a place to worship during Malawi's rainy season.

Malawi facts

Size of Malawi:

118,480 sq km, slightly larger than Pennsylvania

Climate: tropical

Population:

9,452,844

Birth rate:

41.56 births per 1,000 population

Death rate:

24.48 deaths per 1,000 population

Infant mortality rate:

139.9 deaths per 1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth:

36.16 years

Religions: Protestant

55 percent, Roman Catholic 20 percent, Muslim 20 percent, plus traditional indigenous beliefs

Languages: English

(official), Chichewa (official), 15 languages are spoken.

Statistics, estimated as of July 1996, are supplied by the World Factbook webpage, maintained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency <www.odci.gov/cia/publications/nsolo/factbook/mi.htm>.

Darkness out in the open

The once-hidden world of the occult is taking an overt place in society. As Christians, we need to shine the light on the darkness of this world.

John M. Parlow

Take a casual walk through the aisles of your local video store. Peruse the TV guide. Check out MTV's top 10 music videos. Occult themes abound. Fascination with the macabre. Friendly ghosts. Supernatural fixation. Channelers. Curiosity about those "secret" things. 1-900 psychics.

The apostle John warned us: "After that, [Satan] must be set free for a short time" (Revelation 20:3). His inspired words remind us that toward the end of the New Testament age the devil will be unfettered for a "short time."

When we look at the overwhelming modern surge of interest in occult phenomena and the widespread and multiplied incidence of occult practices, we may justifiably conclude that we are living in the short time of which the apostle wrote.

Although interest in such "hidden things" and dark practices is nothing new, it is significant that these things were usually done in secret. Not so today. The covert has become overt. Scientific research in the field of parapsychology is now advancing in many scientific laboratories in American academia. Hollywood and prime time television has learned that in many instances the occult is big business and, in some cases, in vogue.

With the alarming rate at which people are becoming involved in the occult, the inevitable question

comes up: Why do people in this enlightened, computer-chip age become involved in occultic practices?

The secularization of the gospel

As you know, "speaking the truth in love" is becoming more difficult not only because we live in a society that occasionally changes the definition of "truth," but because it is also filled with people whose moral mantra is "Whatever!"

**Playing with the occult is
like juggling hand grenades;
you are going to get hurt.**

This secularization of the gospel has not only drowned many individuals but also saturated many churches. Leaders in many Christian denominations have denied cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. This leaves a greater spiritual vacuum that invites people who have spiritual needs to go elsewhere to have them satisfied. Moreover, some of these church leaders who have forsaken the gospel have become practitioners of the occult, causing a follow-the-leader mentality in many former churchgoers.

Episcopal bishop James Pike, who rejected the church's belief in the deity of Christ, his virgin birth, and other central truths, is the classic example. After the suicide death

of his son, Pike began consulting mediums, including the famous Arthur Ford, in an attempt to contact the spirit of his dead son. Pike became a firm believer in life after death from his occultic involvement rather than from biblical doctrine and took many people with him into the dark world of the occult. When the Christian church waters down the gospel of Christ, the door to occultic practice swings wide open.

Curiosity

Let's face it, there is a certain mystery about the occult that appeals to our curiosity. Many who get involved in the occult start out with so-called "harmless" practices such as reading horoscopes or using a Ouija board. They proceed into deeper involvement because of an increasing curiosity. Lynn Buzzard comments on this fascination:

Our age seems to have a deep fascination with evil, the bizarre, and the inexplicable. It thrives on horror and repulsion. What makes one faint or vomit or experience nightmares has a kind of magnetic charm. . . . What was buried has arisen and dances unashamedly in the streets (Introduction to *Demon Possession*, pp. 17,18).

Unfortunately, there is a price to pay for this curiosity about the occult. Playing with the occult is like juggling hand grenades; you are going to get hurt. One cannot just pick up the dark bolts of magi-



cal fire and drop them at will without getting burned. The occult is not something neutral that an individual can get in and out of without any adverse effects.

Ultimate reality

A level of reality in the occultic experience attracts many people to it. We all desire the ultimate answers for life's basic questions, and the world of the occult gladly supplies answers. The Ouija board promises you direction. The astrologist will chart your future. The 1-900 psychic will set you up with Mr. Wonderful for \$3.95 per minute. The New Age medium will talk to the spirit of your dead relative.

Since these occultic practices do reveal some amazing things, the spiritual wonderer is lulled into thinking that he has experienced ultimate reality and no longer needs to continue his search for truth. The spiritual vacuum is filled by means of

a spiritual experience, not with God, but often from the very pit of hell.

A sign of the times

There are many indications that we are living during the "short time" mentioned in Revelation 20, with the return of Jesus Christ on the horizon. If this is the case, then we should expect to see an increase in demonic activity as Christ's coming nears. The Bible says: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). Jesus said that at the end of the age "false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible" (Mark 13:22). Don't be surprised at what you see; our Lord warned us.

The apostle Paul, writing to Christians living in an occult-riddled society, wrote, "Have nothing to do

You've seen occult games. You've walked past fortune tellers at county fairs. You've gone to movies about ghosts. What should Christians know about them?

In upcoming articles of Exposing the darkness, we'll cover the following topics:

- Fortune telling
- Ghosts
- Ouija board/occult games
- Satanism
- Witchcraft

with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11). Today as Christians living in a similar society, it is imperative that we stand alert and shine the light of truth for people wandering in the darkness of fruitless orchards.

NL

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

Our marriage mechanic

Determining, "Who's to blame?," requires spouses to be on opposing teams. Husbands and wives become teammates when they ask, "What exactly is wrong, and how do we fix it?"

James A. Aderman

"You're late. We started supper without you."

Ice-sickled words. I heard them many times during my quarter century of marriage. I always had just one more task to finish in the office, one more phone call to make, one more minute to spend with a member.

But this time I was saying the words . . . to my wife. Her job as office manager has brought her home past normal supper time with increasing frequency. Delicious, if not comic, irony. And conflict.

No one desires conflict, especially in marriage. But occasional contention is a normal part of every relationship. Sinful humans living in a sin-broken world can't avoid it.

But there's an upside to conflict. Like a kachunk-kachunk sound from under your car, marital discord is the symptom that something is wrong, that something needs to be fixed or the problem will act worse. Even better, marriage problems drive us to the Prince of Peace for repair. Conflict leads us to ask these questions.

• **Is my love Christ-like?** One of the reasons relationships fray is that we fail to "live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:1,2). When we take our eyes off the Savior's sacrificial grace, it's impossible to love like him, to love with an unconditional commitment for the imperfect people in our lives.

Conflict usually dissipates when we recognize how Jesus' love compels us to be patient and understanding, and to view other's actions in



the best light. Strife in marriage calls each spouse first to examine his or her own relationship with Jesus, then their relationship with each other.

• **Do I neglect or avoid dealing with the issues?** Cars will not run long or well without attention to those funny noises they sometimes make. The scraping sounds of a clashing relationship must also be addressed. Avoid confronting a spouse's sin and it will happen again, probably worse. Neglect repenting of sins against your spouse, and trust and love will erode.

Couples must find a caring way to talk about conflict potholes in their marriage. Certainly, "do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths" (Ephesians 4:29), but do talk.

• **Do I listen or react?** Words icy enough to match a cold supper should have signaled me to listen until I understood my wife's complaint. If I had, I would have discovered that the real issue was not that she was disappointed because I was too late to enjoy a meal with my family. Instead, she was disappointed because my lateness showed a lack of respect for her and my daughters.

But I tended to react rather than listen. I grumbled under my breath or dismissed her complaint as inconsequential or ignored her frustration. I missed any hope of addressing her basic concerns.

The clatter of conflict means it's time to listen closely—to ask sincere, probing questions and put what we're hearing in our own words—so we learn which gears aren't meshing: "Be quick to listen, slow to speak . . ." (James 1:19).

• **Do I seek a remedy or merely to defend myself?** When conflict is discussed, the goal is a solution, not self-justification. I did nothing to remedy the situation when, coming home to a half-eaten supper, I excused my tardiness with tales of ministerial necessities.

Determining, "Who's to blame?," requires spouses to be on opposing teams. Husbands and wives become teammates when they ask, "What exactly is wrong, and how do we fix it?"

Marriage problems drive us to the Prince of Peace for repair.

Brainstorming a remedy often works. That means recording as many ideas as possible—any idea is acceptable no matter how outrageous—in a short time span. Then evaluate the list for a workable solution.

• **Do the same issues keep resurfacing?** A car's suspension system is built to handle occasional potholes. When it's fed a steady diet of potholes, however, shock absorbers, tires, and tie rods quickly fail. Relationships can also weather occasional rough roads, but when we constantly revisit that same stretch of corduroy those relationships are fast to fatigue.

The kachunk of conflict urges us to ask, "How often have we been down this road? For everything we've tried, are we still in the same place?" If so, it's time to call in a Christian friend, your pastor, perhaps even a Christian therapist. A caring and wise counselor will often see the formerly invisible and vastly

better routes God has in mind. Don't allow pride to stop you from using these special gifts from your Father.

Conflict is a blessing, but only when the Prince of Peace serves as our mechanic.

NL

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Want to STRENGTHEN your marriage?

These books are available through Northwestern Publishing House. Call 1-800-662-6022 (Milwaukee area, 414/475-6600). Include item number when ordering.

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(LU12-2988)

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Husbands Knew About Women*
(LU12-2228)

*Deepening Love for Marital
Happiness* (LU12N1755)

Praying in Jesus' name brings answers

The power of prayer lies in God's Word, not in the many words we utter.

Wayne D. Mueller

Zach sat at the kitchen table, his head in his hands. Grandpa had promised him a birthday present, but the day was almost over, and no gift had arrived.

"I think Grandpa forgot my birthday," Zach said. "Or, he forgot he promised to send me a present. Or, maybe, he was too busy to bring it over."

