

FORWARD IN CHRIST

March 2000

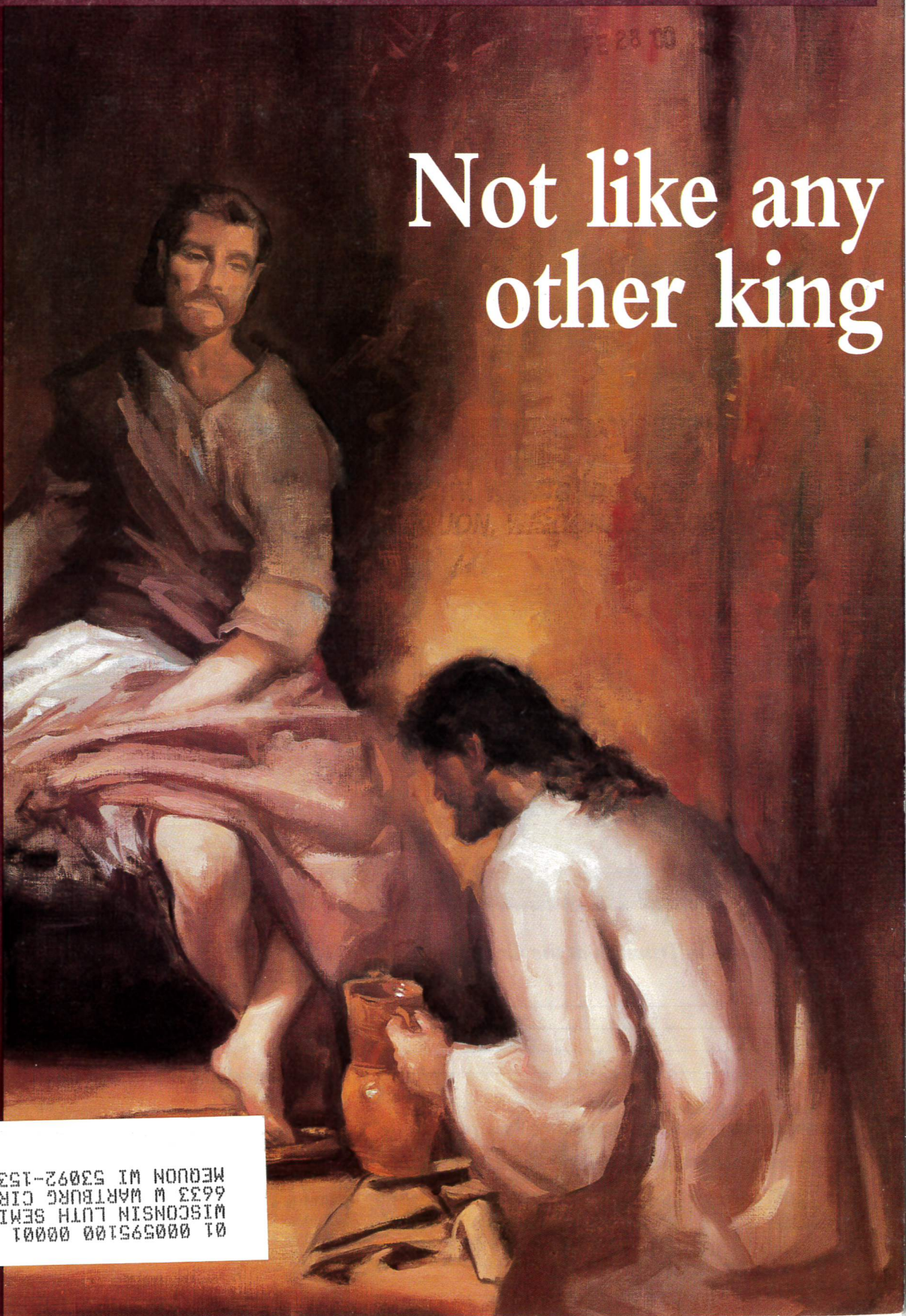
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The
perfect
church

The
church's
"big toe"

Drinking
your cup

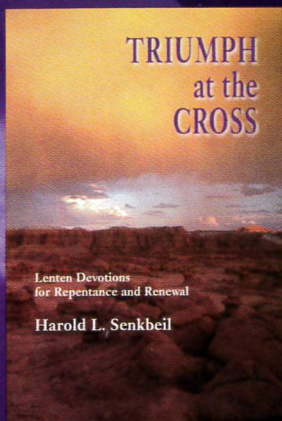
Not like any
other king



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Double glory

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. . . . As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." Matthew 17:1-2, 9

Paul M. Janke

The summit of a mountain can be an exhilarating place. There's a feeling of accomplishment from having made it to the top. There's the panoramic view of the terrain below. There's a sense that you're standing on the rooftop of the world.

