

# FORWARD

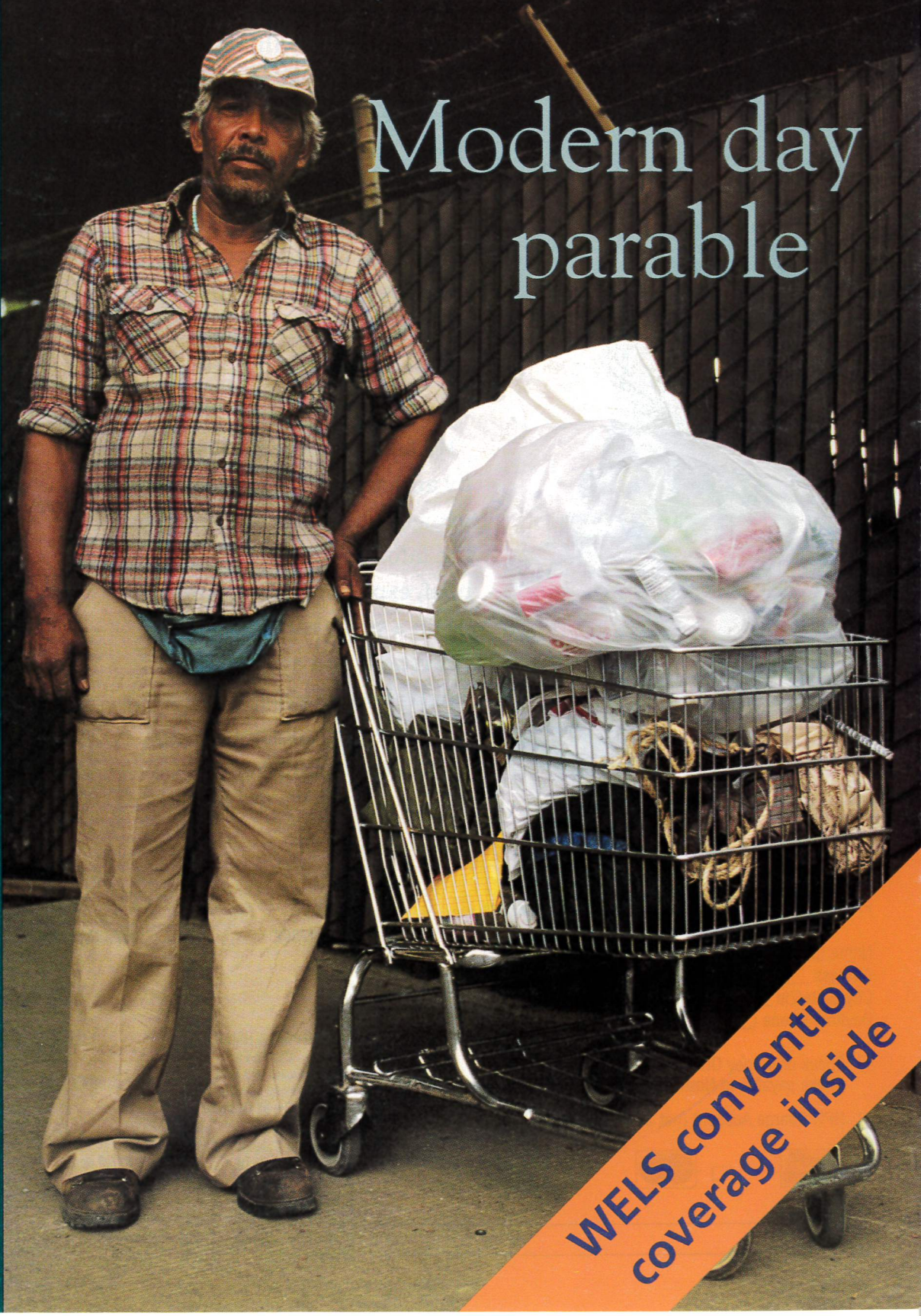
October 1999

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

**Ancestral  
religion  
in Africa**

**Digging  
in Israel**

**Tips for  
witnessing  
to non-  
Christians**

A photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a striped cap and a plaid shirt, standing next to a metal shopping cart. The cart is overflowing with several large white plastic bags of groceries. The background is a dark, textured wall.

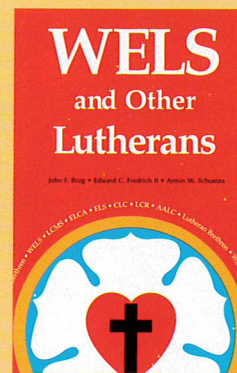
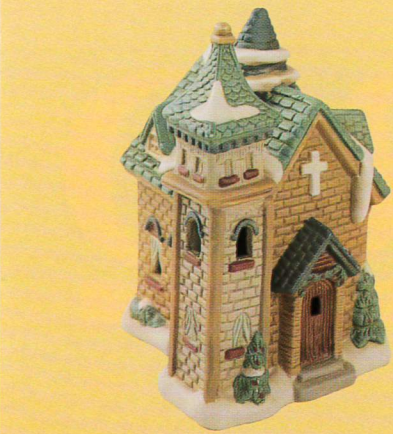
Modern day  
parable

**WELS convention  
coverage inside**

# Discern the Differences That Divide

Over 150 years of mergers, splits, and reconciliations have challenged the Lutheran churches in the United States. Today, what are the differences between the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod? WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? What do the smaller Lutheran church bodies teach?

*WELS and Other Lutherans*, by authors Brug, Fredrich, and Schuetze, provides the answers. The information is complete yet brief, explaining the differences in a way that is easy to understand and apply. This very popular book is a handy personal reference for questions about Lutheran differences.



**WELS and Other Lutherans:  
Lutheran Church Bodies in the USA**  
by John F. Brug, Edward C. Fredrich II,  
and Armin W. Schuetze  
Papercover, 104 pages.

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# Imitate the master

*“You became imitators of us and of the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 1:6*

Eric S. Hartzell

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, according to C.C. Colton. Actually, we proved his point in copying his words. We imitated his observation, at a loss to come up with a better one of our own.

## Worldly imitation

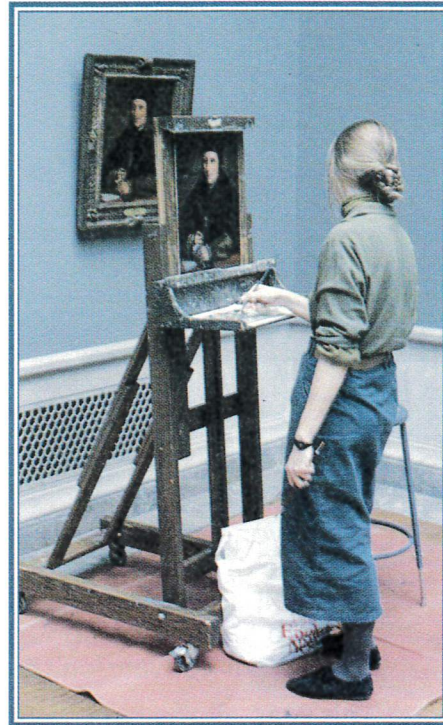
The words “copy” and “imitation” don’t have high resale value for our world. Perhaps that goes back to school and the misguided effort of copying someone’s paper. Bad! Imitation is wrong then. It’s cheating.

In the past, our country looked down on Japan and its industry because we thought that all the Japanese could do was copy our stuff and then sell it back to us. Something stamped “Made in Japan” was little valued. Evidently, judging from our cars, stereos, and cameras, we have gotten over that sensitivity. Whatever the Japanese did initially when they imitated things surely worked to their benefit.

Bill Gates and his bunch of entrepreneurs imitated things too. But they didn’t call it imitation. They called it “reverse engineering.” They took a computer that worked fine, and they worked backward to see what made it work. Then they made their own, improving on someone else’s plans. Their imitation paid off, literally.

## Spiritual imitation

Christians profit from imitation too. Paul said to the believers in Thessalonica, “You know how we lived among you for your sake. You



became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 1:5,6). The Christian life is a picture to be copied, faith to be lived. We set our easels up next to someone’s beautiful and completed picture and try to make the picture of our life look like the picture of that life. The Thessalonians did that. They imitated the apostle Paul.

The Bible is like a fine art museum full of priceless paintings that Christian people are invited to copy. Read Hebrews 11 for a partial listing: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob . . . Rahab! To try to make the painting of our life look like the paintings of the lives of these heroes of faith is high art as far as God is concerned.

Among all the paintings, one is perfect. Paul said, “You became

imitators of us and of the Lord.”

Among all the pictures of lives lived, Jesus is the only perfect picture.

You can’t copy a picture if you don’t look at it often. Imitation is a constant referral and rearranging. Imagine the eyes of a person copying a painting. They flit back and forth from the master’s work to the imitation. That is the only way to get it right.

To copy Jesus’ life means to look at him often. You see him in his Word and in his worship. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

Try to paint a picture without looking at anything. Even the masters didn’t do that. The Mona Lisa was Leonardo Da Vinci’s copy of Lisa del Giocondo’s face and form. God made the original. Our life’s painting gets ugly and distorted when we take our eyes off Jesus and start to paint our own picture.

Imitation is a good thing. Children imitate their parents and things around them. We call it learning. Parents don’t resent it when children copy them—at least when they copy good things about them. C.C. Colton was right. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. By imitating Jesus we honor and praise God. He’s happy with that. He even helps us in our imitation.



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

# FORWARD

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A man sees firsthand what it means to be a Good Samaritan.

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## bits & pieces



Ask anyone who attended the convention what it was like, and one of the first adjectives you'll hear will be: "HOT!" That will quickly be followed by "exciting, interesting, inspiring." To learn more about why the delegates felt this way, turn to our convention coverage, which begins on page 20.

This year, all the convention decisions are being reported through *Forward/Northwestern Lutheran*. This October issue replaces the *WELS Herald* and is being sent to every congregation. Our thanks to the pastors who helped us update our numbers to determine this month's mailing.



Our cover story, "The samaritan in my house," is a modern day account of the Good Samaritan. See how a little child taught her parents the meaning of Jesus' parable. (p. 8)



For those who find history boring, don't miss "Digging in history's garbage pile." You'll learn how history comes alive through archaeology. (p. 10)



For 27 years, the longest consecutive period by a current contributing editor, Joel Gerlach has shared his unique editorial insights with our readers. This month's editorial completes his string. Many thanks and many blessings! We also welcome Jon Buchholz as a new contributing editor. He begins his stint with a Bible study containing Lessons from Job. (p. 34)



By the way, welcome to those who are reading this magazine for the first time. We hope you'll like what you see so much that you'll want to join us next month too. To subscribe, call 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8.

—LRB

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**I just read "Webs of intriguing possibilities" [August].** As much as it was a well-

written, general-purpose article, I feel strongly I must point out a flaw in an underlying assumption many WELS members have regarding the world wide web and our participation in it.

Our local newspaper cited the statistic that only one percent of the world's population has a computer. That means that 99 percent of the world's souls have no access to our Web sites. We dare not get all taken up with our technology, sprinkle some gospel on it, and be satisfied with our efforts. The Lord did not say, "E-mail the good news to all creation." He said, "Preach the good news to all creation." There is no substitute for personal evangelism.

*Jeff Koepsell  
Yakima, Washington*

**I poured over with great interest your article in the August issue on developing a church Web site.**

Having just finished a webmaster certification program, I published the beginning framework of a site for my congregation (Faith, Tallahassee, Fla.; <<http://members.spree.com/family/faith93/>>).

The tips in the article are right on the money for webmasters (although 100 bytes is really too small and probably meant to say 100 Kilobytes).

The Web presents a powerful means of reaching out, and we need to be prepared to take full advantage of it. Thanks for your help! I can't wait for our first visitor to give us a try because they saw our Web site.

*Gary R. Graves  
Tallahassee, Florida*

**Your article about the World Wide Web [August] listed eight keys to an active Web site.** Number four mentioned that a response is important. I would add that a prompt response is very important.

Recently I wrote to a pastor who encourages members in his bulletin to write him at his e-mail address. I did. He only checks his e-mail occasionally, maybe once a week. Another pastor tells me he rarely checks his personal and congregation's e-mail. Pastors and congregations who solicit people to contact them should check their e-mail/Web site once a day, at the very least.

Thanks for a fine magazine!

*Bill Finn  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin*

**I'd like to second Scott Welch's thanks [July] and add something**

that you may find interesting. In March of '97—about a month before our deployment to the Mediterranean—I and two other WELS members began gathering on Sunday afternoons for worship. Since that time, both of those WELS members (and the original eight prospects) have transferred off.

However, now—about two months before we begin our next Med—the Lord has blessed me with a group of seven "irregulars" (who attend the services as often as their fractured schedules will permit) and, as I write this, 18 additional prospects.

All praise and thanks to the Lord, for both the opportunity and the tool to take advantage of it.

*Kevin Rex Heine  
USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67)*

My husband and I do a lot of camping. We have been a little disappointed and frustrated because our WELS churches never have their **worship time on the campground bulletins** with the other churches. Today I was looking in our paper and not one of

our three churches there are listed. How will people know when and where our churches are if we don't let them know? To me it seems like we are hiding under a bushel basket or are too good to invite others.

*Alice Mehrkens*

**Thanks to Pastor James Aderman for his Bible study on Psalm 91.**

Some time ago the young man that is my WELS prison pen pal wrote, "Today I was led to Psalm 91 and I've been stuck there going over it, over, and over again . . . Can you give me some insight on why Psalm 91 might be standing out to me so strongly?"

When Pastor Aderman's lessons began, I started sending copies of *Northwestern Lutheran* to this young man, now 19. He wrote back, "Thanks for the *Northwestern Lutheran* and the psalms (a calendar of Psalm 23). You're right. They did in fact brighten my day."

*Trudy,  
last name withheld*

**A personal note:** This month's editorial (p. 7) concludes 27 years of service as a contributing editor to NL, during which my assignment was to provide commentary on the religious scene from a wider field. I want to publicly thank the hundreds of readers who commented on my efforts personally or by letter during those years, those who offered criticism as well as commendation. It has been a distinct privilege to be able to share my observations with NL readers.

*Joel C. Gerlach*

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <[nl@sab.wels.net](mailto:nl@sab.wels.net)>. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity and conciseness. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward/NL*.

# A question of indulgences—again

Joel C. Gerlach

For most of our 150 years, doctrinal integrity has been a hallmark of WELS. We say that, not with parasitical smugness, but with an awareness of the Spirit's role in making that a reality.

While WELS Lutherans are celebrating a century and a half of God's grace, many other Lutherans are in the process of diluting it—just as Luther predicted future generations of Lutherans would do. Nothing makes that more apparent than the spirit of compromise that has undermined a faithful commitment to the Lutheran Confessions.

Compromise is the only suitable way to explain Lutheran endorsement of the document that claims that Roman Catholics and Lutherans have reached agreement on the doctrine of justification.