Then mom asked Zach to recall what Grandpa told him. Zach could remember only that Grandpa had promised a present that would be delivered on his birthday. But mom asked him to think harder: "How did Grandpa say he would deliver the present?"

Zach's eyes lit up. He grabbed his jacket, flew out of the back door, and headed for the mailbox. There it was! A big package with his name on it and Grandpa's return address.

Finding God's answers

Have you ever buried your head in your hands, wondering if and when God would deliver his answer to your prayer? Like Zach, the impatient suppliant needs the gentle reminder of how and where God delivers his gifts.

The invitation to pray in Jesus' name gently reminds us how God answers prayers. Jesus' name is his reputation. To pray in his name, we must learn and relearn our Savior's reputation. Only one source teaches what Jesus' reputation is. That's the

Bible. In prayer we speak to God. In the Bible God speaks to us. To pray without reading and studying the Bible is a one-sided conversation.

My grandpa told me that for good reason God gave us two ears but only one mouth. Our sinful tendencies in balancing our prayer life with Bible study make that obvious. I would rather talk than listen. That weakness often leads me to think my prayers are unanswered. When I don't read Scripture, I don't hear God's answers. When I do all the talking, I don't give God a chance to reply.

**To pray without reading
and studying the Bible is a
one-sided conversation.**

Those who pray in Jesus' name know the power of prayer. The real power lies in God's Word, not in the many words we utter. "When you pray," Jesus said, "do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words" (Matthew 6:7).

The one who trusts God's Word, Luther explains, "knows that God is listening to him; he has no need of such everlasting twaddle. That is how the saints prayed in the Scriptures, like Elijah, Elisha, David, and others—with brief but

strong and powerful words" (*What Luther Says, II*, p. 1,085). Luther added, "If you use [prayer] and practice it and thus ponder the Word of his promise, your heart keeps getting stronger and firmer in its confidence, and finally gets much more than it would have otherwise" (*Luther and Prayer*, Martin E. Lehman, p. 117).

When close attention to God's Word goes hand in hand with prayer, conversation with God becomes true communication. It flows both ways. By keeping our prayers to the point and meditating more on what our divine friend is saying, we acknowledge the greater wisdom of his words. In the Bible's longest prayer, Psalm 119, all 176 of the poet's sentences praise the value of God's words.

Understanding God's answers

Scripture answers directly our most important prayers. Jesus taught us to pray for spiritual things first: "Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done" (Matthew 6:9,10). These are petitions for conversion, faith, and the working of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual requests like these are answered by the Scriptures. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). If I pray for stronger faith, but neglect the Word, which God

uses to nurture my faith, I am not praying in Jesus' name. If I ask God to bring a friend to faith but do not share the Word with that friend, I am giving my words more power than God's.

Some prayers the Bible answers indirectly. For instance, the Bible explains why God may delay his response to our prayers. "You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:11). Jesus told the parable of the pleading widow to teach his disciples "that they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1-8).

Like Zach's mother, Bible study reminds us that God may have already sent his gift in answer to our prayers. But his answer isn't always what we asked for or where we were looking for it. God may make us better stewards instead of giving us more money. He may give us godly patience instead of quick relief. He may heal our souls when we ask him to heal our bodies. The Lord may give our dying mother eternal life instead of longer life on earth. Bible study can convince us that terrible suffering comes for our good under a loving heavenly Father. Bible study may even convince us that God wants us to listen more instead of talk more.

Trusting God's answers

Only by his Word can the Lord convince us that he has already



answered prayers we thought went unheard. But the Good Shepherd does more than that. Jesus shows us that the answers we received were better than the things we asked for.

Beyond that, the powerful Word leads us to do the impossible. God's promises prompt us to praise him for things unbelievers can only curse him for. At the death of his children, Job responded in faith, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). Paul speaks of Christians facing their troubles: "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3,4).

Some people fear delving into the Word. They think God will only ask them to bear more suffering or tell

them they are praying for the wrong things. The opposite is true. The more we listen to him, the more God encourages us to talk to him. The Bible invites us to pray more boldly. Jesus told his disciples, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:24).

Only the reputation we gain of Jesus from reading the Bible— Jesus' name— can give us the confidence to ask so much so boldly. Our Bible is the mailbox that delivers God's gifts. Not only do we find his answers there, but the courage of faith to ask for more.

NL

Wayne Mueller is the administrator of the synod's Board for Parish Services.

In this series on prayer, Wayne Mueller reminds us that Bible study is a key aspect of a strong life. Don't forget to check out the Bible studies on pages 19 and 30, and hear what God has to say to us today.

Lessons from a four-year-old

What began as a way to get out of going to sleep turned into an education for Molly and her parents.

Stephen L. Merten

At four years of age, not only have many children mastered language, they've also mastered the art of "Bedtime Delay" (BTD). Our second child was a master at BTD.

Molly's second wind always seemed to come just as her parents' hands would creep toward that ominous light switch. We stood pretty firm on following a lights-out schedule, which made her more imaginative in BTD tactics. Like a river looking for the soft spot in the dike, her energies would turn toward a stream of questions.

The questions started with small talk: "What time is it? What's happening tomorrow? What time is it now?" Our favorite was: "Why do we always have heads?" But these BTD tactics never had the desired effect for her.

What finally got our attention and proved to be an effective BTD was theology. She began with that heaven place she had been told about. "Will I be able to bring my toys? Will my bed be in heaven? Will we be able to fly? Will there be holes in the wings we fly with so we can put them on like sleeves?" We didn't want to give her pat answers or false information. We really had to start separating some notions and ideas we had about heaven from what was actually taught in the Bible. That's when the theological education of her parents began.

She really took us to school though, when her questions turned to the topic of death. Then she became profound. She explained that for her the idea of being dead wasn't so bad. You got to be in heaven. But the part she didn't like was when you had to take your body off.

Molly said it. Is it all right for Christians to fear death? The "being dead" part shouldn't trouble Christians. But the dying part—the time when "you have to take your body off"—will be far from easy.

Man was never created for death.

A few years later, she took us to school again at her great-

grandmother's funeral. When we talked about this death, we knew it was right and best. The Lord had prepared us for it as he gently took her over the course of several months. And yet when we said goodbye to the body, it was Molly's tears that started our own.

The next day a well-meaning friend shared with us a funeral he remembered because he didn't see a tear being shed in the entire congregation. He thought this was a fine way of celebrating the triumph Christ won over death.

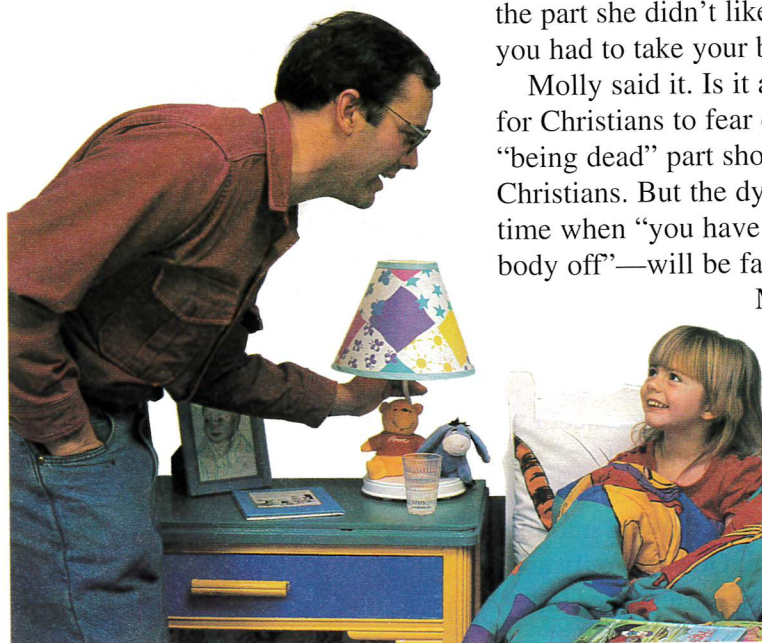
Yet how unlike Christ's own reaction to the death of his good friend Lazarus when he stood at the graveside. The shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept," shows the empathy he felt as Lazarus' surviving friends grieved over the death of their brother.

It's all right to cry at funerals. Though death holds no fear for us, we know that the dying part is tough. This "taking off our bodies" will be a scary process, one in which we will want our Savior right by our side holding our hand.

Our daughter had come up with the ultimate BTD strategy that actually caused delays for up to 10 minutes. But what a blessing in the lessons we've learned.

Stephen Merten is a teacher at West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minnesota.

NL



INTER-ACT

Randy K. Hunter

"The word of God is living and active." Hebrews 4:12

Introduction

Imagine what life would be like if Christians had to carry a cross with them all day, everywhere they went! What kind of cross would you carry? Would you be more likely to . . .

- stuff a small cross-token in your pocket?
- wear an ornate cross necklace?
- lug around a full size replica of Calvary's cross? How would your choice affect your life?

When Samuel was head-hunting for a new king, the Lord taught him, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." It won't always be easy to determine who is following Jesus and who isn't. It's not simply a matter of how we act. It's a matter of the heart. Faith beats in the heart. Still, faith shows in our actions.

Text

Read Mark 8:34

³⁴If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Application

The cross is obvious when we suffer mistreatment or even persecution for the sake of our faith. The cross we carry may also be hardship, illness, limitation, or some unpleasant aspect of the way God has arranged our life. What cross are you carrying as you follow Jesus?

It's dangerous business to choose our own crosses. We may choose wrong! How can we know which cross the Lord wants us to carry? Evaluate these answers.

- The Lord wants me to carry this cross because I feel I should.
- The Lord wants me to carry this cross because nobody else is doing it.
- The Lord wants me to carry this cross because in the Bible, he says . . .