Three of Jesus' disciples experienced more than just the normal mountain climber's exhilaration at the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration. As they saw Jesus in heavenly majesty, it convinced them of his deity. And as they saw Jesus descend that glorious mountain to face the suffering that awaited him below, they saw the glory of his love for us. Werner Franzmann in his hymn, "Down from the Mount of Glory," calls this "double glory"—glory on the mountain and glory that brought Jesus down the mountain.

Glory on the mountain

Peter, James, and John witnessed the rare exception to the rule when Jesus appeared in heavenly glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Until then, the appearance of Jesus had been nothing more than ordinary. There were no auras, no halos. In fact Isaiah says, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (53:2).

But for a brief, brilliant moment on that mountain, the three saw Jesus in glory that overwhelms mortal eyes. It was a splendid metamorphosis. The Son of God shone with the glory that he's had from all eternity. Not even lightning has such blinding brilliance. The vision of a majestic Jesus was designed to fortify the disciples for the difficult days that lay ahead as Jesus went to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Even when they saw him wounded, bleeding, and dying they could still know: this man is God.

Glory that brought him down the mountain

Just three disciples witnessed the transfiguration—and Jesus ordered them not to divulge what they had seen.

Why was that? Why not schedule the transfiguration for the temple courts on the Day of Atonement so thousands could witness it? Jesus knew that a public transfiguration would be misunderstood. If feeding the 5,000 caused people to try to make him a bread king, what would the transfiguration do?

So the transfiguration took place on an out-of-the-way mountain. And when Peter tried to prolong the glorious vision by suggesting the construction of shelters for Jesus and Moses and Elijah, his idea was

simply ignored. Before Jesus would resume the permanent use of his divine powers he had another mountain to ascend: Mount Calvary.

As glorious as Jesus' transfiguration is, he came down from the mount of glory. Shame and degradation awaited him below, but Jesus went down resolutely. He came down to suffer and die because our lives depended on it. A glorious Jesus who decided to avoid the pain and blood of the cross would be no Savior for us. How glorious it is that he came down the mountain!

Then hail the double glory
Of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
And let the wondrous story
Full peace and joy afford!
The holy mount acclaims him
The majesty divine;
Mount Calvary proclaims him
Redeemer—yours and mine.
(*Christian Worship* 97)

Paul Janke is pastor at Saint Peter, Modesto, California.

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Cover illustration by Glenn Harrington

Humble King.
Righteous King.
Kind King.
Gentle King.

8

bits & pieces



Every year we take six weeks to study and reflect on what Jesus went through to save us from our sins. He lived a perfect life and then died a gruesome death, all for us sinners. Two articles this month give us more food for thought in this Lenten season:

- Jesus our King was not like most earthly kings. He was not proud, harsh, or cruel, but humble, gentle, and kind. Read more about our gentle King (p. 8).

- Jesus endured everything God gave him during his life on earth. Do we? Or do we try to escape “the cards we’ve been dealt”? Mark Paustian enlightens us in “Drinking our cup” (p. 18).



Have you ever thanked the person who helps lead you through worship every Sunday? I’m not just talking about the pastor. I’m talking about the church organist. In the first article of our new two-part series on church musicians, Randall Ott shares ways we can show our appreciation to those who beautify our worship with music (p. 20).



What’s your idea of a perfect church? Mark Cares shares his insights—some that you may not expect (p. 12).

—JKT

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Jesus is the only 100 percent gentle and righteous king this world will ever see.

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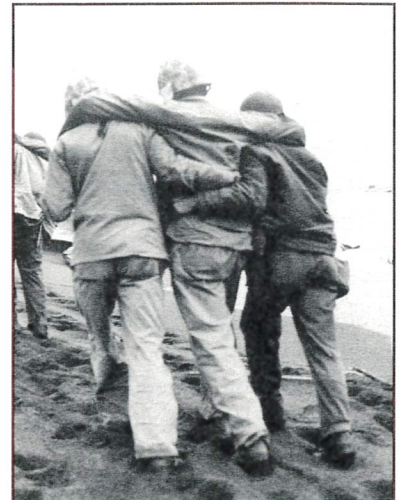
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A precarious, but necessary path



Spring makes you think of Good Friday, Easter, baseball, grass cutting, gardening, fishing, and cooking out. Sounds good!

But what if you didn't have any money left to do these things or even enough for food or the basic needs?

With higher taxes, rent, food prices, child care, utilities, medical expenses, the working poor, in striving to meet their basic needs, have to spend at least 105 percent of their gross income.

A family of four has to make at least \$6.50 an hour just for food alone. With no job or job skills, it is worse. When the money runs out you have the pain of watching your family go hungry.

Our city's food pantries have noticed increased requests for food during this so called period of "Economic Recovery." We can help by donating food, time, or money to the food pantries. Let us not forget those who can't speak for themselves—the infants, babies, and toddlers. They need food too!

This desperate need continues all year long. Hunger is with us 100 percent of the time. As Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you."