Shortly after that document, "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," was signed in June, Pope John Paul II issued a proclamation making the year 2000 a Great Jubilee Year for Roman Catholics. This pronouncement calls for a restoration of the practice of granting indulgences and expands the ways church members can obtain them. (The selling of indulgences was what prompted Luther to draft the 95 Theses, spawning the Reformation.)

A papal spokesman, Monsignor Timothy Shugrue, said, "The indulgence is one of the spiritual privileges extended during jubilee. It's a way of applying the merits of the good deeds of the saints and the Virgin Mary and Christ himself to the rest of us."

So, the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" brings "an end to the deep divisions between Roman Catholics and Lutherans, and heralds the

eventual unification of the Christian Church"? Really? If the Pope's proclamation of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 is not an embarrassment to Lutherans who acclaimed the Joint Declaration as an agreement on justification, they ought to consider whether it is honest to call themselves Lutherans.

The "good deeds of the saints and the Virgin Mary" do not even justify them, much less anyone who seeks an indulgence. And "applying the merits of . . . Christ himself to the rest of us" is something God has already done as a result of Jesus' holy life and innocent death. Those merits are personally ours *sola gratia, sola fide*—by grace alone, through faith alone—not through the papal granting of indulgences.

If Lutherans who hailed the Joint Declaration as a step toward reunification with the Roman Catholic Church are red-faced because of the Pope's decision to grant indulgences again, then they ought to reexamine whether a genuine agreement on the doctrine of justification has actually been achieved.

What the Joint Declaration does is link the Lutheran understanding of being declared righteous by God with the Roman understanding of becoming righteous by living a sanctified life. That's not a real agreement. That's an agreement to disagree—on the teaching by which, as the Reformers said, "the church stands or falls."

In truth, we are still back to where we started on Oct. 31, 1517. The Pope has made it clear. It's a question of indulgences—again.

*Joel Gerlach is a retired pastor. In his retirement, he has served churches in Germany, New Jersey, Oregon, and Alaska.*

While WELS Lutherans are preparing to celebrate a century and a half of God's grace, many other Lutherans are in the process of diluting it.



# THE SAMARITAN

A daughter's example teaches the true meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Victor L. Vieth

When my wife, Lisa, and I moved from a modest Midwest town to the burgeoning metropolis of Washington, D.C., we tried to prepare our children for the culture shock. Monuments that touch the sky, subways that crawl inside the earth, and a sea of people greeted us at our journey's end. My son, Christian, wondered if this faraway city had a McDonald's. He found this and more.

Lisa and I were pleased when we settled into our middle class home and watched our children adjust to their new surroundings. We found a Lutheran church and school, and all seemed as it was before. There was, however, one startling difference. Many of our new neighbors were hungry.

## Teaching their daughter

Each time our family ventured into downtown D.C., we found our impoverished neighbors sleeping on benches, talking aimlessly in the park, and huddling near the warmth of heating vents and sewer grates. Often, our new neighbors approached us boldly and begged for money, food, and hope.

Seeing the poor up close and personal, our children asked questions. Why do some people sleep on the street? Why do some people push shopping carts when there is not a grocery store in sight? Why do some people answer voices only they can hear? Why do some people eat from dumpsters?

The homeless, we explained, are men, women, and children who have fallen on hard times. Physical and

mental handicaps, drug and alcohol addictions, mental illness, and the vagaries of human existence have left them on the sidewalks.

The hardest question, though, came from our then six-year old daughter, Naomi. The girl we raised to be a Christian was confused when her parents walked silently past this mass of neediness. Why, our daughter demanded, did we not give these poor souls a helping hand? Was this not the lesson of the Good Samaritan?

We smiled at our daughter's naivete. She did not yet realize the world is more complicated than a New Testament parable. We calmly explained that we do help the homeless by giving money to local shelters and a facility that provides free medical care for the uninsured. Naomi, however, worried that the homeless before her might not find the shelters to which her parents contributed.

We smiled again and explained that we did not give money directly to homeless individuals because we were not confident any one of them would spend our pennies wisely. Though Naomi remained unconvinced, we knew that she would grow to understand us. We never dreamed that we would grow in faith to understand our daughter.

## Teaching her parents

It was a sweltering summer day when Naomi taught us the true meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Lisa and I were walking with our children when we came

upon a beggar wearing tattered clothes and in need of a bath. Lisa and I, like the Priest and the Levite, passed the beggar by. Our daughter, however, did not pass to the other side of the road. Instead, Naomi opened her plastic purse and emptied her change into the man's hand. "God bless you," he said gratefully.

Like the Samaritan in Christ's parable, Naomi saw a man in need and "took pity on him" (Luke 10:33). She did not ask him if he was in some way responsible for his impoverished condition. She did not ask him if he would use her gift wisely. She did not ask for thanks. She saw a man's physical need and, in Christian love, did what she could.

Since that day, our family does not pass the homeless by. When we plan a trip to downtown D.C., we pack bags of food and pockets of change. We do this in remembrance of a Savior who, after telling the tale of the Samaritan, commanded us to "go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). It may be, of course, that some of what we give away falls into the hands of undeserving people. If this happens, I'm certain Jesus understands. After all, undeserved love is the hallmark of his life.

I was a little boy in Sunday school the first time I heard the parable of the Good Samaritan. I was a man of means when my daughter brought the message home.

*Victor Vieth is a member of Trinity, Woodbridge, Virginia. Naomi, now nine, is pictured above.*



# IN MY HOUSE

Why, our daughter demanded, did we not give these poor souls a helping hand? Was this not the lesson of the Good Samaritan?



## archaeology

We don't dig to prove the Bible. Rather, we dig to understand better the context in which the text of the Bible was written.

# Digging in history's garbage pile

John C. Lawrenz



“**är'kē-ōl'ə-jē**: the systematic recovery by scientific methods of material evidence remaining from man's life and culture in past ages, and the detailed study of this evidence.”

Never mind what the dictionary says. Archaeology is digging around in other people's garbage. “Digging” amounts to several thousand buckets of dirt picked, scooped, carried, dumped, and hauled away every day. “Garbage” includes tens of thousands of pieces of broken pottery, gathered, scrubbed, examined, sorted, and stored away for off-season study. It takes weeks to unearth the plan of a building.

Only occasionally does hard work pay off with a thing of special value that ancient looters somehow overlooked, such as the commemorative scarab of Pharaoh Amenhotep III found this June by Newton Trimmer, a second-year student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. He and 87 others took part in an archaeological excavation at Tel Yafo (biblical Joppa), a seaside enclave on

the southern edge of Tel Aviv, Israel.

Diggers labored for a couple of weeks, some for a month, and a few for all six weeks. Four AM wake-ups anticipated eight hours of hard work that ended an hour past midday. Gallons of water replaced buckets of perspiration. Food was familiar, yet with a decided Near Eastern flavor. Nights were spent in a youth hostel, simple yet air-conditioned. Sleep was deep and rewarding, following late afternoon lectures on the fine points of archaeological evaluation, chapel, and the last meal of the day.

Why dig? This question was asked of LIBRA (see box) leader Dr. John Lawrenz by an Israeli who is writing a book on why people do archaeology in Israel. “Not to prove the Bible,” replied Lawrenz. “Our faith convinces us that the Bible by its nature is God's truth. Rather, we dig to understand

The group working at Tel Yafo during the first two weeks of the six-week dig. Fifty WELS/ELS members participated during this time period, three-fourths of the group pictured. Eighty-eight WELS/ELS members participated over the entire six-week period.

better the context in which the text of the Bible was written.”

The interview led unavoidably into a discussion of Lutheran theology. “Lutherans believe that the God who fills the universe revealed his love for a troubled world by doing something that defies reason. He became human to live and die in our stead. Jesus of Nazareth was a real person. He lived in a real place at a real point in human history. The scriptures tell us how God prepared the world for his Son's coming and how God's good news was carried to the ends of the earth. God did all this through real people who also lived in real places.”

Lawrenz continued, “The Bible is real. So are things left behind by the real people who once lived in the land of the Bible. Archaeology is the painstaking work of human minds piecing together scraps of information over many seasons, from many



Diggers uncover a clay floor at the archaeological dig at Tel Yafo this past summer.

locations, and reflecting many academic disciplines. A mosaic eventually emerges that blends fact and interpretation.

“Scholars can either do a good job or a bad job of bringing written texts and archaeological context together. A lot depends on personal bias. Lutherans bring to the task the highest possible respect for the biblical text. No error should be read back into the text as a result of avoidable ignorance. This includes archaeological bits and pieces, even though they represent but a percent or two of what the ancients once possessed, and even though archaeology has dug up only a percent or two of the buried cities that survive. The Bible is a coherent, purpose-filled story that flowed from the mind of God working through his messengers. Archaeology, on the other hand, is an evolving story that scholars are reworking constantly as new facts come to light.”



*John Lawrenz, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education, led the LIBRA trip this past summer.*

This summer’s archaeological experience in Israel was carried out in cooperation with the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology. LIBRA is a consortium of five schools that work with the institute. The five are Bethany Lutheran Seminary and Bethany Lutheran College of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran College of WELS. LIBRA brought 88 ELS/WELS members, ages 17 to 70, to Tel Yafo in 1999. Each participant had the option to receive three summer school credits in field archaeology. LIBRA’s men and women were joined by other diggers from schools in the United States, Australia, Europe, and Israel.

LIBRA, organized in 1996, stands for Lutherans Integrating the Bible and Related Antiquities. Its motto is “text in context.” For more information and pictures, look for LIBRA under “links” on <[www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net)>.



Newton Trimmer with the commemorative scarab he discovered during the dig at Tel Yafo.

The commemorative scarab was something given to special guests of the pharaoh, not unlike the cufflinks given by U.S. presidents when guests visit the White House. The text begins with the fivefold title of the pharaoh, adds a tribute to his wife, and celebrates his hunting prowess.



The living Horus: Strong-Bull-  
Appearing-in-Truth;  
He of the two goddesses: Establishing-  
Laws/ Pacifying-the-Two-Lands;  
Golden Horus: Great-of-Valor-Smiting-  
the-Asiatics;  
King of Upper and Lower Egypt:  
Re-Lord-of-Truth;  
Son of Re: Amenhotep, ruler of Thebes,  
given life  
[together with] Great Royal Wife:  
Tiy, may she live!  
[They say:] “His majesty himself shot  
[with his bow]  
102 fierce lions in the first ten years  
of his reign.”



## Witnessing of Christ to non-Christians

Often we learn  
basic beliefs about  
non-Christian religions.  
What we really need  
to know is how to  
reach out to followers  
of those religions.

Mark J. Cares

“I don’t believe I did that!” said members of our congregation after inviting Mormon missionaries into their homes to witness to them. They took this step after ongoing encouragement and equipping.

Even more telling are some of their comments after those visits. “The young man really listened.” “It was obvious they appreciated someone being nice to them, even though we spoke frankly.”

Not every encounter is a “success,” in the sense that the missionaries listen, but surprisingly large numbers do. Most telling is that people continue to invite the missionaries in because they discovered how worthwhile it is.

### A call to witness

Why doesn’t this happen more often? Could it be that we don’t aim for it to happen? Imagine the following conversation in one of our churches:

“We just completed a Bible class on non-Christian religions. It was very informative. You should have taken it.”

“Sounds interesting. Besides learning about their beliefs, did you learn how to witness to them?”

“Uh, no, I don’t think so. Not that I can remember anyway.”

Classes on non-Christian religions are becoming commonplace in our congregations. It’s easy to understand why. World religions and cults have spread into every nook and cranny of America. Rare is the individual who hasn’t had some contact with a follower of a non-Christian religion. So, many of our people are learning more about those religions.

But what about learning to witness? How many classes go the next step by encouraging and equipping people to

reach out to people caught in these religions? More pointedly, how often does anybody notice this deficiency?

Equipping people to witness usually is not a major goal when such classes are offered. The usual goal is to inform people about the basic beliefs of a particular religion so neither they nor their loved ones become ensnared by it. That is a good goal, but is it good enough?

More troubling is when a study results in people ridiculing or becoming callous towards members of non-Christian religions. “I can’t believe anybody would be stupid enough not to believe in blood transfusions.” (Jehovah Witnesses do not allow blood transfusions.) “Those crazy Buddhists: burning incense and bowing down to a statue.” “It’s

no use trying to talk with Mormons. None of them will ever convert.”

Much more healthy is the attitude that humbly proclaims, “There but for the grace of God go I,” and then compassionately prays for and witnesses to such people. That, however, is easier said than done.

## The work of listening

All witnessing takes work, but witnessing to members of non-Christian religions often involves more work—particularly the difficult work of listening. Listening is an important (and often neglected) part of witnessing and is doubly important in this arena.

✕ **Members of non-Christian religions often define words differently than Christians do.** When we talk about the “kingdom of God” with Jehovah’s Witnesses, they think of something completely different than we do. Moslems do not employ a Christian concept of heaven. Therefore, they think of something entirely different if we throw out the term without careful explanation. To avoid talking past each other, words need to be carefully defined. It is especially helpful to know how they define words and phrases. That takes a lot of listening.

✕ **Members of non-Christian religions experience different stresses than Christians do.** We hit a brick wall when we assume that a particular aspect of their religion gives them great stress when, in reality, it affords them great comfort. For example, many people in cults are not troubled by, but rather find security in, the rigid discipline and minute rules of their particular cult. If we tell them there are many areas of life where the Bible

doesn’t give us rules, but rather offers us great freedom, they might find that thought extremely unattractive.

✕ **Members of non-Christian religions are troubled by different aspects of their religion than Christians are.** When we focus on something that bothers us about their religion but is something they regard as a great strength, we don’t get far. For example, many people joined the Mormon church because it made God understandable to them. Therefore when we talk to them about the Trinity, we get stopped right in our tracks. But when we talk to them about striving for perfection, something that does give them stress, their ears open up.

One of the best ways to grow in our faith is by sharing our faith.

✕ **Members of non-Christian religions rarely believe exactly the way their beliefs are explained in books.** (This also frequently holds true with members of Christian denominations. Many do not believe, or are not even aware of, some of their church’s historical beliefs.) If you don’t first listen to them and find out what they do believe, you might end up debating with them rather than witnessing about Christ. “As a Mormon, you believe that Jesus and Lucifer are brothers.” “I don’t know what you are talking about. I don’t believe that!” Imagine how quickly such a conversa-

tion can destroy any opportunity to share Christ.

## The value of acting

After all this, is it worth it? Yes! One of the best ways to grow in our faith is by sharing our faith. It is almost guaranteed that whenever we engage in an ongoing discussion with someone from a non-Christian religion, we will be driven back into our Bibles. We will need to revisit familiar biblical foundations in addition to exploring new biblical ground. Such biblical exploration invigorates faith.

Witnessing efforts are also part of faithful stewardship of the gospel. Jesus commanded us to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Faithful stewards of the gospel not only defend the gospel, but also go and share it with all people.