It was the Father's will for Jesus to carry his cross. It is the Father's will for us to carry our cross. What's the difference? His cross saves. My cross thanks.

Questions

1. Jesus summarized all of God's law with two commands: "Love the Lord your God . . ." and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). What has your love for the Lord your God led you to deny? What has your love for your neighbor led you to deny?
2. How is every sin a refusal to "deny yourself"?
3. Before he was betrayed and crucified, Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). What did it mean for Jesus, from birth to death, to deny himself?
4. When we stand before Jesus on the last day, only his cross will matter. We can't improve on what he did on his cross. Paul reported, "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). By faith in Jesus, we become the righteousness of God. That's perfect. It doesn't get better than that, and neither do we! What can taking up our cross never do for us? So why does Jesus require his followers to carry a cross?
5. What did it mean for each of these people to "take up his [or her] cross and follow" the Lord?
 - Moses?
 - Noah?
 - David?
 - Peter?
 - Mary?
 - Paul?
 - Martin Luther?

Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, you heard your Son pray, "Not my will, but your will be done." Now hear my prayer. If you plan for me days of ease and times of peace, give me the grace to spend my life thanking you. If your plan for me is to carry crosses, give me the strength to carry them. Convince me of the lightness of my cross because of the weight of Jesus' cross. In his righteousness, I pray. Amen.

In the news

The Commission on Parish Schools named three WELS high schools "schools of excellence" because of outstanding achievement in the ministry to young people.

California Lutheran High School, Wildomar; Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco; and Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, received \$2,500 grants to fund instructional programs, teaching materials, and faculty recognition. The schools are among 21 WELS area high schools in the United States.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, received \$25,700 in grants. The seminary will use the funds for student assistance, faculty development, and continuing education opportunities. All grants were awarded by Aid Association for Lutherans.

SYMBOLS *for your life*



Symbol: Lily

Background and meaning:

Though the lily bulb is buried in the ground and eventually decays, out of it comes new life rising out of the soil and blooming

beautifully. So we as Christians believe that out of death we will rise again in glory. Also, since the lily often blooms at that time of the year, it reminds us of Christ's resurrection at Easter.

Bible gems:

Romans 1:4 "Who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God."

Romans 4:25 "He was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification."

John 11:25 "Jesus said to her, '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.'"

A symbol for your life:

Of what three things does Christ's resurrection assure you? What if Christ hadn't risen from the dead?

Christmas—and more—for kids

Even though it's Easter, the Christmas spirit lives on at Abiding Faith.

For the past five years, this Fort Worth, Tex., congregation has held a "Christmas for Kids" program for the children of members and for children in the community.

"This year we had some special visitors," says Pastor Bill Werth.

Special is almost an understatement.

Before the program took place, a woman who received a "Christmas for Kids" flyer called and asked if children from Bosnia could attend. Of course, Werth said yes.

So Bené Turner, who teaches English to them, invited 15 Bosnian children. Four Bosnian parents also attended, and so did Turner—who is Jewish. Most of the children had been in the United States for a few weeks. One family came the day before.

The Saturday following the program, the congregation gathered clothes and toys and took them to the families. Yet, that wasn't the best thing about meeting the families.

"Most important," says Werth, "we were able to tell these children about Jesus. They did not know much English, but now they know the word 'Jesus!'"

And now, what started out as a Christmas outreach program continues as longer-term spiritual care.

"We've followed up by continuing to give them clothes. We're in the process of following up spiritually," says

Werth. "We want to work with their apartment complex supervisor and see if we can meet with them in the same room they are being taught English."

What started out as one great day has turned into one great opportunity.



Members of Abiding Faith, Fort Worth, Tex., hand out clothes to children from Bosnia. The children first met the members at a "Christmas for Kids" program at Abiding Faith. The church continues to follow up on the children and their families.

A boost for staff ministers

Sometimes a suggestion of a different way to do things or just a word of encouragement reenergizes your work.

Thirty staff ministers received—and gave—this encouragement in the first WELS staff ministers' conference, held at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, in February.

"This was the first time many of us met face to face," said Michael Pfiefer, staff minister at St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis. "It gave us the opportunity to hear what others are doing, to share resources, and to learn different ways to reinvent the wheel."

Besides sharing ideas with those in similar situations, participants were able to see the many ways staff ministers serve in parish congregations and in parasynodical organizations.

Over 40 full-time staff ministers serve in areas such as family ministry, youth ministry, evangelism and assimilation, adult spiritual growth, counseling, prison ministry, church administration, and planned giving.

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., began its staff ministry program in 1993. Now 20 full-time students are in this five-year program. MLC also

provides distance learning for those already in staff ministry who are seeking certification and for non-traditional students looking for a career change. According to Lawrence Olson, director of the staff ministry program, it is anticipated that there will be eight to 10 requests for this year's four staff-ministry graduates.

The second staff ministers' conference will be in Arizona next year.

Want to learn more? Contact Lawrence Olson at MLC, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 507/354-8221; <olsonlo@mlc-wels.edu>.

Opportunities in Indonesia

It's the weekend, and WELS teachers are busy preparing lesson plans for the upcoming week. Stephanie Hopf, Kathryn Uhlhorn, and Cheri Wehausen are no exception.

Except they're preparing lessons to teach children at a national school in Indonesia.

Hopf, Uhlhorn, and Wehausen began teaching at the Sekolah Pelita Harapan (SPH) in Karawaci, Indonesia in fall 1997. SPH, a private national English-language school system, has three schools in the Jakarta area. Its mission is to provide a high-quality Christian and academic education.

WELS teachers first became involved in 1996 when Darrell Van Luchene, assistant deputy director of SPH and a member of our mission in Indonesia, told Missionary Pieter Ried that the school system was looking for Christian teachers. After investigation and discussions with leaders at SPH, members of our Indonesian mission, and WELS officials, the WELS Conference of Presidents favorably reviewed the participation of WELS teachers at the schools in individual and independent activities.

"Dan Schmeling [administrator

for the Commission on Parish schools] told me there might be an opportunity for me to teach at SPH and asked if I was interested," said Wehausen. "I was very excited about using my teaching skills to help bring the gospel to the Indonesian people."



(from left) Kathryn Uhlhorn, Cherie Wehausen, and Stephanie Hopf with children from their school in Indonesia. They teach children basic school subjects—but more important, they share the gospel message.

The teachers resigned from their calls for this two-year opportunity to teach English to students of various ages and team-teach other classes with national teachers. Since the school system expects its teachers to express their Christian faith, they are able to witness to the children, half of whom are Muslim, half Christian, as well as to the other teachers.

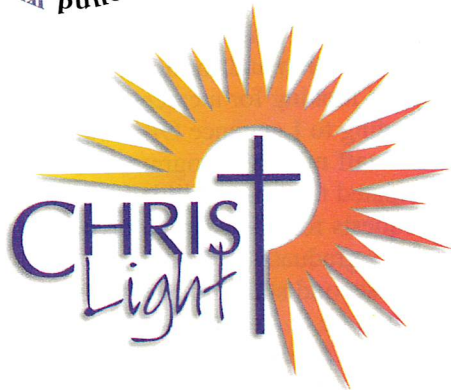
Sometimes, though, dealing with differences in religion is difficult.

"I see people who are strong Christians, some new Christians, and some who are wavering," said Uhlhorn. "The best way I can reach them is to let my light shine."

And their lights do shine. Other expatriate teachers have asked Hopf, Uhlhorn, and Wehausen what their church teaches and have attended services at our mission in Jakarta and weekly Bible studies Reid conducts for the teachers.

Besides attending church and Bible study, the women stay involved at the Indonesia mission by accompanying services, singing in a "small but exciting choir," and helping national pastors with their English.

But they all agree that their greatest joy is sharing the gospel with the children. Says Hopf: "It's a thrill to hear comments like this 'non-Christian' student made. We were talking about our heroes. He, with every assurance in the world, said that his hero was Jesus because he died for his sins. Watching that seed of faith grow is a life changing experience, and I daily thank God for it."



Christ-Light® FAQ

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

Why is production taking so long?

A quality publication like this is a huge undertaking for WELS. The volume and complexity of *Christ-*

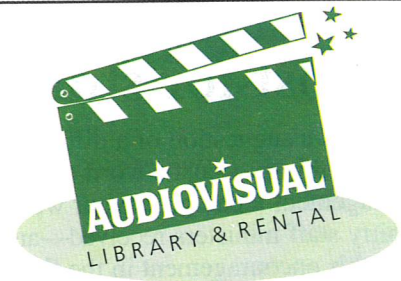
Light has required several years of development. The publication "pipeline" is currently full. It is, however, moving. NPH is committed to completing everything in a timely manner, but not at the expense of quality and doctrinal integrity.

Will hymnology be a part of the curriculum?

A core of "memory treasures" will be taught and applied in every lesson to both Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school children. Though the core number of hymns and passages taught is more than adequate, some congregations may want to add hymns and passages to their course of study.

Can we see an itemized list of each resource?

This information is available at the *Christ-Light* Introduction Program (CLIP), offered in each district. Otherwise, interested individuals can contact Project Director Gerald Kastens at 414/256-3224 for assistance.



WELS Ministerial Schools, (Code 5190), 1997, 15 min., color, JSCA

WELS trains future pastors and teachers at one seminary, one college, and two prep schools. This video shows us our ministerial education system.

The Bridge, (Code 8352), 1997, 11 min., color, SCA

A father must sacrifice his son to save passengers on a speeding train. The story attempts to illustrate God's sacrifice in sending his Son to die for our sins. This video should not be shown without a prepared discussion of the points of comparison.

These videos are available for rental for \$7.50 by congregations, schools, and church groups. Subscribers to the library may order them for the cost of return postage from Audiovisual Library Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

Forty years of praising with song

Members have come and gone. Directors have changed. Rehearsals have been held in various places. The Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee has changed much during its 40 years of existence.