Such witnessing glorifies God. Not only is his saving work being proclaimed, but when we trust that his Word is powerful enough to bring even a zealot of a non-Christian religion to the truth, we are giving God glory. Conversely, think of the message being sent when Christians state that such witnessing is a waste of time, because none will convert anyway.

Finally, because God’s Word is so powerful, some will be brought into God’s kingdom. There will be ex-Moslems, ex-Buddhists, ex-Jehovah Witnesses, ex-Mormons in heaven. Although from different backgrounds, they will all have this in common: some Christian loved them enough to witness about Christ to them.

Will you be one of those Christians?



Mark Cares is pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.

Often people struggle with putting the principles referred to in this article into practice. A five-page document, “A Process for Witnessing in a Non-Christian World,” outlines one possible approach. Contact the Board for Home Missions, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3886.

# AFRICA

## —where religion makes headline news

### “Beleshi Kalyolyo’s disaster

**H**er confessions: I have already killed two people with my charm.

Her summit of anguish: I suddenly ran out of fuel and crushed (sic) on the roof” (*Sunday Times of Zambia*—Dec. 27, 1998)

The article below this shocking headline begins: “Reports of witches and wizards falling from skies continue to fill newspaper pages and airwaves amid heated debate on their verity. In the latest incident, 70-year-old Beleshi Kalyolyo confessed she crash-landed on the roof of witch-finder Joyce Kapambwe’s house . . . on the night of Dec. 15, 1998. Mrs. Kapambwe said she heard a loud thud on the roof and screams, only to find Mrs. Kalyolyo writhing in pain on the ground within the yard. . . . Mrs. Kalyolyo narrated to me . . . how she was initiated into witchcraft and how she crash-landed on Mrs. Kapambwe’s house. Mrs. Kalyolyo did not show any sign of senility or disorientation and she answered all the questions intelligently. She was alert throughout the interview. . . .”

A story like this is not extraordinary, nor intended to be humorous or sensational. This is deadly serious—and many accounts like it make the local “news” regularly in Africa. In the past, such vivid accounts were circulated by word of mouth. Recently, with greater press freedom and liberalized political

“Men of  
[Africa],  
I see that  
in every way  
you are very  
religious!”  
(Acts 17:22).

Salimo Hachibamba and  
Ernst R. Wendland

thinking, such stories are broadcasted more openly.

### But is this “religion?”

One may be tempted to ask, “But isn’t this merely an example of heathen ‘superstition?’ What does religion have to do with such fantastic stories?”

African Ancestral Religion (AAR) qualifies as a religion because all Bantu peoples recognize the existence of a supreme creator who is somehow responsible for the ongoing governance of the universe, including human morality.

According to most local beliefs, however, this so-called “High God” remains in the background. He leaves the management of everyday

affairs to a hierarchy of ancestral spirits (*mizimu*)—from departed family and relatives to the great semi-deities and nature-based totems of the tribe.

This highly personalized type of animistic religion reveres a vast society of spiritual beings that interacts with the visible world for good or evil. Though largely invisible, unrecorded (in sacred scriptures), and unmarked by permanent places of worship, AAR is extremely powerful, even in countries like Malawi and Zambia that boast a professed Christian community of over 50 percent. This ancient system of belief and ritual behavior influences people of all ages and social classes, from the womb to the tomb, and beyond.

Ancestral religion may be manifested anywhere, even within the sacred precincts of a modern church. Stories are told of pastors (not our own) who have “inoculated” or in some way treated themselves with preventative medicine to defend against attacks of malicious sorcerers lurking in their congregations. They forcefully preach their sermons to parishioners whose bodies are dotted with protective and good-luck charms—hidden in their pockets, around their waists, on their necks, in their hair.

### Religion, religion—everywhere

Africans are mostly very religious people. Religion is woven into the fabric of their culture and society. Local languages don’t even have a

generic word for the term—religion is just here, there, everywhere! Sad to say, however, often these traditional beliefs are allowed to coexist with those of adopted Christianity.

The result is syncretism, a fusion of faiths and a philosophy of life that relies upon either religion, depending on the situation. In general, “Christianity” is manifested in public on the ceremonial surface of religious affairs (baptisms, confirmations, weddings, major church festivals, and official functions). AAR takes over less overtly when crises of life strike, such as grave physical danger, prolonged illness, and the customs that pertain to man’s mortality. In Africa no death (even that of the very aged) occurs by “accident” or without some human cause. Thus, death—how to defend against it and how to deal with it—becomes for many the central focus of their lives and brings out the nefarious aspects of ancestral religion: witchcraft, sorcery, divination, taboo, and protective magic.

### AAR and the LCCA

Since its founding nearly 50 years ago, the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA) has been fighting AAR’s influence. The battle continues. At times it almost seems as if Satan has gained the upper hand, as the manifestations of witchcraft and sorcery do not appear to be abating in congregations and even on our theological training schools’ campuses.

Yet, perhaps there is another, more positive explanation for AAR’s persistent visibility. Due to more theologically-trained national clergy and biblically-educated laypersons, more cases of this faith-depleting disease are being “diagnosed” and dealt with God-pleasingly. Magical practice, witchcraft accusation, polygamy,

ancestral veneration, and divination that would have formerly gone unchallenged are being resolved in the all-penetrating light of Scripture. Key passages, such as Deuteronomy 18:10, are openly preached and discussed in Bible classes—then carefully applied to the indigenous cultural and religious setting. Lutherans are being challenged by the confessional stance of Joshua and educated about the spiritual weaponry they can use to ward off attacks of Satan and his demonic forces.

AAR also makes headlines in our national LCCA church paper, the *Lutheran Christian*. In April 1999, in addition to a Bible study about why “Christians do not need to fear witchcraft,” a feature article, “A practice that God hates,” challenges people to avoid the Central African religious equivalent of the “lodge”—“*Nyau*.” This quote shows that by God’s grace, the Devil is not getting all the press in Central Africa:

“A Chewa proverb says: *chikomekome cha mkuyu, mkati muli nyerere* [“A fig may look good on the outside, but the inside is filled with ants”]. When you see that the wicked practices of this world are very nice, just think about their ending. You might want to enjoy the outward practice of *Nyau*, but think where you will go after death. Because Satan himself is working in *Nyau*, he will not be happy to see that we are following the Lord. He will use our traditions, friends, and even relatives to discourage us from rejecting *Nyau*. As you are active in the Word of God, you will understand more and more the reason to run from *Nyau*, and you will receive the power to turn away. Use your Bible as a weapon to defeat the tricks of the Devil—like *Nyau*!”



Village elders who dance the Gule Wamkulu (the big dance) use this mask. The main function of Gule Wamkulu, a secret society popular in the central region of Malawi, is to preserve African traditional beliefs, including reincarnation and spiritism.

That is excellent biblical advice for all of WELS too. What is the “*Nyau*” or other diabolical influence that needs to be defeated in our lives? It probably has nothing to do with our ancestors, but is more likely to be associated with the rank hedonistic materialism that has fatally captivated our secular age. The spiritual danger, however, is just as great—and the spiritual solution just as inviting: “(God) commands all people everywhere to repent” and to put their living trust in the risen Savior-Lord whom “he has appointed” (Acts 17:30,31).

Salimo Hachibamba is a national pastor in the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Dr. Ernst R. Wendland is the language coordinator for that field.

# The head

**P**olitically correct pundits are changing their tune. Well, maybe it's the same tune, but at least it's set to a different arrangement. Just a few years ago divorce, Murphy Brown, and homosexuality were touted as acceptable norms.

Increasingly, however, marital infidelity and parental neglect are taking a devastating toll on our youth. Across the country, teachers struggle to manage classrooms, juvenile crime is skyrocketing, gang activity and drive-by shootings target the innocent, and elementary schools fear gun-toting students.

## How men fail family

So polite conversation is pulling back from “alternate lifestyles,” and suddenly the “good of our children” is the hot topic. It's become obvious, even to those who defend moral aberration, that we are producing a generation of little monsters. These spiritually disabled children are created in monstrous families. A monster is a beast with more than one head—or no head at all.

Men must accept most of the blame for America's headless and two-headed families. When sin interrupted the peace of the perfect family in Eden, God held the man primarily responsible. God appointed Adam the head of his family. But when trouble threatened his family, Adam failed

**Men  
should follow  
Jesus' lead and  
head their families  
with love, sacrifice,  
and the Word.**

**Wayne D. Mueller**

his God-given role. That's why God called on the first man to account for the tragedy.

Adam's sin, my sin, and the sin of all men, is the sin of omission. Either we fail to lead at all, or we fail to be spiritual heads of our families. Men who control their families in a legal, worldly way make even godly women leery of male headship. Husbands and fathers looking for the meaning of headship should not look to the first Adam or his sinful progeny. Instead, we look to our own head, Christ, the second Adam. Jesus earned his headship of the family of believers by providing for his body, the church, what the first Adam failed to give.

## How the heart fits in

What makes for a Christ-like husband and father? Many men are looking for answers. Too often, however, they are asking the wrong questions. They want quick-fix approaches to family leadership that will quickly endear them to their wives and children. Should I bring flowers, do the dishes, communicate better, change the diapers, spend more quality time?

But the Bible is remarkably short on specifics. God inspired the Scriptures for personalities and

# of the home

cultures of all times and places. God is not into providing short-term hints. By holding Jesus up as men's head, God aims for their heart. Above all he wants men to come to Jesus in repentance and faith. He wants men to kneel before their Savior in sorrow for their failures and stand again to take joy in their salvation.

With such faith in Jesus, men begin to understand the nature of spiritual family leadership. “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23). Paul's picture of Christ and the church calls on men to express their faith. It is not a list of hints and how-to's but an appeal to man's mind and attitude.

Listen how Paul aims at the heart of family leaders: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word” (Ephesians 5:25,26).

## How faith exercises headship

Three important characteristics of Jesus' loving headship emerge from these verses. Jesus heads his family, the church, with love, sacrifice, and the Word.

A Christian man's headship in the home begins, as Christ's does, with love. A man's love for his wife and children flows naturally from his love for himself. And his love for self grows as his trust in the



Savior's forgiveness increases. With their pasts erased, men learn to see themselves as God sees them, righteous in the merits of Christ.

Loveless headship comes from men who do not love themselves and therefore cannot love their family. Their guilty consciences chafe under God's law. Their anger spills out on others. A bad day at work and they come home to kick the dog and fight with their wives. They misconstrue headship as laying down the law, and that's how they try to lead others. By nature, men tend toward legal domination instead of loving headship.

But through faith in Jesus we become dead to law. Yes, we men are chauvinistic. But Jesus became our brother to cancel out our patronizing sins. Yes, men act selfishly toward their wives and children. But our unselfish Head came to serve and give his life as a ransom for us.

Men who love as Christ loved also seek to sacrifice as he sacrificed. Worldly leaders expect their subjects to make sacrifices for them. But the cross testifies to Christian men that their head sacrificed himself for his subjects. And what good thing will God withhold from those for whom he has already sacrificed his Son?

A man whose head is Christ imitates his unselfish spirit. His wife's and family's needs outweigh 4x4's, fishing boats, golf, and endless hours away from home. Just as the church sees the cross at the center of Christ's headship, the family led by a godly man can see the sacrifice in his attitudes and actions.


The '90s man, we are told, is a communicator. That's old news.

Paul writes that Jesus transmitted his love to the church "by the washing of water by the Word" (Ephesians 5:26). That is an obvious reference to baptism. Through the power of God's Word both in sacraments and the gospel, Jesus communicates everything God does for his family of believers.

Adam failed when he did not communicate God's words to his wife at a time when she most needed to hear them. Husbands will steer away from his sin to follow their spiritual head, the second Adam.

The communication a godly man receives from his head he in turn shares with those he loves the most. He reads the Bible for himself and for his family. He offers the full message of Scripture, not just the moral rules, but above all the good news of forgiveness. His attendance at worship and Bible study in church speaks louder than the orders he shouts at home. His house is a place where Jesus feels at home. He surrounds his loved ones with Christian art, music, and literature. He tempers his direction with encouragement and follows up on his discipline with forgiveness. He provides first for the soul, then for the body.

Man's leadership of the home includes moral authority. But his love, sacrifice, and communication of God's Word create the atmosphere in which his headship is received. God urges men of faith to love their wives "just as Christ loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25). Christ led with his heart. When our head touches our heart, we will also lead our families to Jesus.

  
*Wayne Mueller is the administrator of the Board for Parish Services.*



# A church

Crown of Life is working on a big—but not so easy—transition in the Big Easy.

# change

Julie K. Tessmer



## Transitions

are important tools for writers. Without them the article will be confusing, and readers won't keep reading. You need a connection from one thought to the next so the whole article will flow.

Crown of Life, New Orleans, La., is working on its own transition—and it's not in their church newsletter. It's changing from a congregation of WELS transplants to a multi-cultural congregation of native New Orleanians.

Although these changes aren't easy, one thing won't change in the process—the message of salvation Crown of Life is giving to the people of New Orleans.

### Why it's changing

Crown of Life, consisting mostly of WELS transplants from the Midwest, began in 1972. They had their share of ups and downs since then, including losing a third of their members in 1986 because they lost their jobs due to an oil bust.

Then the church's neighborhood began to change. People transferring to New Orleans moved into the suburbs, not the city. Those already living in the city moved too.

"When I moved here 13 years ago, the neighborhood was half white, half black. Now it's 85 percent black," said David Sternhagen, pastor

at Crown of Life. "Only two people on my block have been here longer than I." This made it hard to retain members but gave Crown of Life countless opportunities to reach out.

### Changing for the community

But in order to reach out, the congregation had to change. Previous outreach methods didn't make the same impact in this changing neighborhood.

Crown of Life is now giving an added emphasis to family and community. By becoming involved in the community and having community events at the church, more people are becoming aware of the church and its members, as well as WELS and its teachings.

"In the process of their coming and going, they see our church and meet our people and see who we are," said Sternhagen. "We can show them that we're regular people—we don't have three arms."

This year the congregation sponsored Creolefest, a community event with singing, crafts, and food. "We're trying to incorporate things into the congregation that are typically New Orleans type stuff," said Sternhagen.

They also had a homework help program, in which volunteers helped neighborhood children with their homework after school. Parents and children from this program are still attending church, and the congrega-

tion made many good contacts.

Next year they're looking to provide day care. "Any way we can make contacts with people is good," said Sternhagen. "Then we can get them the message of the Savior."

Though Crown of Life is changing physical programs to work with their changing neighborhood, it's not compromising spiritually. And that's really what keeps people coming back.

"There is a closeness in our church. They [members] don't come here because Grandma came here," said Sternhagen. "Those who find out why we exist and why we're here, come because of a conviction in their heart. That makes our congregation closer and more like a family."

### Changing in the church

But even families need to work through problems. Changing from a congregation of mostly white members to a church that is 75 percent black left room for growth—for the entire congregation.

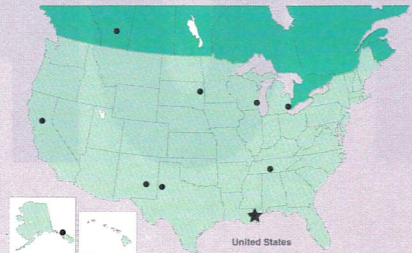
Some members weren't ready for this change and left the church. The remaining are working to better understand each other.

Education about the different cultures is the key, according to one member. "[Blacks and Whites] don't know about each other. If you don't know about each other, you're naturally afraid." That fear may cause



### Crown of Life

Founded: 1972  
 Communicants: 77  
 Souls: 105  
 Pastor: David Sternhagen  
 11721 Morrison Rd,  
 New Orleans LA 70128-2035  
[www.acadiacom.net/wtheard/col\\_home/](http://www.acadiacom.net/wtheard/col_home/)



★ = featured congregation  
 • = congregations already featured

misunderstandings and difficulties.

But the more you know about the differences—and the similarities—the less afraid you'll be.

"There are cultural differences, but they don't mean so much because we have the same values," said Elijah Oliver, church council president.

Though this change isn't easy and can't be made overnight, Crown of Life is working on it. According to Sternhagen, one way is by celebrating differences rather than accentuating them. On "Heritage Day," members bring food and dress according to their culture. While eating their bratwurst and greens, members talk about their backgrounds, so they can understand each other better.

Because once they understand each other, they will be better able to reach out to all nations.

"Some churches work as social clubs," said Oliver. "But we have to reach out to all kinds of people and accept them—whether they be Vietnamese, Blacks, or Whites."

So as Crown of Life continues to make its own transition, it also will be helping others with another transition—a change from unbelief and confusion to saving faith in our unchanging Lord.

### Pastor David Sternhagen shares two stories that relate the strong faith of his members in times of death:

I went to visit a member who was dying of liver cancer. The time was close. I joined the procession of those who were coming to say their last farewells. As I talked with George he told me how people didn't seem to know what to say. He said, "I wish they would just say, 'It's been nice to know you. Too bad you have to go. Have a good time.'" What a nice view of a Christian's life, death, and eternal life!

One of the men I miss the most is LeRoy. LeRoy always wanted to be a Lutheran pastor. But growing up as a black child, with all Baptist family members, he never got the opportunity. But he supported my ministry and the ministry of the church with contagious enthusiasm. He was always there to help with any project I came up with. One day I came to the church, and he was working on the front doors of the church. While working on those doors he had a heart attack. I took him to the hospital, but the Lord took him home. I couldn't help thinking of the psalm, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked" (Psalm 84:10). A fitting death for one of God's great doorkeepers.

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



The "Spice Boys" work hard to prepare food for a fellowship meal.

# WELS moves FORWARD in Christ



**M**etal folding chairs all in rows. Sweaty bodies, sardine-like in the chairs, barely tolerating the 95-degree heat and high humidity. Stacks of handouts, hours of committee meetings, two years worth of reports. Huge fans, small fans, glasses of ice water. More than enough food and too-little exercise. Bible study, worship, fellowship. Thankfulness, encouragement, trust. Teamwork, debate, closure.

All this and more marked the 55th biennial convention of WELS in New Ulm, Minn., on July 26-30.

Before sounding a resounding "ho-hum!" (aren't they all like that?), know that this convention had the spirit of Forward in Christ all through it.

Former synod president Carl Mischke set the stage in his opening sermon: "With grateful acknowledgment of God's grace in the past, with fervent prayer for God's continued grace in the present, and with joyful response to God's grace as we look to our future—let the celebration

begin. . . . Let us move boldly and confidently forward in Christ."

## Time to celebrate

So, the synod in convention unanimously resolved to "encourage all members of our synod (districts, conferences, circuits, individual congregations, schools) to participate in the planned activities of this celebration."

The celebration, commemorating 150 years of grace as a synod and the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' birth, will continue through the 2001 convention. Special worship services are planned for Reformation, Oct. 31, 1999; next New Year's Eve and Day; Anniversary Sunday, June 11, 2000; and Lent, March/April 2001.

Each congregation is encouraged to use the anniversary Bible study on Acts, which helps us see our WELS history alongside the early church's, to become active in Outreach 2000, and to support the special thank offering.

Let's all participate "wholeheartedly," voters urged, "with appropriate focus on God's blessings to us and his command to further his kingdom." They also had in mind a thank offering as part of the celebration. They resolved, "that this offering be

conducted in a way that maintains focus on the celebration and complements it as an appropriate way to express thankfulness to God."

## Opportunity to show our thanks

The offering has no set dollar goal. The emphasis will be on Christian stewardship and giving thanks to God. Donors can designate gifts for three projects: (1) mission/outreach, (2) Martin Luther College (MLC) chapel, and (3) WELS heritage (synod archives).

Undesignated gifts will be allocated according to a list of projects, with heavy emphasis on outreach. The first \$12 million will go to mission projects/scholarships, the next \$8 million to the MLC Chapel Project (\$3 million of it for master plan alterations), \$7.9 million more for outreach, then \$2.1 million for the Heritage Project. Including an additional \$15.8 million worth of un-prioritized projects, we have over \$45 million of opportunities set before us.

Voters discussed considerably the list of projects for the offering. They considered hard questions: Why not more new missions? Why not more dorms at MLC? Why not more student aid? Why this particular

## Getting involved with Forward in Christ

The synod convention kicked off the WELS 150th anniversary celebration. Gerald Free, director of the Forward in Christ (FIC) celebration, talked about its importance.

"We want to stimulate and bring joy to our people," he said. "We [WELS] are so happy with what God has given us and we want to say thank you."

He listed the five objectives of the celebration:

- Remember God's blessings
- Rejoice, pray, praise, and give thanks
- Grow in our understanding of Christ's blessings
- Spread the good news about Christ
- Involve all the people

Free's main duty is encouraging pastors and members to get involved. He has been communicating with district FIC committees, churches, schools, and parasynodical organizations. "Our goal is to have all 1,268 congregations involved," he said.

But even individuals can get involved. "This is a celebration from the grassroots," said Free.

- Do activities connected with the number 150.

- ✓ Give \$150 to a special fund, such as the Student Assistance Fund, which helps pay for the education of future teachers and pastors; the special FIC offering; or one of the WELS mission boards.
- ✓ Write 150 letters to missionaries, schools, or prisoners.
- ✓ Memorize 150 Bible passages or hymn verses.
- Research WELS history. Reflect on the blessings God has given WELS in the past, and think about where WELS should go in the future.
- Schedule daily Bible readings.
- Pray. Thank God for all he has done for our synod and ask for opportunities to share the Word with others.
- Get involved in congregational, circuit, and synod FIC events.

All activities should help the mission and ministry of the congregation. Free stressed that whatever you do, "put the emphasis on Christ and the gospel, because that's where the power is."

**A bird's eye** view of the convention. A total of 436 delegates—184 laymen, 79 teachers, 117 pastors, and 56 advisory delegates—attended the four-day convention held at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.



chapel? Assured that those issues are receiving proper attention, and that the listed projects are a fitting way to glorify God and to leave a memorial to his grace, the program passed by voice vote.

### Forward in ministerial education

Only once the assembly called for a division of the house—regarding Minnesota state licensure for MLC teacher graduates. Some delegates expressed concern that part of student teaching will be in public

schools. Delegates were assured that MLC retains considerable control over the program and that without licensure some WELS schools, notably in Washington, are in jeopardy. The measure passed 259-71. If any problems arise that cannot be resolved in a manner harmonious with God's Word, MLC will discontinue the state licensure program.

In a similar action, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., was approved to begin seeking accreditation with the Association of

Theological Schools. Such accreditation does not judge the institution's doctrinal position or compromise its confessional integrity.

MLC was directed to design its first masters degree program, offering courses toward a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, by summer 2001. The Synodical Council is to "give high priority to funding for this program."

Because of increased enrollments, our ministerial education schools face a number of anticipated needs

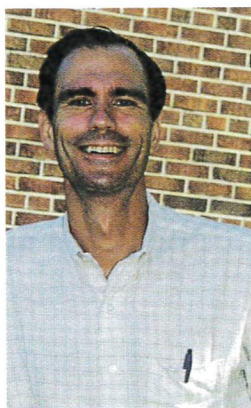


**Nancy Koeplin**, past president of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, presents a Forward in Christ flag to President Karl Gurgel. At the start of the convention, LWMS members presented flags and facts from all the countries where WELS does mission work. The FIC flag will hang at the Synod Administration Building in Milwaukee.



**William Meier** (right), pastor at St. Thomas, Phoenix, Ariz., visits with Peter Markgraf, teacher at St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis., and his family during free time at the convention. Meier stepped down after 18 years of serving both the Synodical Council and as chairman of the Board for World Missions.

## Missionary profile



**Charles Gumm** has been a missionary at Sao Paulo, Brazil, for 10 years. He and wife, Wendy, and their children live 700 miles from the nearest missionary family. The three other Brazil missionaries are Charles Flunker, Bruce Marggraf, and Guy Marquardt.

### The joy of life in Brazil

"I enjoy living there. I feel guilty when I say I have fun. Sometimes there's a perception that missionaries need to feel like martyrs because we've left everything behind. I've received so much back that I feel the things I've given up are small."

### The joy of family

"We went to another country, so we had to depend on family. True, family life is more intense. Maybe we fight more, but we make up and we depend on each other. We develop strong relationships. Too many people are so busy looking for fun. We have fun with our family."

### His wife's importance to the mission work

"Wendy is involved every day. She is as important to the work as I am. Because Brazil

is a macho society, Wendy alleviates people's fears of calling or coming into the center. She's such a people person that people seem to relate to her because she doesn't have an answer for all of life's circumstances."

### Watching members grow

"Dora, a 29-year-old woman, came to Sao Paulo for college. She now works in the fashion industry. She came to the Christian Information Center and has been there about three years. She struggles because it's such a sensual society. She catches flack from friends for not succumbing to temptation. Yet Dora keeps witnessing. It's so great to see how she is standing strong in her faith—all only after three years."

### The people he works with

"I work with doctors, lawyers, professionals. I need to gain credibility because professionals tend to look at American religious people as simple.

"The Christian Information Center is in a 1 1/2 mile radius of 400,000 people. (That's equal to the number of all WELS members.) But only last year did we get six communicant members, and 15 people regularly attend.

"Even though the going is slow, I've got to believe that the Lord's got people there for me. It calls for lots of patient perseverance—not prayer alone. I get busy after prayer time, doing creative things to attract people. I work hard to do God's work."

for residence space, classrooms, and other facilities. The convention charged the Synodical Council to address the most urgent needs as they arise and to keep members of the synod informed.

### Forward in parish service

In this time of untold blessings, WELS also faces critical challenges. We have, for example, a shortage of church musicians. To fill the void, it was resolved "that the Commission on Worship be encouraged to explore

the production and offering of MIDI [Music Instrument Digital Interface] music files and other computer generated music" for our churches.

We need to improve the training of our children in God's Word. To that end, "we praise God for the blessing of the *Christ-Light*® curriculum" and encourage our congregations to continue to pursue the *Christ-Light* goal of involving parents more in Christian nurture at home. We also support the priority of the Commission on Youth

Discipleship to get a full-time assistant as a two-year pilot project to help strengthen our Sunday schools.

WELS prison ministry has 1,400 volunteer pen pals, distributed 140,000 Bibles and 300,000 Bible study guides and 100,000 newsletters in four years, and corrects over 360 Bible study tests a week. The assembly, therefore, concurred with the Synodical Council to fund a full-time man to coordinate this expanding program.



## The important work

Although a lot of work needed to be done at the convention, delegates did not skip the most important work—Bible study and worship. The convention opened and closed with worship. Each morning and afternoon session began with a devotion. In addition, delegates had four one-hour Bible studies.

The six-lesson Bible study, “Anniversary Reflections: The Book of Acts and The History of the Wisconsin Synod” by John M. Brenner, will be included in *Proceedings*, and one copy was sent free to each congregation. The first part of each lesson explores the Bible. The second part explores the history of WELS, your congregation, and your faith. You can order more copies from Northwestern Publishing House.

**Each day**, everyone at the convention attended a Bible study. This opportunity reminded attendees of the blessings they’ve been given and the opportunities in front of them.

## Forward in mission outreach

The call to tell all people about Christ dominated delegates’ thinking. They resolved to “encourage WELS to actively reach across cultural barriers to ensure the spread of the Word of God is not delayed by cultural differences.” They called for increased efforts to serve WELS students on college campuses and to work among international communities on campus. They supported “the creative use of staff ministers, laypeople, and teachers to help in all ministries” and “the continued energetic opening of new mission stations.” They called for the Church Extension Fund (CEF) Board to keep the CEF program before WELS members to help build missions.

As we go forward with the gospel worldwide, the Board for World Missions (BWM) will continue to work with all synodical divisions. The board should continue using alternate mission strategies such as the Multi-Language Publication

Program, technical advances in education and communication, and cross-cultural orientation for missionary candidates to make the most of every mission opportunity.

Delegates also encouraged increased use of qualified teachers and laypeople in foreign fields. To that end, the Southeast Asia Administrative Committee is to explore sending teachers into China to teach English and ultimately share the gospel.

East Fork Lutheran High School (EFLHS) on the Apache Reservation has been asked to find a way to fund the school outside of the synod budget. The synod in convention, however, encouraged the BWM to seek funding for EFLHS through the school year 2000-01. EFLHS is to present its plans in the 2000 *Report to the Twelve Districts* for the transition to self-support and for the training of indigenous Apache pastor and teacher candidates.

The Multi-Language Publication Program (MLPP) has benefited the work in Latin America and beyond

with doctrinally sound foreign language materials. To help the program keep an aggressive schedule, the synod in convention encourages WELS agencies, including Northwestern Publishing House, to work with MLPP to improve their printing, storage, and distribution.

## Forward by all means

Thankful for the communications achieved through *Forward/Northwestern Lutheran*, the WELS Web site, and other media, delegates asked the Communication Services Commission to promote especially the use of the lesser-known *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, *Lutheran Educator*, *Mission Connection*, and *Lutheran Leader*.

Acknowledging the growing role of technology in our ministry, voters called for further development of the WELS technology infrastructure and for plans to make sure the work of the Tel/Tech Task Force continues permanently.

As the Publication Coordinating Commission assesses the publishing

# WELS 55th biennial convention

plans of WELS boards and agencies, they are also to create a list of materials that WELS should publish.

The Committee on Relief and BWM's newly formed Humanitarian Aid Committee were acknowledged with thanks. Their roles in supporting the gospel ministry will be further clarified to the congregations.

Our WELS Support Committee helps 63 households, and congregations are asked to do all they can to make sure called workers can retire in reasonable comfort.