But the important thing hasn't changed.

"We sing quality Christian music that's not only well-composed, but has solid biblical texts," said Mary Prange, director.

The Lutheran Chorale has sung over 200 full-length concerts in the past 40 years.

Prange equates the group's longevity in part to the Christian bond between its members. This bond can be seen not only in choir performances but also in the close friendships between choir members, some



of whom have been in the group since it started. Over 20 marriages have occurred between choir members.

The late Pastor Kurt Eggert directed the choir for 35 years before Prange took over. She considers directing the choir a highlight in her life because it "combines your love of

music with God's Word," a sentiment Lutheran Chorale members share.

See page 28 for a list of Chorale's concert schedule. A CD of the concert will be available from Northwestern Publishing House this summer.

Gathering and sharing the Word in many languages

Have you ever wanted to share the promise but couldn't find the words? It can be especially difficult in another language.

A collection of biblical materials in over 35 languages—the World Mission Collection—is making it easier.

Its website <www.wels.net/wmc> offers an on-line catalog of over 1,000 items, audio clips in 14 languages, items to download, and suggestions from missionaries on where to begin cross-cultural work.

The collection is one of the projects of the Multi-Language Literature Committee. Pastor Harold Essmann, project coordinator, states, "From overseas to our own shores, we hope that this will save effort and provide

access to materials beneficial to any mission field."

The committee shares resources, making it easier for people to cross language barriers. They save money and energy by translating items into many languages. Two such booklets are "The Promise" and "What the Bible and Lutherans Teach."

Written first for Bulgaria, 49,000 copies of "The Promise" were later printed in four other languages. The 16-page brochure leads readers through the basic biblical message from the fall into sin to the open doors of heaven. Over 100,000 copies in 12 new languages—including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Norwegian, and Finnish—will soon

be completed. Four Southeast Asian languages are next.

Another popular booklet, "What the Bible and Lutherans Teach," lists Bible passages with short summary statements on 30 topics. Over 30,000 copies are printed in five languages.

What's next? The committee wants to publish a catalog in 1998 to distribute several hundred items from WELS mission fields in over 25 languages.

For more information or to order materials, contact Kenneth Fisher, 6633 W Wartburg Cir, Mequon WI 53092; 414/256-8819; FAX, 414/257-8818; <wmc@wls.wels.net>

Kenneth Fisher

World Mission Collection helps world missions too

Missionary Jim Sherod from Japan writes about how the World Mission Collection helped him—and the Portuguese family he's ministering to.

It was Sunday night, and the heavily accented voice on the phone sounded hesitant: "Do you have any services in English?"

"We worship every Saturday night in English at 7:30 PM," I replied as I thought to myself, "Of course, we just started formal worship in English last Saturday, and only my family attends."

The second question came as more of a surprise. "Do you have any Bible material in Portuguese?"

I answered, "I don't have any on hand right now, but I can have some for you in about a week." And then the added thought, "What am I getting myself into? I don't know Portuguese!"

We talked some more, and they decided to come that Saturday. When they came, I was able to tell them that the Portuguese materials had arrived.

How did I get them so quickly? The answer—the new World Mission Collection (WMC). After getting off

the phone with Nino and Marcia, a couple from Brazil who live in Japan, I e-mailed Kenneth Fisher, developer of the WMC, and asked for the "Communicating Christ" series along with other pamphlets. He mailed them out Federal Express, and they arrived in time for Nino and Marcia that Saturday. You should have seen the look of gratitude in their eyes as they heard clear explanations of God's Word in their native language.

I've since learned a few words in Portuguese, and we usually communicate through a combination of Japanese, English, and looking at each other's English and Portuguese versions of "Communicating Christ."

But the Holy Spirit was at work. After going through the Bible's teachings on baptism, I asked them, "Would you like your daughter Mayumi-chan baptized?" Their eyes lit up, and they replied enthusiastically, "We were wondering if you would baptize her for us!"



Mayumi (far left) was recently baptized by Missionary Jim Sherod (right) in Japan. Sherod used Portuguese materials from the World Mission Collection to share God's Word with Mayumi's parents (left), who are originally from Brazil. Learn more about our mission in Japan from their website <www.net-ibaraki.ne.jp/leccjws/>

Thanks to you and the World Mission Collection, the Holy Spirit has worked faith in another heart and strengthened the faith of two people who live in Japan, far from their native land of Brazil.

Work in St. Lucia grows

Mission work is a team effort. Just ask Missionary Joel Jaeger and his wife, Karla.

They have been serving at Trinity, Castries, St. Lucia for almost six years. Work had been slow because two people can only do so much on an island of 157,862 people. Yet, with help from fellow WELS members,

the mission is growing and expanding.

In July each year, students from Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., travel to St. Lucia to help with vacation Bible school as part of Project Timothy, a program that gives prep school students a taste of mission work.

In January 1998, a travel-canvass-witness team from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, presented an original street drama to five different communities. The group, funded by WELS Kingdom Workers, sang with the neighborhood children and adults



Children in St. Lucia gather to see a street drama, based on the story of the wisemen, which was put on by a travel-canvass-witness team from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

and invited them to a Saturday Bible school and Sunday service.

The mission also got a big boost when Erik Landwehr, a 1997 Martin Luther College graduate, was assigned as a staff minister to St. Lucia. Because there is no Lutheran school, Erik and his wife, Staci, wanted to reach out to the children in the area. So they opened a study center at the congregation's new parish center.

An average of 20 children attend the study center, which is open four days a week. To attend, children must have homework or bring a book to read. Through the study

center, the Landwehrs noticed that one out of four children either cannot read or reads slowly. To help those children, reading and writing classes are also held.

But because many children come from homes where the gospel isn't taught, the Landwehrs also teach God's Word. "Over 12 children we contacted through the study center have come to worship. Now

we need to get the message to their parents," says Erik. "We are grateful that the mothers send their children to church, but God's Word is for adults, too."

That's where Jaeger is focused. "Having Erik on staff, working with the children, allows me to concentrate on reaching the unchurched," he says.

Through the work of all these people and the blessing of God, attendance at church, children's Bible hour, and the study center is at an all-time high. And children are asking, "Can we come again next week?"

St. Lucia mission stats

Exploratory status granted: September 1991

Mission status granted: April 1997

Worship location: Vide Bouteille Secondary School, LaClery

Number of members: 102 baptized, 52 communicants

Congregation make up: International members from India, Tanzania,

Nigeria, and Guyana in addition to St. Lucians and U.S. citizens

Mission staff: Joel and Karla Jaeger, Erik and Staci Landwehr

Worship schedule: Sunday morning service and Family Bible hour, Wednesday Children's Bible hour, Friday Family Fellowship (2nd & 4th Fridays)

rē·li·giōn

Defining religion

confession: The act of acknowledging one's sins. Formal confession in the Lutheran Church has two parts: (1) acknowledging one's sins and (2) receiving absolution or forgiveness. A confession can also be a statement of what one believes, for example, the Augsburg Confession.

District news

Arizona

After months of construction, the Arizona-California website <www.primenet.com/~schultz/> is nearing completion. The site contains pages relative to the district as well as a calendar of events. In addition, the former district newsletter, *The District Dispatch*, was replaced with a page devoted to district news items. . . . **Grace, Casa Grande**, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special service on Feb. 1. The congregation built its first house of worship in 1948 shortly after it began and occupied it until they constructed a new sanctuary in 1996. . . . **Emmanuel Lutheran School, Tempe**, marked its 25th anniversary with a thanksgiving service on March 15. The school opened in 1972 with one teacher and about 20 students. Today there are eight teachers with over 150 students in grades pre-k through eight.

Kenneth H. Pasch

North Atlantic

Peace, King of Prussia, Penn., will be using a travel-canvass-witness team this spring, made up of six students from the University of Wisconsin—Madison. The TCW team will conduct a door-to-door and a telephone survey of the neighborhood in order to identify prospects and test the marketability of offering a child-care facility. . . . **Several of our WELS churches and members' homes in eastern Ontario and the New England states were victims of an ice storm in early January.** Electrical power lines and poles were down, broken trees and branches were lying everywhere, and thousands of homes went without power for up to three weeks. Fortunately, the power supplied by the true God was not affected by the ice storm.

Kevin Schultz

South Atlantic

Twenty-one years after gaining mission status, **Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.**, is starting a Lutheran elementary school. The Christian Enrichment Center was remodeled into school rooms to accommodate the students. . . . Dec. 28 was a special day for **Cordero de Dios, a mission in Miami**, when four children—ages three to 12, from two families—were baptized. Both families are originally from Puerto Rico. Pastor Martens has also made contact with two Cuban women who have not been baptized. Because recent immigrants from Cuba who grew up in the Castro era

are not likely to be baptized, he says, "I need to train myself to ask people whether they have been baptized." Cordero de Dios meets in a conference room of the Days Inn Miami Airport. . . . At the end of January, **St. John's, Antigua**, launched its Caribbean Christian Training Institute. This institute is designed to help Christian adults become active in different areas of ministry within the Caribbean. Twenty-three attended the first course. Subsequent courses began in March.

Paul E. Zell

(Back row, from left) Pastor Ralph Martens, Diana Bojaca, and Roxanne Martens. (Front, from left) Renato and Adriana Bojaca and Sasha Sanchez. When the Bojacas' mother was being treated for cancer she came to faith and wanted her children baptized. She also encouraged her sister to baptize Sasha. The parents are prospective members at Cordero de Dios, a mission congregation in Miami that reaches out to Spanish-speaking people.



Obituaries

Edward Earl Schutters 1953-1998

Edward Schutters was born Aug. 21, 1953, in Chicago, Ill. He died Jan. 13, 1998, in Mankato, Minn.

Schutters taught at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.; Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; and Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn.

Schutters is survived by wife, Faith; two daughters; his mother; one sister; and three nieces.

Duane Tomhave 1936-1998

Duane Tomhave was born on Aug. 4, 1936 in Montevideo, Minn. He died Feb. 17, 1998 in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1961 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Tomhave served at Emmaus and St. Thomas, Phoenix, Ariz.; St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.; and Reformation, Genesee Depot, Wis. He was the administrator for the Board for World Missions from 1984-1997.

Tomhave is survived by wife, Janice; his mother; three daughters; one son; and 12 grandchildren.



U.S. church workers expelled from Laos

A Bible class was being held in Laos when three U.S. Christian aid workers and 44 others were arrested.

The Laotian government news agency KPL said the arrests were made because the Bible class participants were not truly interested in religious study, but instead "wrongly slandered the Lao government, [and attempted] to interfere in the internal affairs of Laos."

The U.S. Christians were released after spending one night in jail and three at an immigration detention facility. They were told to leave Laos within seven days.

Over 33 Laotians were still imprisoned one week later. One man, who had been incarcerated before because of his involvement with the Christian group, was kept in solitary confinement.

Laos, a communist nation, is predominantly Buddhist, but is also home to small numbers of Catholics and Protestants. Although the Laotian constitution guarantees religious freedom, a 1997 U.S. State Department report on the persecution of Christians abroad said "in practice, the [Laotian] government continues to restrict freedom of religion, especially for some Christian denominations."

Foreigners, said the report, are prohibited from proselytizing. Importing foreign religious publications and artifacts is also restricted. The report noted that Laotian authorities often associate Christians with unwanted "foreign influences."

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Twelve Months Ended Dec. 31, 1997

	Total Subscription			Offerings Received			
	Communicants 12/31/96	1997	Year to Date Projected	December Offerings	Twelve Months Offerings	Percent of Sbscptrn	Annld Ave Per Commun
Arizona-California	17,019	\$ 990,894	\$ 990,894	\$ 184,653	\$ 992,653	100.2 %	\$ 58.33
Dakota-Montana	9,313	427,354	427,354	97,158	440,028	103.0	47.25
Michigan	37,016	2,134,950	2,134,950	412,961	2,082,906	97.6	56.27
Minnesota	43,576	2,381,269	2,381,269	555,792	2,379,769	99.9	54.61
Nebraska	10,126	573,107	573,107	130,546	577,054	100.7	56.99
North Atlantic	3,696	312,620	312,620	45,119	315,594	101.0	85.39
Northern Wisconsin	61,316	2,491,834	2,491,834	539,828	2,450,241	98.3	39.96
Pacific Northwest	4,890	273,134	273,134	47,088	263,577	96.5	53.90
South Atlantic	6,453	426,791	426,791	69,672	450,483	105.6	69.81
South Central	4,357	377,004	377,004	68,524	413,652	109.7	94.94
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,805	3,340,777	3,340,777	771,663	3,205,242	95.9	55.45
Western Wisconsin	59,810	3,036,217	3,036,217	636,498	2,965,430	97.7	49.58
Total - This Year	315,377	16,765,951	16,765,951	3,559,502	16,536,629	98.6	52.43
Total - Last Year	315,099	16,517,537	16,517,537	3,433,456	16,161,500	97.8	51.29

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities/Six months ended Dec. 31

	1997 Actual	1996 Actual	1997 Budget
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$ 7,801,019	\$ 7,361,573	\$ 7,558,000
Gifts and memorials	4,177,671	3,059,406	3,452,000
Bequest/planned giving	284,029	728,380	577,000
Tuition and fees	5,241,416	4,705,489	4,776,000
Other	129,737	58,394	84,000
Transfers-endwmt/trust earnings	135,141	123,683	138,000
Transfers-gift trust	4,345,304	3,855,155	4,388,000
Transfers-continuing programs	1,982,364	1,722,554	2,141,000
Transfers-other	20,060	20	-
Total revenues	24,116,741	21,614,654	23,114,000
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	4,122,365	3,486,476	4,755,000
World Missions	4,037,542	4,019,184	4,533,000
Ministerial Education	10,868,720	9,672,420	10,923,000
Parish Services	726,268	675,548	857,000
Administrative Services	2,638,282	2,301,487	2,979,000
Total expenditures	22,393,177	20,155,115	24,047,000
Change in unrestricted net assets	1,723,564	1,459,539	
Change in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	87,800	58,013	
Bequest/planned giving	(36,000)	7,802	
Change in value of trust agreements	(9,600)	(30,058)	
Satisfaction of restrictions	(2,085,000)	(2,510,644)	
Total revenues	(2,042,800)	(2,474,887)	
Change in temp restricted net assets	(2,042,800)	(2,474,887)	
Net assets - beginning of year	5,909,760	5,109,960	
Net assets - end of period	5,590,524	4,094,612	

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Dec. 31, 1997	Dec. 31, 1996
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,252,796	\$ 2,088,234
Due from other funds	30,046	45,496
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	104,750	101,750
Cash advances-schools	102,412	-
Other accounts receivable	146,356	135,802
Contributions receivable	3,222,027	2,222,380
Mortgage note receivable	15,901	17,790
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	6,945	16,051
Total assets	5,789,233	4,535,503
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	-	136,802
Accounts payable	198,709	304,089
Total liabilities	198,709	440,891
Unrestricted	2,368,497	1,872,232
Temp restricted	3,222,027	2,222,380
Total net assets	5,590,524	4,094,612
Total liab. and net assets	5,789,233	4,535,503

James C. Huska, Treasurer

Poll: America ambivalent on abortion

After the United States observed the 25th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling legalizing most abortions, a new poll finds Americans are ambivalent on the subject.

Eighty-three percent of those surveyed said abortion should be permitted in some cases, but only 47 percent supported the Supreme Court's Jan. 22, 1973, ruling. That court decision allows women to get an abortion at any time during the first three months of pregnancy. Forty-three percent said they were against the ruling. The rest were either uncertain or did not answer.

But the poll also showed there is general support for limited abortion rights, even among opponents. Some of the circumstances in which people said they support abortion included: when the mother's health is seriously in danger; when the baby is likely to be born with serious defects; when a woman's pregnancy is the result of a rape; or when a woman does not want the baby.

These findings have remained relatively stable over the years despite the emotional debate that surrounds it.

The poll also found that six percent of those who supported abortion without restriction based their views on religious beliefs. And 76 percent of those who thought it should not be legal in any circumstance said their views were influenced most by their religious beliefs.

The nationwide telephone poll by the Associated Press included 1,102 adults and was conducted Jan. 8-12 by ICR of Media, Pa. The margin of error was plus or minus three percent. (But, see NL February 1998, p. 31. —ed.)

Number of Lutherans worldwide increases

The number of Lutherans around the globe increased to more than 61 million in 1997, up from 60.9 million in 1996.

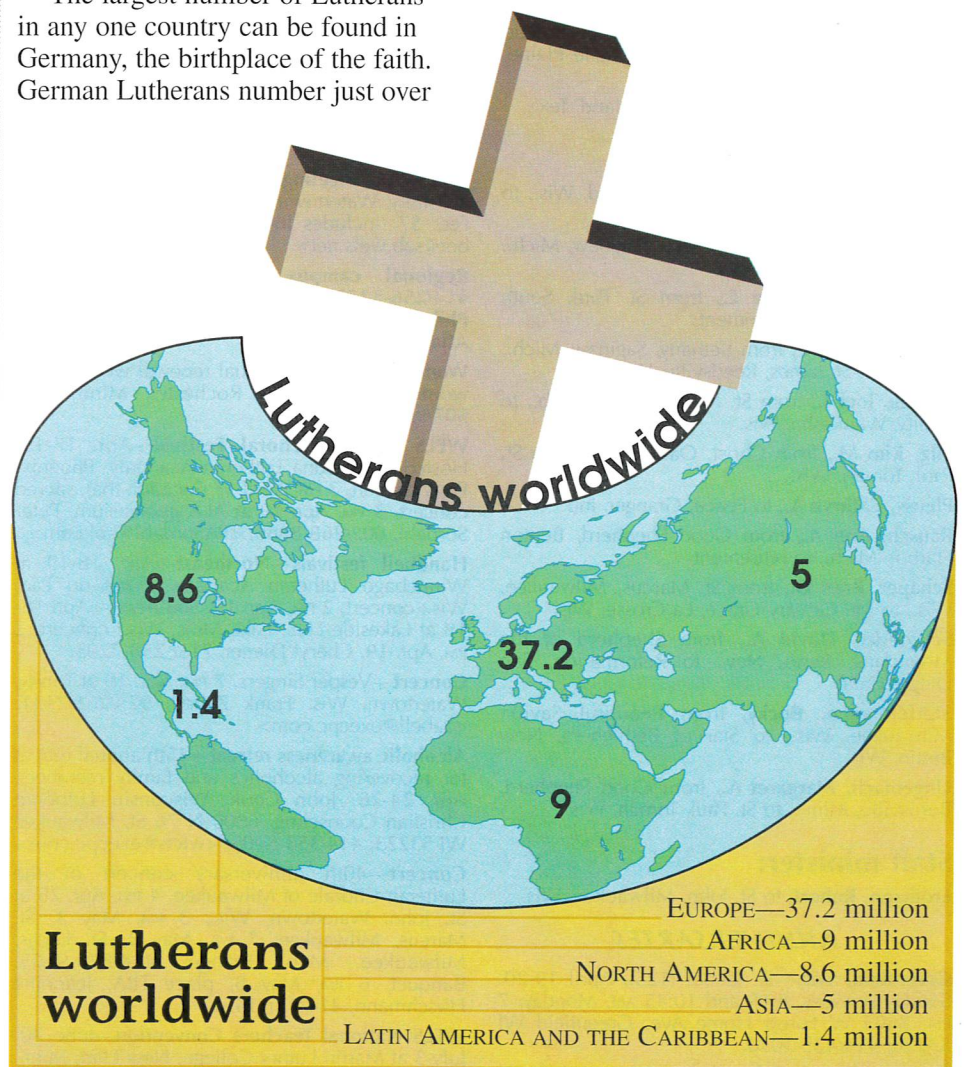
The 7.6 million-member Church of Sweden remains the largest Lutheran body, followed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with nearly 5.2 million members, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland with nearly 4.6 million.