The work of the WELS Historical Institute is "commended and encouraged across our synod." Also, without downplaying the need for improving the synod's archives and promoting the WELS Heritage Project, voters asked the responsible parties to explore less expensive means of maintaining and storing our synod's archive materials than presently envisioned.

The synod commends Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) for producing solid confessional materials, urges NPH to continue doing so and

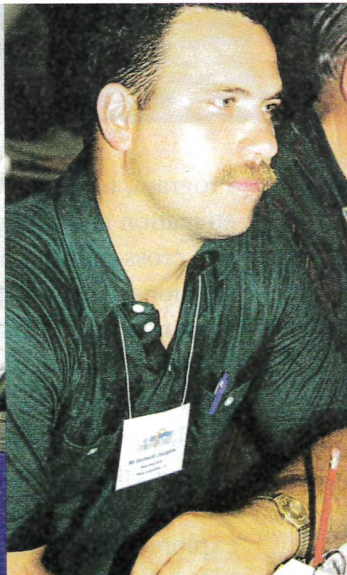
to seek a wider audience than WELS, and calls for WELS congregations and individuals to use and promote NPH publications.

## Support for going forward

The Mission Objectives Vision (MOV) statement reminds us that the Word is everything. We are to go with it, study it, apply it, and teach it. To make the statement more meaningful, the Synodical Council is asked to reformat the MOV in a way that clearly articulates what our

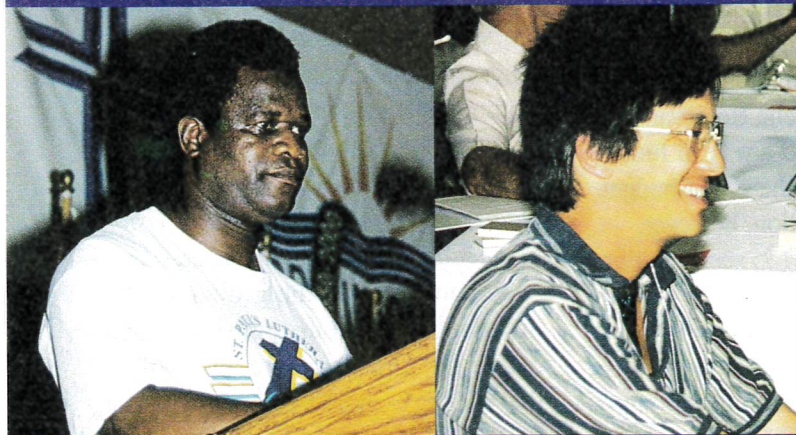


**Gerhardt Cares**, chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Matters, found a way to battle the heat by bringing his personal fan each day.



**Gerhardt Jurgens**, a 31-year-old member at Our Redeemer, Ladysmith, Wis., was a delegate from the Western Wisconsin District. This former farmer was out in the field one day when some farm equipment caught on his pants and tore off the lower part of his leg. He limped to the barn, made an emergency phone call, and passed out.

As he was home recovering, he realized he needed a career change. Don Sellnow, his pastor at the time, encouraged him to consider training for the public ministry. Jurgens did and is now in his third year at Martin Luther College, studying to become a pastor.



**Daison Mabedi**, from Lilongwe, Malawi, is a pastor in the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Mabedi visited the convention after attending summer quarter at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

**Gregory West**, layman from St. Paul Park, Minn. Delegates met from 8:30 AM to 5 PM every day and had committee meetings, open forums, longer sessions, or worship in the evening.



**The four presidents** of the WELS synodical schools and the Board for Ministerial Education's chairman. From left: Pastor Paul Prange, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw; Pastor Donald Sutton, BME chairman; Pastor David Valleskey, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon; Pastor Theodore Olsen, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Pastor Mark Schroeder (at podium), Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.



synod plans to do, under God's guidance and blessing, in the future.

The assembly adopted the proposed called worker compensation schedules and supported an improved pension plan to begin Jan. 1, 2000. The new plan will increase pension benefits of current workers up to 17 percent and raise retiree benefits a minimum of five percent.

Budgets of \$50,334,700 and \$52,666,700 were approved for the two years of the biennium with the prayer for God's blessing on his

people to prompt increasing gifts out of love for Christ.

The Commission for Communication and Financial Support (CCFS) was commended for its faithful work, emphasizing giving that is compelled by the love of Christ and that supports our worldwide mission. Delegates encouraged CCFS to explore a direct congregational support program that includes regular communication and personal involvement between the congregation and the

mission. The assembly also authorized calling three additional planned giving counselors.

Responding to concerns about the process of calling public ministers, delegates instructed the Conference of Presidents to publish a statement outlining the scriptural doctrine of the call along with practical guidelines explaining our practices.

### Forward as Lutherans

WELS continues to monitor relations with other Lutheran bodies

## Heard at the convention

### Walter Beckmann, 150th anniversary committee chairman, at the closing service

Let's make outreach for Christ the main thrust of our celebration. In our personal lives, in our congregations, in our districts and synod as we plan our celebration may our greatest concern be and remain: How can we invite others to come and celebrate God's blessings of salvation with us?

### Carl Mischke, former synod president, at the opening service

The underlying emphasis of this anniversary is not on people, not on what individuals have done, but rather on what God has done through them.

### Arvid Schwartz, Synodical Council laymember

In the time I have talked here this afternoon—roughly 30 minutes—another 1,000 or 1,100 people have joined the ranks of those headed to hell.

And we've been sitting here thinking we're really busy.

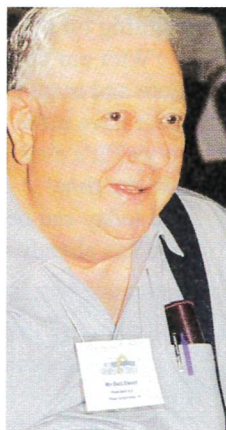
God said just go and do it [witness] and I'll bless that work. I promise you that.

### Paul Wendland, essayist and MLC professor

Brothers and sisters: we can make brave plans at this convention for reaching out institutionally with the gospel both in America and abroad, but if we don't each in humble, heartfelt repentance ask Jesus to come back into our homes with his Word, all those brave plans won't amount to a hill of beans.

Go out and be what God has made you. You're his own dear child. He's your Father. Dare to be different. Be ruthless in ridding your life of everything that defiles. Be passionate in your pursuit of everything that's good and right and true.

## Delegate profile



**Name:** Earl Ewert

**Hometown:** Township of Mecan, Wis. (right outside of Montello)

**Church:** Earl, a layman, represents two churches: Emmanuel, outside of Montello, Wis., and St. John, Montello

**Occupation:** Retired. He now serves as town board chairman and county supervisor. But he says, "I'm not a politician!"

**His thoughts on the opening service:** "It was awesome, inspiring. I shook in my boots when I heard all those voices. I thought the roof was going to come down."

**What impressed him about the convention:** "It was a really democratic process."

*He also enjoyed the committee work—and all the people that contributed:*

"I was impressed by the younger people and all their common sense and knowledge. I won't be here again, but they may be, and that's encouraging."

*Not to mention the food . . .*

"The food was excellent. Those cooks should all get a kiss on the cheek."

*And overall . . .*

"It was a pleasant experience. A little warm, but . . ."

**What he wants to bring back to his congregation:** "I want to give all the facts and figures to my congregation. You tell anyone that you need money, and that doesn't mean anything. You can't just throw out something without background—people won't understand. I want to bring my congregation the whole picture."

# WELS 55th biennial convention



**President Karl Gurgel** opens his commemorative 150th anniversary gift. The storybook crystal he received is only one of a number of memorabilia available to WELS members. Catalogs were mailed to each congregation in July. For more information, contact your pastor or Communication Services <nl@sab.wels.net>.

**WHEN OPENING HIS SYNOD CONVENTION ADDRESS**, President Karl Gurgel remarked, “No wonder we move forward into the third millennium with confidence, following our leader. With what he has done for us in the past, we move forward toward what he has promised us. Forward in Christ we go, together.”

He then presented six challenges to delegates and all WELS members.

**First challenge: Speak the truth in love.**

“Rather than teaching us how to avoid controversy at all costs, Paul, for God, is instructing us in the proper attitude of heart when we speak God’s truth.” (For more on this challenge, see p. 35.)

**Second challenge: Become lovingly color-blind when it comes to reaching out with the gospel.**

“We are to see everyone, regardless of their color, in the only light God sees them: redeemed, through the saving blood of Jesus Christ.”

**Third challenge: Loving the Word, building on the Word.**

“With our constant need to know more and more about everything, we don’t have more time for Bible study, do we? It’s even more important that we take the time! . . . Nothing that can be said today can be as important as what God has already said to us.”

**Fourth challenge: Seeing his love make our faith fruitful.**

“Nothing other than Christ’s love is to be behind all that we do. It’s as vital as breath in moving forward in Christ.”

**Fifth challenge: Work together, loving the brotherhood.**

“Unity is not achieved in the sameness of the gifts, but in the sameness of the giver along with the sameness of the purpose [God] had in giving us distinctive gifts.”

**Sixth challenge: Recruit and train others to share Christ’s love.**

“Our prayer is heard and answered every time the Lord gives us one more pastor, teacher, or staff minister. We do pray for more of them. But the Lord’s prayer is also answered when through these called workers we are all encouraged and equipped to serve him.”



**Estelle Vaichinger** (left), the president’s secretary, and Betty Bertschy, secretary to the vice president of mission and ministry and the executive director of support services, worked hard during the convention. They prepared materials for the Synodical Council and worked on *Proceedings*, the book that reports what happened at the convention.



**Pastor Joel Frank**, Nebraska district president (left), and Pastor Ken Lenz, from Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Milwaukee, have some fun during free time at the convention.

around the world. We are thankful for fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany, and 13 other church bodies who with WELS comprise the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. We pray we may one day establish fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession on the basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Delegates continue to watch for positive developments in the

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. They expressed regret over the ecumenical decisions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, which “are contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures regarding Holy Communion, justification, and fellowship, and undermine the gospel by tolerating or accepting false teaching.”

Every member of WELS is encouraged to study the newly revised WELS doctrinal pamphlet *This We Believe*, available from NPH.



**Michael Woldt**, convention host, addresses the delegates.

## Election results

**President**—Karl R. Gurgel  
*After being reelected for his fourth term as synod president, Gurgel remarked:*  
 “What right do I have to have the awesome privilege to serve you? It would be false humility to say I don’t have any gifts to serve. But it would be outright arrogance to say I have all the gifts I need. That’s why I’m so grateful that I serve among you and with you. Together God has blessed us with all we need to move forward in Christ. Continue to pray for me and my family, that God would keep us ever humble and ever trusting, knowing his grace.” He asked for prayers for his wife, Barbara, “for helping me to serve you.” He ended with, “May God allow us to go forward in Christ.”

**Second vice president**—  
 Jon Mahnke

**BOARD FOR WORLD MISSIONS**  
 Chairman—Philip Koelpin  
 Member at-large layman—  
 David Sauer

**Latin American Missions**  
 Pastor—Gregory Lenz  
 Layman—Carl Toepel

**Native American Missions**  
 Layman—Duane Backhaus

**Africa Missions**  
 Pastor—Peter Zietlow  
 Teacher—Jeffrey Dorn

**Japan Europe Asia Missions**  
 Layman—Daniel Carow

**Southeast Asia Missions**  
 Pastor—David Dolan  
 Layman—Richard  
 Engelmann

**BOARD FOR PARISH SERVICES**  
 Member at-large layman—  
 Victor Manian

**Commission on Worship**  
 Chairman—Mark Bitter

**Commission on Special Ministries**  
 Chairman—David Timm

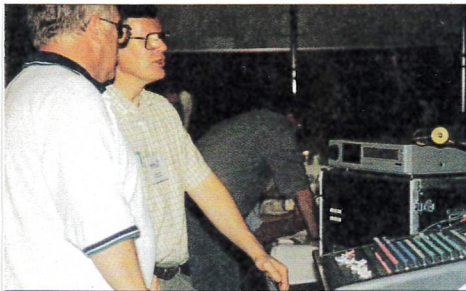
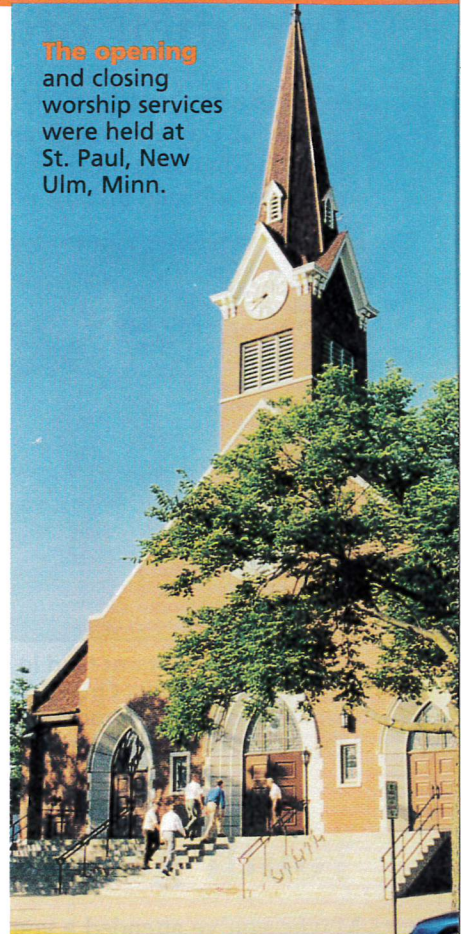
**NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
 Pastor—Robert Gurgel  
 Teacher—John Kolander  
 Layman—Eugene Baer

**BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION**  
 Laymen—John Wempner,  
 William Schmidt  
 Teacher—Frederick Luehring  
**Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Board of Control**  
 Chairman—James Mattek

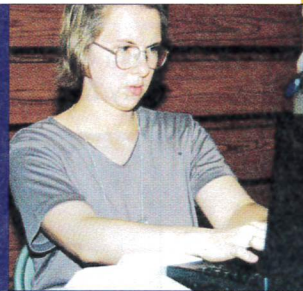
**BOARD FOR HOME MISSIONS**  
 Chairman—Kenneth Gast

**SYNODICAL COUNCIL**  
 Pastor at-large—William Gabb

**The opening and closing worship services were held at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.**



**John Nolte** (right) was the sound technician at the convention. Over 25 people gave reports on different areas of the synod during the first three days of convention. After that, floor committees gave their reports, and delegates voted on the committees’ resolutions.



**Julie Tessmer**, communications assistant for Communication Services, prepares an update for the Web site. Convention news was available twice a day, along with profiles, pictures, devotions, and text from papers, presentations, and sermons.

## Behind the scenes

Synod conventions don’t just happen. Ask convention host, Michael Woldt, the campus pastor at Martin Luther College.

As host, he oversaw the convention steering committee. He was the liaison with the food service, network services, and maintenance and custodial staff. Woldt was at the campus by 6 AM, providing newspapers and coffee for delegates. He’d rarely leave before 6 PM, but would “go home and say ‘hi’ to my wife.” Sometimes he worked 14-hour days.