The largest number of Lutherans in any one country can be found in Germany, the birthplace of the faith. German Lutherans number just over

14 million, followed by U.S. Lutherans, who number nearly 8.3 million in several Lutheran denominations.

The most significant Lutheran growth was in Nigeria, where the number of Lutherans reached 655,000 in 1997, an increase of 175,000—or more than 36 percent—over 1996.

Data supplied by the Lutheran World Federation.



In brief

The British parliament rejected a proposal to allow dying patients to ask their doctors for drugs that would hasten death.
The bill was rejected 234 to 89 in December.

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

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors:

Haag, Gerhardt E., to Bulgaria
Lonnquist, Allen D., from St. Paul, Hamburg 6SE, Wis., to St. John, Boyd, Minn.
Mattek, Floyd W., from St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich., to retirement
Otto, Robert G., from Faith, St. Petersburg, Fla., to Mankato, Minn., exploratory (ELS)
Panitzke, Peter A., from Good Shepherd, St. Peters, Mo., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Petermann, Martin B., from Calvary, Glenwood, Minn., to retirement
Schaller, Daniel L., from Peace, Tucson, Ariz., to Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev.
Sims, Snowden G., from LPS, Watertown, Wis., to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.
Werner, Paul J., from Dr. Martin Luther, Buffalo City, Wis., to The Lutheran Home, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Zwieg, Larry G., to Silver Lake, Pearland, Tex.

Teachers

Braun, Bruce W., from Peace, Hartford, Wis., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Grunwald, James R., from MLS, Saginaw, Mich., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Holzhueter, Suzanne E., from St. Paul, South Haven, Mich., to retirement
Knittel, David A., from Bethany, Saginaw, Mich., to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.
Mattek, Joel T., from St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Pilz, Kim M., from Christ, Oakley, Mich., to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.
Pleuss, Cathryn A., to Peace, Granger, Ind.
Rausch, Ann A., from Good Shepherd, Benton Harbor, Mich., to retirement
Schaper, Brad D., from St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis., to Mt. Calvary-Grace, La Crosse, Wis.
Schroeder, David A., from Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev., to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.
Steffenhagen, Becky, from Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis., to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Ungemach, Margaret A., from Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn., to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.

Staff minister:

Erdmann, Robert, to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Greenfield, Wis.—St. Jacobi (125). April 19-20. Sunday services, 8:15 and 10:45 AM, Monday, 7 PM. 8605 W Forest Home Ave, Greenfield WI 53228; 414/425-3030.
Genesee Depot, Wis.—Reformation (20). April 19. Service, 10:30 AM; catered lunch follows. RSVP for lunch. Hwys D & E, PO Box 316, Genesee Depot WI 53127; 414/392-9745.
Denver, Colo.—Zion school (30). Apr. 25—service, 3 AM; open house, 4-6 AM. Apr. 26—potluck follows 10:30 AM service. 2600 S Wadsworth Blvd, Denver CO 80227; 303/985-2334 for reservations.

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

Minneapolis, Minn.—Pilgrim (75). May 2—dinner and program. May 3—services at 8:30 and 11 AM. Reservations by Apr. 20 for dinner. 3901 1st Ave S, Minneapolis MN 55409; 612/825-5375.

Williamston, Mich.—Memorial (50). May 17. Services, 8 and 10:30 AM; dinner, noon. 1022 W Grand River Ave, Williamston MI 48895; 517/655-2294.

Hazelton, N.D.—St. Paul (75). June 21. Service, 4 AM; picnic follows at park. Contact Ruben Humann, 6275 Hwy 1804, Hazelton ND 58544; 701/782-6885 for reservations. 700 Claremont Ave, Hazelton ND 58544.

Helenville, Wis.—St. Peter (150). June 14—confirmation reunion. Services, 8 and 9:45 AM; catered dinner follows. N4678 S Helenville Rd, Helenville WI 53137; 920/674-3307.

Campbellsport, Wis.—Immanuel (75). July 12—service, 10:15 AM; church picnic follows. JoAnn Maedke, 920/477-2806.

COMING EVENTS

WELS-CLO meeting—for church librarians. Apr. 4. Trinity, Watertown, Wis. Registration, 8:30 AM. Fee: \$7 (includes lunch). 414/256-3222; <jwebber@sab.wels.net>

Regional campus rallies—Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279 or Dan Heins, 507/437-6948.
Philadelphia—Apr. 17-19, **Phoenix**—Apr. 17-19, **Atlanta**—Apr. 24-26.

Women's retreat—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. Apr. 17-19. Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866.

WELS national Choral Festival—Apr. 17-19. Hosted by Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix. Pops concert, 7 PM, April 17 (location tba), sacred concert, 3 PM, Apr. 19 at ALA gymnasium. Peter Sordahl, 602/268-8686; <PASordahl@aol.com>

Handbell festivals—Northeast—Apr. 18-19 at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.; concert, 2 PM, Apr. 19. **Southeast**—Apr. 18-19 at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.; concert, 2 PM, Apr. 19. Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

Concert—Vesper Singers. 7 PM, Apr. 19 at Trinity, Watertown, Wis. Frank Zabell, 920/261-2131; <zabell@execpc.com>

Alcoholic awareness retreat—15th annual retreat for recovering alcoholics and family members. Apr. 24-26. John Cook, Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, 6800 N 76 St, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5005; <wlcs@execpc.com>

Concert—40th anniversary concert of the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee. 4 PM, Apr. 26 at St. John, Watertown, Wis.; 3 PM, May 3, St. Marcus, Milwaukee; 7 PM, May 3, St. Lucas, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105. Banquet, 6 PM, May 8, place TBA. Jeannine Hirschmann, 414/871-1461.

WELS National Teachers Convention—June 30-July 3 at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Public school teachers welcome. Registration with no late fee until Apr. 1. Connie Cortright, 507/359-4347; <welsntc@ic.new-ulm.mn.us>

Special education seminar—Special Ministries in Lutheran Education religious training seminar, July 24-26 at Holiday Inn West, Madison, WI. Bruce Cuppan, 920/929-4232.

Wisconsin Lutheran College Choir spring tour—Dr. James Nowack, 414/443-8848.

May 19—Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.

May 20—Nebraska LHS, Waco

May 22—Zion, Denver

May 23—St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.

May 25—St. Martin, Watertown, S.D.

May 26—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

May 27—First, La Crosse, Wis.

May 28—St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.

Course—Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). 4 week, 110 hour intensive. Offered summer 1998. Tom Hunter, MLC, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142; FAX, 507/223-9109; <huntertn@mlc-wels.edu>

Cruise trip—of the Greek Isles, including Athens and Turkey in November 1998. Sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service. Fred Matzke, WLCFS, PO Box 23980, Milwaukee WI 53223-0980; 414/353-5005 ext. 44.

Tour—13 day tour to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy in September 2000. Trip highlight: passion play in Oberammergau. Pastor Ronald Ash, N2749 French Rd, Appleton WI 54915.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Tallahassee, Fla.—Faith. Worship at 10:15 AM. 2763 Capital Cir NE. Mailing address: 3037 Corrib Dr, Tallahassee FL 32308. Pastor Nathan Strobel, 850/383-1125.

Navarre, Fla.—Risen Savior. Formerly in Ft. Walton Beach. Now at 1809 Alhambra St, Navarre FL 32566; church, 850/936-1005; pastor, 850/936-5209.

AVAILABLE

Lodging—free lodging at bed and breakfast for pastor and wife for up to three days in central Pennsylvania near Altoona and Johnstown. Hookups available for campers or trailers. 814/674-5993.

Chancel furnishings—altar cross, altar candle stands, floor-standing candle stands, baptismal font, communion ware, old hymnals, and KJV Bibles. Free to a mission for cost of shipping. First, Prescott, Ariz. 520/445-1807.

NAMES WANTED

Japan—If you know a Japanese student or businessman moving to Japan, contact the Japan mission staff for follow-up. Use the "Rescue Japan" feature of the Japan mission website at <www.net-ibaraki.ne.jp/leccjws>.

Augusta County / Staunton / Waynesboro / Charlottesville / Harrisonburg, Va.—Names, addresses, and phone numbers of people interested in starting a mission. Pat and Fred Boehling, 540/941-8412.

SERVICE TIMES

Holland, Mich.—Visiting Holland, Mich., for tulip time? Lord of Life (ELS) invites you to worship Sundays at 9 AM. 290 E 18 St, Holland, Mich. Pastor Michael Smith, 616/395-5275.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

After school teacher—for St. Paul, Franklin, Wis., child care center. Hours: 12-6 PM. Michelle Voss, 414/421-1833.

Even calls me by my name

Karl R. Gurgel

Do you like to be called by name? Almost everyone does, especially today when so many things have become impersonal. We're just a number to many people. We might even forget how many numbers we are as we struggle to remember the PIN (personal identification number) to access our checking account or credit card or telephone calling card.

So, under these circumstances, doesn't it feel good to have someone call you by name?

During the events of Holy Week, apparently, some people weren't eager to have their names called. The disciples, almost inseparably linked with Jesus for three years, forsook him in Gethsemane and fled. One who recovered a bit, Peter, hugged the shadows in the high priest's palace, not wanting to be identified as one of Jesus' followers. And on Easter eve these fearful disciples, still wishing to remain anonymous, were hiding behind locked doors.