Woldt, though, will be the first to tell you that it’s a group effort.

- Three faculty members were in charge of housing and travel; the convention floor, sound, and room assignments; and registration, information, and hospitality.
- One member worked with audiovisual and media needs.
- Nine pages worked nonstop. In addition to handing out all the materials, they constantly refilled water because of heat.
- The maintenance and custodial staff “was touched by the convention.”
- Ten faculty members drove shuttles from the airport.
- One or two faculty members were in charge of evening hospitality.

- Three tutors watched the dorms.
- Two MLC ladies’ auxiliary volunteers were available every day.
- Four people in the graphic arts department duplicated materials.
- One woman worked on data entry since May.
- Fifteen high school students, five food service members, five women, and two college students fed delegates three meals a day.

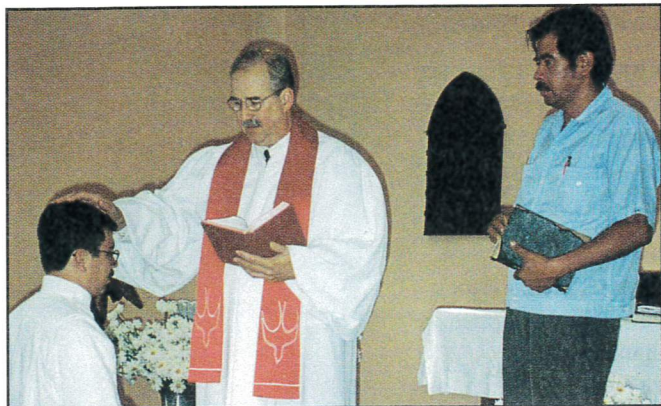
Even with all the heat, the nonstop questions, and all the details, Woldt said, “I’m still having fun. I’m glad to do it once in a while.”

He added: “But I wouldn’t want to be a host all my life.”

## Two men ordained in Mexico

Once again we have seen God's blessings on our Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mexico. Two men were ordained into the public

ministry: Esequiel Eliú Sánchez Flores in Puebla, Puebla on May 30, and Jesús Eduardo Vásquez García in Monterrey, Nuevo León on June 13.



One of the ordinations held in our Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mexico this past year. From left to right: Pastor Esequiel Eliú Sánchez Flores, Missionary Larry W. Schlomer, and layman Carlos Cajas.

These men graduated from the seminary during the national convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Torreón in July.

Sánchez finished his seminary studies in Monterrey, Nuevo León in June 1998. He was called as vicar and student-pastor by Glorified Christ Lutheran Church in Puebla. God has blessed his

ministry there. Attendance has increased from 30 to 50 worshipers per Sunday.

Vásquez finished his studies in Monterrey, Nuevo León this June. He had started his seminary studies in Torreón, Coahuila, but in August 1996 Santa Cruz Lutheran Church called him as student-pastor to fill their vacancy. Vásquez has worked hard in this congregation with pastoral visits and evangelism, together with studying for his seminary classes.

It is a blessing to have these men with the necessary talents for the difficult work of the ministry. But it is a greater blessing that God has given them a spirit of service and of dedication to feed his flock.

Larry W. Schlomer

## Youth gather—and witness—in Canada

Maybe you've attended a youth rally. Maybe your children. Maybe your grandchildren. Whatever the case, you know what happens. Teens have Bible studies, devotions, small groups, large groups, fun times, free time. They make new friends and create lasting memories.

Yet, there's one thing you may not know. And after the 25th international youth rally in Ottawa, Ontario, it needs to be said: At youth rallies, teens are powerful witnesses to the community—believers and unbelievers alike.

After all, 2,249 teens coming to one city is news. In fact, two newspapers and one TV station reported on the event. And, admit it, if you hear that over 2,200 teens are in your city, wouldn't you be just a little nervous?

However, when the teens from the United States, Canada, and St. Lucia came, the citizens were pleasantly surprised.

"This is the best group of kids I've ever seen," said Paul, a cameraman from Ottawa who was filming the rally for *Kid's Connection*.



Rally attendees pose for a picture. Over 2,200 teens attended the 25th international youth rally, held in Ottawa, Ontario, in July.

Another man, who was helping run the inflatable games on the soccer field, agreed. "I've done a lot of these events," he said. "These kids are, by far, the best ever. Not a bad one in the group."

Even the staff at Landsdowne Park, the rally site, was amazed. Not

only with the teens, but with the rally organizers. "We're rarely treated with this much respect," they said. "We've never heard so many please's and thank you's." They even said they'd gladly work with the coordinators again.

There's only one answer for this, says Jerry Kastens, youth discipleship administrator. "The Word works! When God's people gather around his Word, it produces the kind of responses you see in the lives of these young people."

For 25 years now, kids have been traveling across North America, renewing old friendships and making new ones. And for 25 years, teens have also been strong witnesses to the communities.

The citizens of Ottawa breathed a sigh of relief and amazement at these young Christians. The citizens of God's kingdom breathed a prayer of thanks, knowing that the future is in good hands.

## Mini missionaries

Everyone knows that Peter and Paul were great missionaries for the Savior. I'd like to introduce you to a modern day Peter and Paul. Peter (Pedro) and Paul (Pablo) were two little boys who attended the first day of Bible school held in inner-city Denver in July. These Spanish-speaking youngsters had a hand in making our Bible school a success.

When the Colorado District Mission Board and volunteers from Denver area churches began Bible school on the playground of Mitchell elementary school, they had no idea how many children to expect. They had canvassed the neighborhood, put up signs, and handed out leaflets. However, they didn't know if one or 100 students would show up. They were pleased when 15 African-American and Hispanic children came the first day.

The day's lessons stressed that Jesus was the Good Shepherd. At the close of classes, instructors told the children that they could bring friends. Apparently Pablo and Pedro liked what they heard because they went up and down the street telling friends,



Pablo (left) and Pedro. These mini missionaries led people to Bible school to hear what they had heard—the saving message of the gospel.

relatives, and neighbors, "Come and hear what we have heard."

On the second day of Bible school the teachers arrived early, filled with apprehension. They asked themselves, "Would the children return? Did we communicate with our precious pupils?" They were elated when they looked up and saw Pedro and Pablo leading a miniature parade toward the playground. Mothers with strollers, preschool and grade school

children came marching in to see what had so interested Pablo and Pedro. Largely through the efforts of these mini missionaries the Bible school attendance doubled. In fact, enrollment reached 47 by the end of the week.

One wonders what great things our Lord could do with our church if we would all just follow the example of Pedro and Pablo.

*Eugene Ahlswede*

## Y2K compliant

The Synod Administration Building (SAB) has determined that it soon will be Y2K compliant.

To do this, the SAB has been upgrading software, replacing non-compliant hardware, and contacting its vendors and suppliers, asking them for a statement that shows their products are Y2K compliant. A proof of performance test was completed in June, including testing of computer hardware and software and of the physical plant (door locks, copiers, lighting system, etc.). The SAB also will get hard copies of all assets to ensure that our office has records of our investments, said Doug Wellumson, director of support

services and Y2K project manager.

Synodical school officials have also assured us that they're working toward Y2K compliance, said Wellumson.

*For more information, contact Doug Wellumson at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <usr19@sab.wels.net>.*

*The year 2000 computer problem is nearing the critical hour, and some are asking what the church is doing to alert its people. Since WELS is not qualified to predict exactly what Jan. 1 will bring, we advise all individuals to assess how big the threat may be to them and act accordingly.*

## DEFINING RELIGION

**Smalcald Articles:** The confession that Luther wrote for a meeting at Schmalkalden in 1537 in preparation for a possible general council of the church. Since Luther was ill and thought he might die, he intended this to be a clear statement of the truth he taught and his theological legacy to the church. This confession was included as one of the official Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord of 1580.

## District news

### Nebraska

On July 25, the **Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School** association voted unanimously to go ahead with a \$3.2 million building project, pending funding. They already have \$.5 million. The building project will quadruple the space at the school—from 14,000 to 56,000 square feet. It will include a regulation gymnasium, science and music buildings, three classrooms, a computer lab, library, parking lot, and administrative offices.

### South Atlantic

**Faith (exploratory), Sharpsburg, Ga.**, celebrated the ordination and commissioning of its new pastor on July 25. About 75 people attended this service held in a rented Seventh Day Adventist church. With the pastor in place, the congregation of about 30 people is praying that the Lord will grant them the ability to reach mission status and purchase their own land soon.

**Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.**, installed three new teachers on July 11, after postponing the opening of their school last year due to lack of teachers. They anticipate an opening enrollment of 20 students. The preschool continues at full capacity. The grand opening service was Aug. 2. A supper and open house followed the service.

During July, "Project Timothy" students from Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, helped out with outreach efforts in **Antigua, St. Lucia, Grenada, Puerto Rico, and Dominican Republic**. Daily VBS reached 200 in Antigua, 151 in St. Lucia, and 100 in Grenada. The reality of the special outreach effort to Grenada began in June with a two-month stay of Rev. Jim Radloff and his wife, Joyce, as the first of volunteer visiting pastors and Christian leaders to help develop the ministry there.

### Anniversaries

**MN**—On Oct. 10, **Salem Lutheran School, Stillwater**, celebrated its 25th anniversary.

**NE**—**St. John, Herrick, S.D.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on Aug. 29.

**St. John, Witten, S.D.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on June 13.

**Pastor Dave Haberkorn** (former Japanese missionary) celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry on Sept. 12 at St. Paul, Grand Junction, Colo.

**SA**—**St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary of the congregation and is also using that date as the beginning of its celebration of WELS 150th anniversary.

These are the reporters for this month's featured districts: **MN**—Jeffrey A. Bovee; **NE**—Keith Petersen; **PNW**—David Birsching; **SA**—Mark Haefner

## THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

### November 1999

1. John 10:22-42	18. 2 Kgs. 18:1-19:7
2. Jn. 11:1-27	19. 2 Kgs. 19:8-37
3. Jn. 11:28-44	20. 2 Kgs. 20, 21
4. Jn. 11:45-12:19	21. 2 Kgs. 22, 23
5. Jn. 12:20-36	22. 2 Kgs. 24, 25
6. Jn. 12:37-50	23. John 13:1-20
7. 2 Kings 1, 2	24. Jn. 13:21-32
8. 2 Kgs. 3:1-4:7	25. Jn. 13:33-14:14
9. 2 Kgs. 4:8-44	26. Jn. 14:15-24
10. 2 Kgs. 5:1-6:7	27. Jn. 14:25-15:8
11. 2 Kgs. 6:8-7:20	28. Jn. 15:9-25
12. 2 Kgs. 8, 9	29. Jn. 15:26-16:15
13. 2 Kgs. 10	30. Jn. 16:16-33
14. 2 Kgs. 11, 12	
15. 2 Kgs. 13, 14	
16. 2 Kgs. 15, 16	
17. 2 Kgs. 17	

### Pacific Northwest



The first- and second-graders at the Sunday school of **Living Hope, Woodinville, Wash.**, worked on a special project this year. Each Sunday they drew a picture of the lesson they studied that week on an eight-inch square of fabric that also contained a Bible verse. The squares were sewn together, and the result was a quilt that will remind them of God's grace, mercy, and love. Pictured from left: Tyler Phelan, Corey Vetter, Jordan Goldschmidt, Ashley Cook, and William Tiernan.

## Obituary

### Kurt R. Petermann 1925-1999

Kurt R. Petermann was born June 5, 1925, in Newburg, Wis. He died July 22, 1999, in Appleton, Wis.

A 1946 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served at St. John, Stanton, Neb.; Good Shepherd, Phoenix, Ariz.; and St. Paul, Appleton, Wis. He, along with his wife, also ran the WELS Harvesters Link Program, which arranged mission presentations by furloughed missionaries at stateside congregations.

He is survived by his wife, Dawn; five sons; four daughters; one brother; one sister; and 23 grandchildren.



**The ELCA approves unity pact with Episcopal Church**—Delegates to the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) agreed to a “full communion” proposal with the Episcopal Church.

In a 716-317 vote, the voting members approved the Called to Common Mission proposal. The vote was slightly more than the two-thirds needed for approval. This action reversed a decision taken by the 5.2 million-member denomination in 1997.

The vote was a major victory for the denomination’s leadership, but still leaves the ELCA sharply divided over the issue.

This means that pastors from the two denominations may be called by congregations of the other body, share communion, join in social service, and participate in other forms of ministry at all levels of the church.

This agreement was formed, even as differences in doctrine and practice exist between the two denominations. Delegates to the WELS convention expressed regret over the ELCA’s ecumenical decisions that “are contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures regarding Holy Communion, justification, and fellowship, and undermine the gospel by tolerating or accepting false teaching.”

**A bitter pill**—In Germany, the distribution of RU 486 has been allowed under the name “Mifegyn’e.” It can be taken within the first 49 days of pregnancy under medical control.

The abortive pill “Mifegyn’e” is distributed in France, Sweden, and Great Britain. In other countries its authorization is still being processed. The European countries that have already banned it because of its harmful side effects are Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and Luxembourg. It will be available in Germany beginning next autumn.

[7/7/99—ZENIT, reprinted in WELS Lutheran’s for Life’s LifeWire]

**Son can’t sue mom**—A child who was injured in a car accident, while still in his mother’s womb, cannot sue his mother for damages, ruled the Supreme Court of Canada. The accident happened hours before he was born. The six-year-old boy has cerebral palsy. The grandfather sued on his behalf, hoping insurance would cover some of the medical bills.

[7/9/99, *Globe and Mail*, Ottawa, Canada]

**Wives, submit to your husbands**—

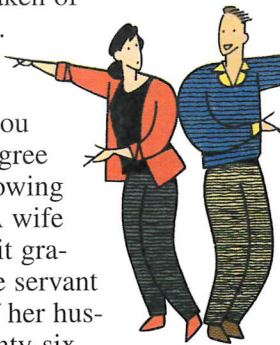
A poll was taken of 1,016 people.

Of those, 498 were asked, “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘A wife should submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband.’” Twenty-six percent agreed; 69 percent disagreed; five percent had no opinion.

The question was slightly reworded and asked of the other 518 people. It was: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement *taken from the Bible [emphasis added]*: ‘A wife should submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband.’”

Disagreements slightly declined when respondents were reminded that the statement is from the Bible. Thirty-five percent agreed; 60 percent disagreed; five percent had no opinion.

[*Emerging Trends*, April 1999]



**Faith sustains poor black women**—A lifetime of poverty has stirred—not shaken—the faith of poor black women, who maintain high self-esteem and a striking optimism about the future. Two hundred women over 70-years-old—50 white and 50 black women living in poverty, and 50 from each group who were well-off economically—were interviewed between 1993 and 1997 for the study, “Chronic Poverty and the Self in Later Life.”

Most women said religion was important in their lives, but all 50 black women living in poverty would bring up issues concerning religion, faith, and prayer before any study questions on the subject were even asked. When asked which person in life they were closest to, many simply replied, “God,” said Helen K. Black, project manager of the Behavioral Research Department of the geriatric center.

“The depth of the spirituality and the utter faith—I don’t know if I’ve ever seen anything like it,” Black said. “The absolute certainly was something beautiful to behold.”

**Prying pilgrims prompt sealing of Jesus-era ossuary**—An ornate stone burial box believed to have once held the bones of Caiaphas has been sealed shut to prevent Christian pilgrims from trying to open it to peek inside.

The ossuary was unearthed about five years ago during a building project in Jerusalem. The bones inside were deemed by scholars to be those of Joseph Caiaphas, who is identified as having plotted Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion.

The bones were never put on display out of respect for Jewish law concerning respect for the dead. Instead, the bones were reburied in a valley near Jerusalem.

“The lid was broken several times,” said David Mevorah, exhibit curator at Jerusalem’s Israel Museum. “We have had to fortify it with epoxy resin because people coming here, apart from praying sometimes, try to open it and see if the bones or the relics are still there. It is now closed and cannot be opened.”

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



## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

**Flunker, Timothy M.**, to Mexico City, Mexico  
**Kurth, John H.**, to St. Paul, Las Animas, Colo.  
**Lindloff, Paul J.**, to Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich.  
**Schapekahn, Gerhard F.**, to St. John, Fremont, Wis.  
**Schmidt, Daniel J.**, to St. John, Lomira, Wis.  
**Schroeder, Allen K.**, to Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio

### Teachers

**Bartholomew, Lori A.**, to St. John, Westland, Mich.  
**Blakely, Paul F.**, to First, La Crosse, Wis.  
**Buman, Lynn M.**, to St. Paul, Sheboygan Falls, Wis.  
**Bunde, Tracey M.**, to St. John, Westland, Mich.  
**Carmichael, Lisa J.**, to St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.  
**Delikat, Doris R.**, to retirement  
**Eisenhardt, Autumn**, to Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis.  
**Enter, Steven H.**, to St. John, Newburg, Wis.  
**Gentele, Vernon R.**, to Emanuel, New London, Wis.  
**Hahnke, Donald J.**, to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Hunczak, Carol G.**, to St. Paul, St. James, Minn.  
**Hussman, Renee A.**, to Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis.  
**Johnson, John C.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, Milwaukee  
**Knobloch, Barbara J.**, to Christ, West Salem, Wis.  
**Lane, Kathy**, to Trinity, Bay City, Mich.  
**Meyer, Heidi**, to Zion, Hartland, Wis.  
**Miller, Kristen M.**, to Centennial, Milwaukee  
**Mund, Maxine J.**, to St. John, Hemlock, Mich.  
**Pagel, Claire A.**, to Christ, Eagle River, Wis.  
**Peterson, Emily M.**, to Atonement, Milwaukee  
**Ross, Robin J.**, to Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis.  
**Schachtschneider, Lois**, to St. Matthew, Milwaukee  
**Schara, Rachel M.**, to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.  
**Schleusener, Lynelle**, to Zion, Monroe, Mich.  
**Spangenberg, Jeffrey L.**, to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.  
**Struck, Carrie L.**, to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.  
**Tollerud, Tara**, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.  
**Traucht, Nancy**, to St. Andrew, St. Paul Park, Minn.  
**Weber, Bridget K.**, to St. Luke, Saginaw, Mich.  
**Weigand, Judith N.**, to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.  
**Woldt, Jon D.**, to Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.  
**Wong, Maribeth L.**, to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.  
**Zarling, Colette B.**, to Siloah, Milwaukee

## REQUEST FOR NAMES

**Gift planning counselors**—On behalf of the Conference of Presidents, the Commission on Communication for Financial Support requests the names of WELS members (pastors, teachers, laymen) to fill three gift counseling positions authorized by the synod in convention. Nominees should be mature Christians who understand the scriptural principles of stewardship, are committed to fur-

thering the spread of the gospel, can work with groups and individuals, and are willing to travel. Training in Christian estate planning and taxwise giving will be provided. Submit names by Oct. 31 to Ronald Roth, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 1-800-827-5482 or 414/256-3881.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Reedsville, Wis.**—St. John/St. James elementary school (125). Oct. 3. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; potluck and program follow.  
**Rib Lake, Wis.**—St. Peter (100). Oct. 10. Service, 10 AM; meal follows. Reservations required. Audrey Skibbie, 715/748-5742.  
**Crystal Lake, Ill.**—Lord & Savior (25). Oct. 10. Service, 10 AM; lunch follows. 815/765-1430.  
**Waukesha, Wis.**—Grace (90). Oct. 10. Bill Merten, 414/542-1113.  
**Hemlock, Mich.**—St. John (100). Oct. 17. Mission festival services, 8 & 10:30 AM; lunch follows.  
**Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.**—St. Paul (100). Oct. 31. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; lunch follows. 715/421-3634.  
**Prescott, Wis.**—St. Paul (125). Dec. 5. Services, 9 AM & 2 PM; program and dinner follow first service. Reservations required. Richard Durov, 715/262-5645.

## COMING EVENTS

**Singles' retreat**—sponsored by Singles Helping One Another on the Road to Eternity. Oct. 1-3. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. For registration information, contact Doris Collins, 414/534-7852.  
**WELS Historical Institute meeting**—Oct. 3, 7 PM. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chapel. James G. Kiecker, 414/443-8835.  
**MLC ladies' auxiliary meeting**—Oct. 13, 9 AM registration. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Paul Doletzky, 507/426-7819.  
**Regional campus rallies**—Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279; <usr20@sab.wels.net>.  
 Oct. 22-24—Lubbock, Tex.  
 Dec. 27-29—Baton Rouge, La.  
 Mar. 3-5, 2000—Philadelphia, Penn.  
 Mar. 17-19, 2000—Columbia, Mo.  
 Mar. 24-26, 2000—Stevens Point, Wis.  
 Apr. 14-16, 2000—Tempe, Ariz.  
**Ladies' retreat**—WELS/ELS. Jan. 7-9, 2000. Montverde, Fla. Topic: How and why to pray. Cost: \$100. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.  
**WELS handbell festivals**—Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.  
 Northeast region, April 1-2, 2000  
 Southeast region, April 1-2, 2000  
 Western region, April 8-9, 2000  
 Michigan region, April 8-9, 2000  
**Today's Christian women's retreat**—April 7-9, 2000. Lansing Sheraton Hotel, Lansing, Mich. 248/391-1133.

## AVAILABLE

**School desks & chairs**—50. Will send pictures via mail or e-mail. Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.; 402/431-8509; <geth@ne.uswest.net>.  
**Pews**—padded. Christ Our Rock, Rochester, Minn.; 507/281-5914.  
**Choir robes**—19 adult robes and stoles. 27 robes and stoles for children. Peace, Holiday, Fla. Annette Meyer, 727/942-2370.

**Altar furniture**—wooden altar, pulpit, lectern, and communion rails. Free for cost of shipping. Christ Redeemer, Trumbull, Conn. Paul M. Meier, 203/378-1270.

**Supplies**—Concordia Bible History References, volumes 1 & 2; Kretzmann volumes 1 & 2; dot matrix printer; electric typewriter; congregational record binder; Speed-o-scope. Free for cost of shipping. First, Lake Geneva, Wis. 414/248-3374.

## NEEDED

**Books**—by Gustav Harders. English translations of *Yaalahn, La Paloma*, and *Wille Wider Wille*. G. Pundt, 520/425-5606.

**Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly**—set of back issues that extends 15 or more years to donate to overseas seminaries. John Brug, 414/242-8139.

**Martin Luther's Small Catechism**—new, Gausewitz edition. Will pay for shipping for as many catechisms as you have available. Michael Enderle, 605/874-2449.

**Stories**—of how women serve in their churches. Kristine Pratt, 815/465-6132; <katagillian@geocities.com>.

**35 mm slides**—of Ken Kremer's Grace-Plan. St. John Lutheran School, West Salem, Wis. Denise Favorite, 608/486-4433.

## SERVICE TIMES

**Rapid City, S.D.**—Abiding Word. Sunday, 9 AM; education hour, 10:15 AM. David Maertz, 605/399-1479.

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**Librarian**—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Full-time. Responsible for copy and original cataloging, database management and troubleshooting, Web site maintenance, supervision of support staff and student workers, provision of reference services and bibliographic instruction. Must have MLIS degree. 414/242-8113.

## NAMES WANTED

**Rapid City, S.D.**—Abiding Word. David Maertz, 605/399-1479.

**Indiana college students**—Valparaiso University: Our Shepherd, Crown Point, 219/663-5853. Ball State: Divine Savior, Indianapolis, 317/849-9692. Purdue: Faith, Kokomo, 765/457-0578. Indiana State, Indiana University, or Rose Human: Shepherd of the Valley, Terre Haute, 812/877-4141. Butler University: Bethlehem, Carmel, 317/571-0204.

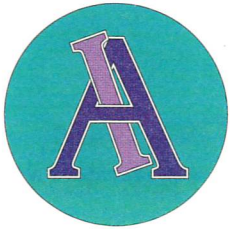
**Champaign/Urbana, Ill.**—Star of Bethlehem. Pastor Tim Glende, 217/384-8920.

**Vacaville, Calif.**—Vacaville, Fairfield, Travis AFB area. Scott J. Stone, 707/455-7575.

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3899; <usr73@sab.wels.net> Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

For a weekly updated bulletin board, see the WELS Web site <www.wels.net>.





# Inter-Act

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

## Introduction

When missionaries first worked among the Eskimos, they could not find a word in the Eskimo language for forgiveness, so they had to invent one. This is what they came up with: *issumagijoujung-nainermik*.

That's a formidable looking word, isn't it? But it has a beautiful connotation for those who understand it. It means: not being able to think about it anymore. Why is this a good way to understand God's forgiveness? Why is this an appropriate way to conceive of our forgiveness of others?

## I. Text

Read Colossians 3:12-14:

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

## II. Questions

1. Is holiness the result or the basis of God's choosing us to be his people (1 Corinthians 1:2)?
2. Picture yourself clothed "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." Think of a specific example, in each case, of how this would affect your dealings with others.
3. The Greek word translated as "bear with each other" literally means "to put up with." What are examples of things we will want to "put up with" in dealing with our fellow Christians?
4. The Greek word translated as "forgive" is related to the Greek word for "grace." Consider the use of the word grace in the following passages: Romans 3:24; 5:20; and Ephesians 2:8. With these thoughts in mind, why will we not want to blame or find fault with others?
5. To what extent has the Lord forgiven you? Why has he forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 1:13,14)? What does this say about how you will want to forgive others?
6. Why is love the umbrella over all Christian virtues? How does love bind all Christian virtues together in perfect unity?

## III. Application

1. A bumper sticker reads: Christians are not perfect—just forgiven. Would you put such a bumper sticker on your car? Why or why not?
2. Why can there be no room in our hearts for memories of wrongs done to us (Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; and Psalm 103:12)?
3. Someone once defined forgiveness as "the odor flowers breathe when they are trampled." How might you apply this definition in your daily life?
4. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus instructs his followers to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39-42). Think of some modern day applications of Jesus' words.
5. Is there someone with whom you presently have a grievance? What specific actions will you take to demonstrate your forgiveness and love?

## IV. Prayer

Father, you have forgiven me all my sins for the sake of your Son's sacrifice on the cross. Help me forgive others as you have forgiven me. Cause me always to remember what you have done for me but completely to forget every wrong done to me. As you have clothed me with the righteousness of my Savior, clothe me also with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Hear me for your great mercy's sake in Jesus. Amen.

# Lessons from Job

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1).

Jon D. Buchholz

**W**hy do bad things happen to good people? What is our human capacity for suffering? How do believers persevere under trial?

The book of Job deals not only with one man's suffering. It offers lessons that speak to life in our modern world. Job explores the "why's" of life and seeks answers finally found only in the mysterious counsel of God. We'll explore some of life's hard questions over the next several months as we take to heart these lessons from Job.

## **Job: a blameless and upright man**

Why do bad things happen to good people? The question's premise is, of course, fundamentally flawed. There are no truly good people. Psalm 14 indicts the whole human race with the words, "There is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3). We sinners wallow in a dirty, dangerous, violent, and vicious world that is a cesspool of our own making, the result of sinful human character.

Still, the Bible holds up Job as a shining light in a dark world. "This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil." Was Job any less a sinful human being? Certainly not! But a remarkable change had overcome this man's heart and life, a transformation worked by God's grace. Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6), Job had come to

know and trust the Lord, the great I am. He confided in his Redeemer, trusted in the promise of a coming Savior, and was counted as righteous before his God.

## **Job explores the "why's" of life and seeks answers finally found only in the mysterious counsel of God.**

Job's simple trust found expression in his daily life. The terms "blameless" and "upright" describe a man who lived his faith. No one could accuse him of great sin or shameful vice. As one who "feared God and shunned evil" he cherished his Savior above all else. He despised all sin as hurtful to his dearest friend, damaging to his faith, and poison to his soul.

## **You: a recipient of God's grace**

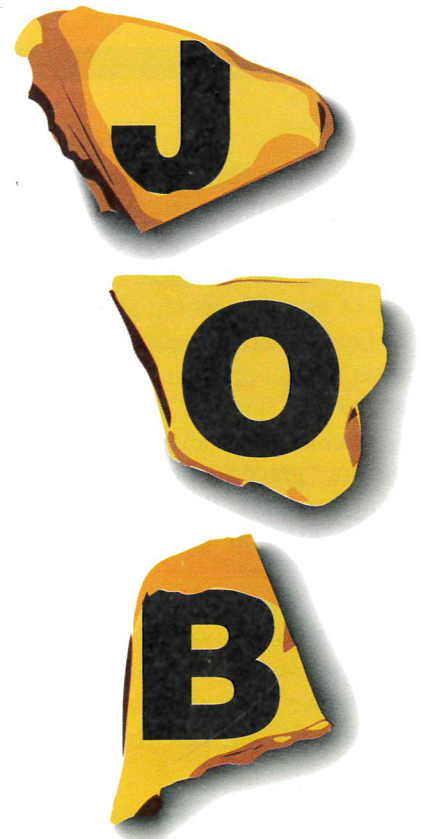
What distinguishes you from the world around you? It's simple: You are a recipient of God's grace. You have been called to faith. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and your heart dedicated as the very throne of God. Your Savior, who bought you with his own blood, now calls you his own. The Lord, the great I am, has written your name in his Book of Life and given you a place in his family. God has declared you blameless and beauti-

ful by clothing you with the righteousness of the only human being who is truly good: Jesus Christ.

In gratitude for God's priceless grace, live as one who stands blameless and upright among your peers, as did Job. Fear God and shun evil. Daily give thanks for every blessing, and above all, cherish God's relationship with you in Christ.

*Jon Buchholz is pastor at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington, and teaches at Evergreen Lutheran High School.*

For further study: Read Job 1:1-5.  
Next month: A deal with the devil?