Other followers of Jesus, though, didn't care who saw them associate with Jesus. Most of them were women—the women, for example, who came to the tomb on Easter morning.

One of them stayed behind at the tomb when the others left. She was heartbroken. Not only, she thought, had she lost her living Savior—she saw him crucified—but now she had lost the dead Savior, too. His body was missing from the grave.

So overcome with grief was Mary Magdalene that she did not recognize the Savior's voice. "Woman, why are you crying? What is it you are looking for?" To her it must be a gardener, perhaps the one who had unceremoniously moved Jesus' body somewhere.

What would it take to overcome her disillusionment, to break her despondency? One word. Her name. "Mary."

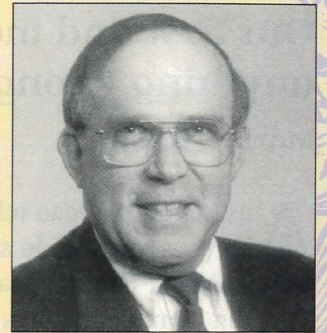
The "gardener" knew her name. Hearing it from his lips, she now knew the "gardener." It was her Jesus. The one she thought was dead and his body moved, was alive and moving about freely, calling her by name.

That's all it took for Mary, hearing the sound of her name, because of the one who spoke it. And that's all it should take for you and me no matter how many don't know our names. Because, as unbelievable as it may seem, our Jesus knows us all. Personally, by name.

It's better, isn't it, than having our bank president know our name, along with our account number? Isn't it better than having the waitress at our favorite restaurant know, along with the kind of tip we leave, if we take our coffee black or with cream?

This is our Jesus talking, calling you and me by name. By being indented with us, the only thing Jesus received was a bill from the Heavenly Father. The bill for all our iniquity, our sin's guilt. He died to pay it. But he still wants to associate with us, after all we have done to cause his death, because he wants to share his resurrection and forgiveness and eternal life with us.

Won't it be good to hear him call us each by name as he welcomes us into heaven? Think of it when someone here doesn't even know your name. What difference does it make if only Jesus knows and calls you by name? David, Emma, Christian—it doesn't matter what your name is as long as Jesus knows it. And He does.



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

**As unbelievable
as it may seem,
our Jesus knows
us all. Personally,
by name.**

Omission and obedience

Our first and most durable defense against accusation is, "I didn't do anything wrong!" But maybe we didn't do anything right either.

Mark E. Braun

Any school kid can tell you a sin is when you do something wrong. Many Bible passages agree. The Ten Commandments say: Don't steal, Don't covet, Don't kill. As John put it, "All wrongdoing is sin" (1 John 5:17).

But in one little verse, which seems almost to stand by itself, James unveils another dimension to sin: "**Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins**" (James 4:17). Beside what we do wrong, we sin when we have opportunity to do good but don't. We sin by doing nothing.

Sinning by doing nothing

James echoes Jesus. In his sweeping portrait of this world's last day (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus described how the Son of Man will appear in his glory to assemble all the world's population before him and then divide it as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. As corroborating evidence, the King will point to the lives believers and unbelievers lived. Believers sound startled at the good deeds their King recalled: "When did we see

you hungry or thirsty or sick or a stranger, and help you?" Those on his left, however, are condemned for doing nothing. No catalog of heinous crimes, no tales of unrestrained vice. "I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, . . . I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in."

We call them sins of omission. In the haunting tones of the *Book of Common Prayer*, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done."

James' passage and Jesus' parable shock us out of lazy indifference. Our first and most durable defense against accusation is, "I didn't do anything wrong!" Maybe. But maybe we didn't do anything right either, which is just as damnable.

The only person who knew the good he ought to do and did it, was Jesus.

Forgiven for doing nothing

Again, any school kid (we hope!) can tell you, "Jesus died on the cross to take away my sins." Correct. So why did he wait 33 long years to do it? If all he came to earth to accomplish was to die in our place, why did he go through being born, being brought up, going to school, working, praying, healing? To prove he's God? We

already knew that. To give us an example? We need much more than his example.

Jesus came to live in our place. Long before Calvary, he chose to place himself under all the laws we have not kept. He loved God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind, and his neighbor as himself. He said "No" to every temptation Satan dangled in front of him. Even on the cross, he loved his mother and completed his Father's assignment.

We should hardly be surprised. He submitted to baptism because it was proper for him "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). In his great Sermon he said, "Do not think I have come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). He summarized his life, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

We sin by omission as well as commission. But Jesus offers us his blood and righteousness. Because of the life he lived, as well as the death he died, you and I stand before God as not guilty.

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

real faith for real life
james

When love is seen as hate

Joel C. Gerlach

The first National White House Conference on Hate Crimes convened late in 1997 to explore ways to deal with bias-driven violence in America. At the opening session President Clinton told the conferees, "It is time for us to mount an all-out assault on hate crimes, to punish them swiftly and severely, and to do more to prevent them from happening in the first place."

The president noted that civil rights legislation already guarantees the rights of citizens in matters of race, religion, and national origin. Now is the time, he suggested, "to extend federal law to include violence against homosexuals, lesbians, and gender motivated attacks."

Attempts to curb the plague of violence threatening our way of life deserve the support of every concerned citizen. But a serious problem arises for Christians when conscientious expressions of concern about moral aberrations become punishable as hate crimes—or to put it another way, when love is seen as hate.

A case in point. "It's Not Natural" is the title of a song on a compact disc released by Capitol Entertainment featuring recording artists Angie and Debbie Winans. The lyrics assert that homosexual behavior is "not natural." Nor are pornography, abortion, and violence, the song says.

The reference to homosexual behavior elicited a response from Lidell Jackson, co-founder of a gay and lesbian group in New York. "It is wrong for anyone, but particularly for performers in the public eye, to release something that is virulently homophobic," he said. "It speaks volumes about the hatred and oppression we're all trying to fight against."

In response, a spokesperson for the Winans sisters said that "It's Not Natural" is an attempt to "help emancipate people from the sinful bondage of homosexuality." He also said that they recorded the song as a response to ABC's sitcom, "Ellen," in which Ellen DeGeneres announced that she was a lesbian. The program was a propaganda piece for acceptance of homosexuality as a normal lifestyle.

If the kind of hate crime legislation proposed by the president becomes the law of the land, it is conceivable, perhaps even probable, that Christian testimony against such sins as homosexuality and abortion could become punishable crimes.

If and when the law makes an act of love a hate crime, Christians will be obliged to remember what Peter told the Sanhedrin in a similar situation. The high priest had said to the apostles, "We gave you strict order not to teach in his [Jesus'] name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter's response was simple and direct. "We must obey God rather than men." The Sanhedrin's reaction was predictable. "When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death."

Jesus too has a word for us when his enemies turn an expression of love into an evidence of hate. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. . . . If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." If and when love is seen as hate, it should come as no surprise.

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

*A serious
problem arises
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Questions about Holy Week

John F. Brug

I know that Jesus descended to hell after his resurrection, but the Apostles' Creed seems to indicate that it was before his resurrection. How do you explain this?

Only one passage gives us specific information about Jesus' descent into hell. That is 1 Peter 3:18,19: "Made alive by the Spirit . . . he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah." This tells us that Jesus descended to hell after he had risen from the dead but probably before he began his resurrection appearances.

Thus, we see that the wording of the Apostles' Creed does not give a clear indication of the time of Jesus' descent. To harmonize the words of the creed with Scripture, Lutheran writers sometime distinguish between Jesus' vivification (his coming alive), which occurred before the descent to hell, and Jesus' resurrection (his appearances on earth), which occurred after his descent to hell. This is a suitable explanation.

The order in the creed may, however, reflect the unclarity of many in the early church about the purpose of Jesus' descent. Many of them thought that Jesus descended to a region of hell called limbo in order to rescue the Old Testament believers, who had to wait there until Jesus had died for sin. Others thought he went there to give unbelievers another chance. Both of these views contradict Scripture. The purpose of Jesus' descent into hell was not to bring the gospel, but

to declare his victory over Satan and his forces. Colossians 2:15 seems to refer to this aspect of Jesus' descent into hell.

The purpose of Jesus' descent into hell was not to bring the gospel, but to declare his victory over Satan and his forces.

Though Scripture gives us little information about Jesus' descent into hell, we rightly classify it as part of his exaltation since it was a declaration of his victory over sin, death, and the devil. This victory was completed and declared by his resurrection.

Did Judas receive the Lord's Supper? In the account of the institution in Luke 22:19-21, it leads us to believe that he could have received the Lord's Supper. If he did, he certainly did not have the same faith as the rest of the disciples. Then comes the question as to close communion.

Because the gospels do not always describe events in chronological order and the various gospels mention the warning to Judas at different points in the story, we do not know for sure whether Judas received the Lord's Supper. Lutheran commentators are divided on the issue. I lean toward the opinion that Judas did not receive the sacrament.

Even if Judas received the Lord's Supper, this says nothing against the practice of close communion. Judas was a hypocrite who received the Sacrament to his judgment. It is not our responsibility to exclude hypocrites (we don't know who they are) from the Lord's Supper, but only those who are openly impenitent.

This is discussed in detail on pages 654-658 of John Ylvisaker's *The Gospels*, a commentary on the four Gospels from Northwestern Publishing House.

Why does the beginning of Hymn 155 say "Christ the Lord is risen again"? Isn't this a doctrinal error? Christ only arose once.

The text simply means Christ was once dead and now is alive again. It follows the language of Matthew 27:63 and Luke 24:7, so the form of expression is scriptural.

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

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

Re: Baumler's editorial

MOVIEGUIDE [Jan.]. I fully agree on the content of movies. They are a far cry from Gene Autry and Lucille Ball movies. I attend movies occasionally since retiring and am shocked at the content.