# Follow the leader

“Follow the Leader”—remember that old childhood game? It may have served its purpose when we learned to cooperate with others by following them. The leaders, though, may have had other intentions. They may have been testing our bravery or sense of daring. But, no matter where they were leading us, they went first. The game was called—follow the leader.

We are following someone, too. During the next two years of our anniversary celebration our theme is “Forward in Christ.” As we move forward in Christ, our leader does not expect us to go anywhere he has not gone. In fact, we will be eternally grateful for where he has gone before us, alone. Our Savior, before us, submitted to death, passed through the grave, and entered heaven. Here, too, we will follow our leader.

No wonder, then, we move into the third millennium with confidence, following our leader. With his mission in the past successfully completed for us, we move confidently toward what he promised us for the future. “Forward in Christ” we go.

As we together move forward in Christ, we have agreed to some signposts along the way. The first of them is “to uphold and testify to the truth of God as fully revealed in the inspired, inerrant, infallible Holy Scripture.”

Dr. Martin Luther understood this challenge. “*Sola Scriptura*,” Scripture alone, is where Luther stood. No church leader, no Christian person, has any right, any authority, to alter anything God has already said in his errorless, inspired Word.

At considerable risk to his life and livelihood, Luther consistently stood up for God’s truth. Before emperor and hostile theologians alike Luther defended the truth. Standing firmly on Holy Scripture,

Luther bravely declared: “I cannot, I will not recant. God, help me. Amen!”

But when we are on the side of God’s truth, there is an additional challenge. The challenge, in words God inspired Paul to write, is “speaking the truth in love.” It doesn’t mean to soft-peddle the truth of God. We cannot safely ignore anything God has said. Rather than teaching us how to avoid controversy at all costs, God is instructing us in the proper attitude when speaking God’s truth. It’s an attitude of love, the understanding and purposeful love of God, which promotes humility in us.

Luther never felt worthy of God’s love. The law of God, like the lightning bolt on the road of Erfurt, knocked him to the ground. He was a miserable sinner, filled with terror at the prospect of standing unrighteous before a holy and righteous God. And yet, as Luther describes it, it was like a ray of heavenly sunshine when he read in Romans, “A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

It’s a double reason for humility. We all are sinners, deserving only God’s judgment. But, by an undeserved gift of God’s love, we have been declared saints, sinners forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ, holy and righteous in God’s sight.

This saving message has been brought to us freely through Scripture alone, God’s Word of truth. Just as freely God would have us pass along this saving truth to others. And, as we do, he challenges us to always speak the truth in love as we move forward in Christ.



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

As we move forward in Christ, our leader does not expect us to go anywhere he has not gone.

# Other helpers

John F. Brug

*Is it appropriate for the principal to serve Holy Communion when the pastor is not present? If elders or the principal conduct services while the pastor is gone, isn't this downgrading the Lord's Supper to a fellowship meal? Is it proper for anyone other than ordained clergy to give absolution?*

In discussing this, we will distinguish between assisting the pastor with the distribution and administering the Sacrament in the pastor's absence. It is quite common in our congregations for elders or male teachers to assist the pastor in the distribution to the members or to give communion to the pastor, if they are properly instructed and called by the congregation to do so.

Vicars and seminarians who have received sufficient training may administer the Sacrament in the absence of the supervising pastor, if the congregation has approved of this practice.

Although ordination and seminary training are not an absolute prerequisite for administering the Sacrament (to be rightly called is a requirement), under normal circumstances it should not be necessary to ask a layman or teacher to administer Communion in the absence of the pastor. If the pastor's absence is extended, a vacancy pastor should serve the congregation. If the pastor's absence is brief, a "reading service" in which the pastor is responsible for the contents can be held during his absence. Except in

cases of extreme necessity, only men who have been both thoroughly trained and properly called should preach and administer the sacraments.

The reality of the Sacrament does not depend on the character of the officiant, but on whether Christ's institution has been followed. Celebration of the Sacrament by a lay person would not eliminate the real presence of Christ's body and blood. The issue here is one of order and propriety. The reality of the Sacrament is not in question.

Any Christian may hear the confession of another Christian and assure the repentant of forgiveness (James 5:16, Matthew 18:18-20). This does not depend on ordination. To give public absolution in the name of the congregation, a person must be rightly called.

**The issue here is one of order and propriety. The reality of the Sacrament is not in question.**

The question of who may officiate at the Lord's Supper is discussed in considerable detail in Volume III of *Our Great Heritage*, a set of doctrinal essays available from Northwestern Publishing House, which is recommended for laypeople who want to undertake a more thorough study of Christian doctrine.

*What role did the deaconess play in the early NT church? I am referring to passages such as Romans 16:1-3 and 1 Timothy 3:11. To me it is clear that they were held in high regard and were quite important in the growth of the church.*

There have been two types of deaconesses in the history of the church. One type concentrated mostly on works of mercy and charitable work. The first deaconesses probably focused mainly on this type of work since this was also the emphasis of the first "deacons" in Acts 6. With time the office of deacon developed into a position that assisted the pastor in the ministry of teaching the Word. The deaconess then became more involved in teaching and counseling women.

When the office of deaconess was revived in Lutheranism in the 19th century the emphasis was on medical works of mercy. More recently deaconesses have assisted the pastor in the work of evangelizing, teaching, and counseling women and children.

We do not have enough information about Phoebe's activities to know what her duties were. It is not clear whether 1 Timothy 3 refers to deaconesses or to the wives of deacons, who probably helped them with their work.

An interesting overview of the work of deacons and deaconesses throughout history can be found in *One Ministry—Many Roles* by Jeannine E. Olson, published by Concordia.

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

### Thoughts on friendship

**Ralph Waldo Emerson—**  
 “I didn’t find my friends. The good God gave them to me.”

**Winnie the Pooh—**  
 “It’s so much friendlier with two.”

**Ecclesiastes 4:9—**  
 “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.”

### Did you know?

WELS Lutherans for Life operates New Beginnings, a home for unwed mothers in Denver, Colo. Since its beginning in September 1993, New Beginnings has had

- 54 residents (mothers)
- 47 dependents of residents (children)
- 26 births
- 10 baptisms
- 8 placements for adoption

### Who can tell the future?

These are some predictions Americans made in 1949 about the year 2000.

- ✘ 88% believed a cure for cancer would be discovered
- ✘ 82% thought there would be another world war
- ✘ 70% said we would not have reached the moon
- ✘ 60% predicted we would not elect a woman president
- ✘ 48% felt sure we would have a 30-hour work week

*U.S. News and World Report, Dec. 28, 1998*

### Happily ever after, after all?

Until 1970, living together out of wedlock used to be illegal throughout the country. (It is still illegal in 12 states, but rarely enforced.) Today, the numbers have risen to an all-time high: 4.1 million couples in 1997 compared to 430,000 couples in 1960.

However, moving in often leads to moving out. Forty percent never make it down the church aisle. Of those who do marry, 50 percent split within 10 years, compared to 30 percent for those who didn’t live together before marriage.

“Who’s happier ever after?” by Cheryl Wetzstein

### Seen on church signs

“It is unlikely there’ll be a reduction in the wages of sin.”

“How will you spend eternity—smoking or non-smoking?”

“God so loved the world that he did not send a committee.”

“Sign broken. Message inside this Sunday.”

### Picture this

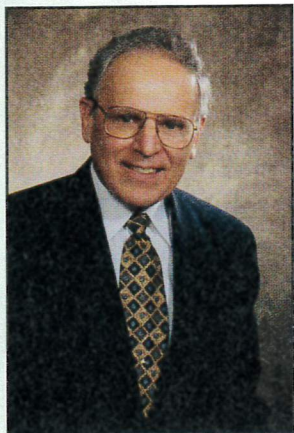


### Children are all the same all over the world.

“This picture was taken on a hike during the church picnic at Trinity, St. Lucia. It shows how truly multi-cultural our church is—seven different countries are represented in our Sunday school! But, as you can see, that makes no difference to them as they all have fun together. They are all children of God, and that is the only thing that matters.”

—Staci Landwehr, Trinity, Castries, St. Lucia

Do you have a picture to share? Send it to Picture this, *Forward/NL*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.



Gary P. Baumler is editor of *Forward/NL* and WELS Director of Communications.

We have the challenge to promote the family and help build solid Christian families in our midst.

## Family values

“God sets the lonely in families.” Psalm 68:6

Here is one inescapable fact: We all come from a family. We all were born of a mother and sired by a father. A mother, a father, and a child make a family—at least biologically.

A more important fact: overall, we do better in families.

That’s not a novel thought. Ever since God brought Adam and Eve together in marriage and told them to be fruitful and multiply, the family—composed of father, mother, and children—has been the basic social unit. We need family for companionship, for identity, for succor.

If the importance of family is not a novel thought, however, many would like us to believe it is a quaint thought, an out-dated thought.

With the coming of sin, too, family quickly broke down. Brother killed brother. Husbands sought many wives and mistresses. And worse.

Over time and in our society, many families have become more like the Simpsons than the Cleavers.

We live with the sad results. Couples live together without the commitment of marriage and without shame. Marriages end up in divorce at an alarming rate. And the pundits sneer, “So what?”

Besides the moral and spiritual implications, the question has a social answer. Multiple studies reveal that we are paying a steep price.

Those who indulge in the benefits of marriage before getting married (does anyone call it “living in sin” any more?) are less likely to get married, and more likely to get divorced if they do.

The children in families broken up by divorce have more behavioral problems, lower academic scores, and more psychological distress and health problems than

those in intact two-parent families. They also have a higher level of distrust in people and a greater fear of marriage.

Broken families experience much higher levels of poverty.

Still, people seek “family.” What they miss at home they often seek elsewhere. This need for family helps build cults and gangs and secret societies. Even counter-culture enthusiasts begin to look alike and gravitate to one another. Some expect the government to replace family.

All this leaves the church with both a challenge and an opportunity.

We have the challenge to promote the family and help build solid Christian families in our midst. We are challenged to confront the twin sins of live-in and divorce. We need to go against the flow of society. We need to challenge people to take seriously God’s admonition through Paul: “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8).

More so, we have the opportunity to live as the family of God in a way that sees all members as brothers and sisters and parents and children together in Christ. We can help fill in where we see things missing in members’ families. We can provide a home for never married, married but now single, married with children, childless, empty nesters, young, old. We can be family.

We can do it because Jesus did it. Whom did Jesus call his family? Whom did Jesus call his brothers and sisters? Who of us is worthy of that?

Still, we are family through faith in Jesus. Let’s work hard to live like family.

*Gary P. Baumler*



*I'll have what he's having!*

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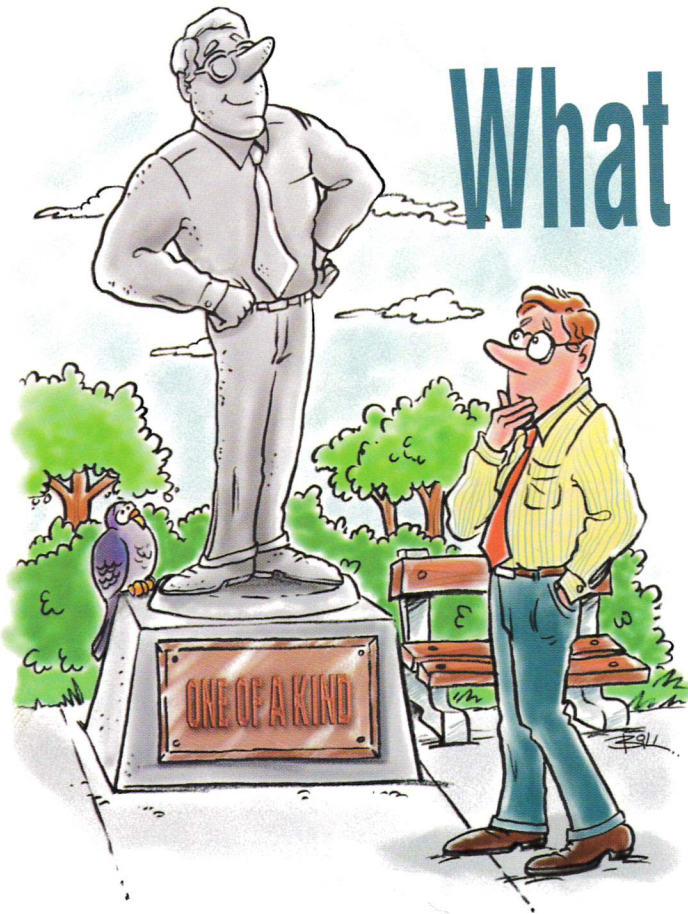
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# What it means to be me

The Bible, a book written thousands of years ago, by people you've never met, is all about you.

Kenneth A. Cherney



**H**ave you ever heard of a “philosophical therapist”? I hadn’t either, until I heard one on the radio. “Philosophy therapy” sounds a lot like psychotherapy, only you talk about the deep questions of life instead of why every inkblot they show you looks like two crawfish fighting.

## Philosophical question

Anyway, this particular “philosophical therapist” made a lot of sense. He said that what usually messes us up on the inside is fear. But fear isn’t a sign that we’re “ill.” Often, it results from our failures to answer life’s big questions.

In his opinion, the biggest question of all is: “What does it mean to be me? Am I alone inside this bag of skin? Do other people see what I see when they look around? Do the thoughts inside their heads sound at all like my thoughts?”

Each of us likes to believe that he’s one of a kind—a unique individual. But when you look at it this way, unique can also mean absolutely alone. That’s not a pleasant thought at all. It’s actually very frightening.

Finally, if I am unique in every way, that means no one else will ever really understand me. If I’m truly unique, then nobody else has ever faced problems just like mine. That means that when people tell me, “Don’t worry. It’ll be all right,” they really don’t know what they’re talking about.

Scary thoughts, indeed. What’s the solution?

## Biblical answer

Believe me, it’s not philosophy. To deal with these fears, don’t read Sartre and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.

Instead, read Moses and David and John and Paul. Read your Bible.

Why? Because in the Bible an amazing experience awaits you. Here is a book written thousands of years ago, by people you’ve never met. Yet, this book is all about you. It knows you better than you know

yourself. It describes your worries and fears and problems perfectly, and traces them all to a single source: human sin.

Then, it provides a solution that satisfies your deepest need. It brings you the forgiveness of your sins through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And along with forgiveness, it meets other needs, too. It brings you comfort. Peace. Hope. Assurance that in Christ, everything will “be all right.” That’s a promise from God, who most certainly knows what he’s talking about.

Each of us likes to believe that he’s one of a kind—a unique individual.

Read Scripture, and you’ll soon see that you’re not so different after all. Human problems have always been pretty much the same. So has God’s solution.

Read Scripture, and you’ll see that you’re not alone at all.

You’re part of a frail, fallible, sinful world—but a world that God forgives and loves.

*Ken Cherney is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.*