I worked 34 years for a chain that had two indoor theaters and a drive-in, retiring as manager of all three. As far as rating movies, it is useless without the cooperation of parents. Here are some of my experiences. A pastor (not of our synod) called me and told me if I wouldn't let his teenage son in, the other theater would. A mother called when I wouldn't admit her son to an R-rated movie and said she didn't care what he saw. Once a "Big Brother" attempted to bring two "little brothers" to an R-rated movie. I told him no, since he wasn't their legal guardian and called the head of Big Brothers the next day.

If you cannot clean up the film industry, educate the parents. I am proud to say I wasn't always the most popular theater manager when I checked ID's and turned teenagers away.

*Dorothy Korn
Norfolk, Nebraska*

Again, an issue well-done! [Jan.].

Re: "The Orthodox Attraction." The need for a Scriptural-based, traditional worship service may surprise many in today's "relevant-based" society. It surprised me whenever I assisted campus ministry's outreach efforts in Madison, Wis. There the WELS chapel offered both traditional and contemporary services—many students preferred the traditional.

Also, there has been an exodus to the Orthodox tradition mainly over women's ordination! Large influxes of converts occur when a mainline denomination accepts women's ordination into the public ministry. Why do these groups not go to Rome? I don't know. Maybe because Rome itself has changed positions, now that the Pope has declared that Judaism and Islam are spiritual cousins of Christianity.

*John L. Hoh Jr.
Mauston, Wisconsin*

I enjoyed the article on Pastor Wilmer Valleskey [Feb.].

I was raised in Manistee, Mich., the small town where the Valleskeys spent some of their retirement. Following my second year at the seminary, I conducted the Sunday service at my home church. After the service, Valleskey asked if he could speak with me.

He began by complimenting my sermon. He said it was an excellent treatment of an Old Testament text (Elijah and Elisha). Then he told me that the sermon would have even been better if I had remembered to mention Jesus! He encouraged me to always include Christ's saving work in every Old Testament sermon, even if a direct mention of Christ the Messiah was missing.

Valleskey's words were not ones lost by this seminary student. I still think of that conversation every time I prepare a sermon on an Old Testament text.

"Always include Christ's saving work." That's what evangelism is all about. That's what Pastor Wilmer Valleskey taught me in a very loving and respectful way.

*Paul J. Lidtke
Freeport, Illinois*

Oops!

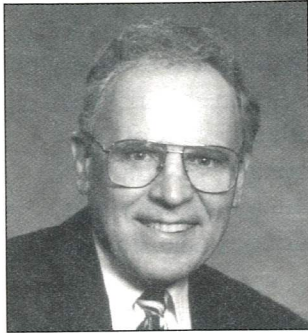
Did you catch it? An eighth-grader was the first to notice. On page 26 of the February issue, the article "Alabama official seeks to block enforcement of prayer ban" was illustrated with a picture of Georgia—Alabama's neighbor to the east. We regret the error and will check our atlas next time.

*Through my Bible
in 3 years*

May 1998

1. Luke 21:1-24
2. Luke 21:25-38
3. Luke 22:1-13
4. Luke 22:14-30
5. Luke 22:31-46
6. Luke 22:47-62
7. Luke 22:63—23:12
8. Luke 23:13-25
9. Luke 23:26-43
10. Luke 23:44-56
11. Luke 24:1-12
12. Luke 24:13-35
13. Luke 24:36-53
14. Psalms 1, 2
15. Psalms 3, 4
16. Psalms 5
17. Psalms 6
18. Psalms 7, 8
19. Psalms 9, 10
20. Psalms 11, 12
21. Acts 1:1-11
22. Acts 1:12-26
23. Acts 2:1-13
24. Acts 2:14-36
25. Acts 2:37-47
26. Acts 3
27. Acts 4:1-31
28. Acts 4:32—5:16
29. Acts 5:17-42
30. Acts 6
31. Acts 7:1-43

Worlds apart



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

These scholars offer us unbelief masquerading as scholarship, and their findings are, sadly, predictable.

“Non-canonical texts blurring biblical lines”

The New Year’s headline caught my attention. Why was the *N.Y. Times* News Service article questioning the completeness of our Bibles? The biblical canon (the choice of books that make up our Bible) was set already some 1,600 years ago. And there hasn’t been much controversy about it since.

Now, the scholars who already have denied the authenticity of most of what’s in the Bible want to tell us that a number of books, left out from the onset, should be added.

Their appeal is deceptively attractive. Don’t books like the Gospel of Thomas and the Infancy Gospel of James pique our interest? They have some unusual stories to tell about Jesus and about Mary. Besides, how do we know we have all the books of the Bible?

Honesty dictates that we cannot say absolutely, beyond any shadow of a doubt, we have the only and the exact books that belong in the Bible. That is not a tenet of our faith. Neither does it cause us to doubt that the Bible is God’s Word. Stay with me on this.

What really are these Bible-blurring scholars saying? You should know

1. they have not found any new books that need our attention, only old ones that were long-ago discredited;
2. they are looking for “alternative voices,” since they reject most of the Bible’s teachings to begin with;
3. they think that the “status as divinely inspired” is irrelevant;
4. they think what we have in our Bibles gives just one interpretation of Christianity among many, unfazed that only one of contradictory interpretations can be correct.

These scholars offer us unbelief masquerading as scholarship, and their findings are, sadly, predictable. But, given some of the unknowns we must admit about ancient texts, how can we have such confidence in the Bible as we confess?

We can because

1. the books of the Bible as they were gathered into one book or canon were carefully evaluated for apostolic authorship and content;
2. the way of salvation and the message from Genesis through Revelation are consistent and without contradiction;
3. the words of our salvation are complete, and no new books can add anything we don’t already have;
4. the words convince us of their truth and divine inspiration by the working of the Holy Spirit;
5. the Lord has promised his words will not pass away (Matthew 24:35).

The issue here is in some ways too complex to adequately address in the space we have, but the lines are clearly drawn. There is scholarship that admits no absolute truths, questions everything, and makes human reason the arbiter of all issues. Then, there is scholarship that also will hear and mark all the questions, but will subject them to the absolute truths of God—as the Word has convinced us of them. The two are worlds apart, literally.

And, given the world opened for us in the resurrection of Jesus, we can be content to stay where we are.

Gary P. Baumler

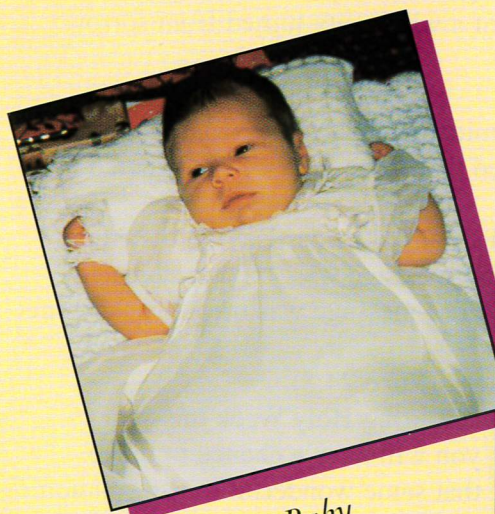
Our Tribute Gifts

remember those special occasions
that are close to our hearts



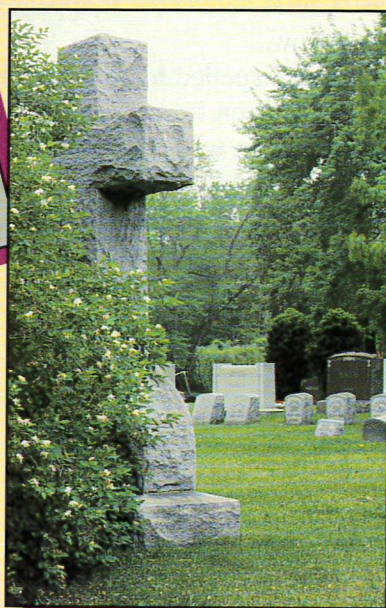
- *In memory of a loved one*
- *Birth/Adoption*
- *Birth/Adoption*
- *New grandchild*
- *Wedding anniversary*
- *Father's Day*
- *Ministerial anniversary*
- *Successful surgery*
- *Mother's Day*
- *Christmas*
- *Graduation*
- *Confirmation*

A tribute is a meaningful way to express our joy, hope and thanks to God!



Baby

In Memory



Anniversary

Please call 800-827-5482 and ask for your free Tribute Packet.

It's an easy way to remember those special people in your life and to extend your gifts beyond yourself to benefit others.

From gloom



During the battle of Waterloo in 1815, the people of England anxiously awaited word from the battlefield. Messages from the field were relayed by a series of stations positioned throughout the countryside. One of the stations was the tower of the Winchester Cathedral.

At one point, the following message was flashed: "Wellington defeated." In no time at all, the news of the defeat circulated throughout the city. People were understandably filled with gloom and despair.

However, two hours later the tide of the battle turned—and a different message was relayed from the tower. The message read: "Wellington defeated the enemy!" Suddenly the emotions of a whole city turned from sorrow to joy, as the message switched from gloom to glory.

In a sense, didn't a similar thing happen at the time of Jesus' death? In the midst of the darkness and gloom of Good Friday, the message the onlookers saw was "Christ defeated." It appeared that Jesus had been conquered by death. And his death left many people filled with sorrow.

But on the morning of the third day, the sorrow was dispelled by the glorious light of Easter Day. In the empty tomb, a new, different message was revealed. Jesus had risen from the dead. The message was: "Christ defeated death!" Where there was once reason for sorrow, now there was reason for joy. The message was transformed from gloom to glory, in the course of three short days.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen" (Luke 24:5).

During Holy Week this year, you will have a chance to relive that same wonderful transformation. From death to life. From sorrow to joy. From gloom to glory.

Robert Raasch is pastor at Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wisconsin.

to glory