Put your heart, soul, and mind into it. Look because they're out there, hoping that you will see them and pray for them.

*Robert Gromowski
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

One Sunday, a member asked which of my children would replace me as organist when I got too old or died (neither of which I intend to let happen). I hemmed and hawed around and mentioned a couple of names who were making headway. But, the conversation got me thinking. **Music is very important in our society—especially in our churches. Where are all the musicians coming from?**

I teach music because I love it. I love to watch the light go on as a child is able to understand a song,



perform a certain skill, learn a technique. I pass it on because of the joy it brings to my students, and then to their whole family. I encourage music in everyone because I believe God has put music into everyone. It may come out in many

different ways, just as each has a different face, a different voice, and a different style of handwriting.

Musical instruction teaches self-control, listening skills, self-discipline, cooperation, patience (in self and others), concentration, and focus. Studies have shown that musical education raises math scores and increases social skills. We need music to keep our lives balanced. God also asks us to use music in worshiping him.

As you plan your days, consider including music in some form. Sing a new song. Watch a musical video. Listen to the classics. Get a little education. Take a few lessons. Rent an instrument for a few months. Do what my parents did: don't let your child quit music lessons until a long-range goal is achieved.

Music is like writing. Music is like riding a bike. Music is like swimming. Once you master the skills, you never forget.


*Rachel Mendell
Columbus, Ohio*

See how you can show appreciation for your church musician on page 20—ed.

The article "Blessings bring challenges" [Jan.] mentions many parasynodical organizations with which our synod has been blessed. Since I am an active member of the

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) I looked to find our group mentioned, but it was not.

I do feel the LWMS contributes quite a bit toward our mission projects, and I would have appreciated a mention of us in the article. We do have our central office in the area.

 *Emily Zimmerman*

Corrections: In Lynn Wiedmann's article "Hinduism Q&A [Dec. 1999], the word *Naramscaram-andil* was misspelled. It should read *Naramscaram-andi*.

Forward/NL prices were reported incorrectly in the February 2000 issue (p. 27). Bundle subscriptions will be \$6.75 per magazine, and every home subscriptions will be \$7.25 per magazine.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

April 2000

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Matthew 22:1-14 | 16. Matt. 28:1-20 |
| 2. Matt. 22:15-46 | 17. Jeremiah 26 |
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| 13. Matt. 27:15-31 | 28. Jer. 42, 43 |
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| 15. Matt. 27:51-66 | 30. Jer. 46, 47 |

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Love/hate that computer

Armin J. Panning

I have to admit that I have something of a love/hate relationship with my computer and all the technology that goes with it.

For one thing, the machine is an insufferable legalist. It's quite unforgiving. One wrong keystroke and I can lose all of the unsaved stuff I've worked so hard to put together. Or if I forget just one dot or add a dash to an e-mail address, it won't send my letter. And the Internet can be a terrible time-waster, serving up not only lots of frivolous and trivial information, but gross and immoral subject matter.

Yet, the computer can also be a marvelous time-saving tool. As someone with only moderate key skills, there's no way I want to go back to my typewriter and clean up typos with correction tape. Also, content revision is easy—and I'm always working with potentially "finished copy." Furthermore, tremendously helpful software programs and vast stores of useful information are available on the net. All in all, it's safe to say that the personal computer and its attachments have been a wonderful technological advance.

But how did the computer and its attachments come into existence? Is it purely the result of human ingenuity, the product of man's cleverness? Is its main goal to make business and industry more efficient and thus more profitable? Or is it primarily a "cash cow," providing the possibilities for enormous personal enrichment through tech stocks?

No, rather, modern technology is a gift from our gracious God, to be used for his glory. It's one of the greatest learning tools ever devised, providing not only secular information, but religious as well. If you aren't acquainted with the WELS Web site, you might want to check it out at <www.wels.net>. It features news of the

synod and the work of its various divisions, together with religious articles and a link to a thought-provoking section of questions and answers.

The new technology is also a boon for the production of new material, enabling authors with limited clerical support to be more productive in handling the mechanics of developing conservative Bible-based materials.

But perhaps it is in the distribution and sharing of such conservative law-gospel materials that the new technology offers the most significantly improved possibilities. Distance has largely become immaterial. Russia, Hong Kong, Central Africa, and South America have become as readily accessible by Internet as our friends and relatives living across town. We have tremendous opportunities for worldwide outreach via modern technology. We dare not muff the opportunity to inform a lost world both of the damning nature of their sin and of the forgiveness of that sin that is there for them in Christ.

But the ease of communicating with the ends of the earth also highlights the urgency of doing so. The preaching of the gospel to the four corners of the world is in itself a sign and a reminder that the time is short. Our Savior clearly indicated, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). "God our Savior . . . wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4). The time to let them know about the Father's love is now.

Let us work while it is day—using all of the resources available to us, including God's gift of modern technology.

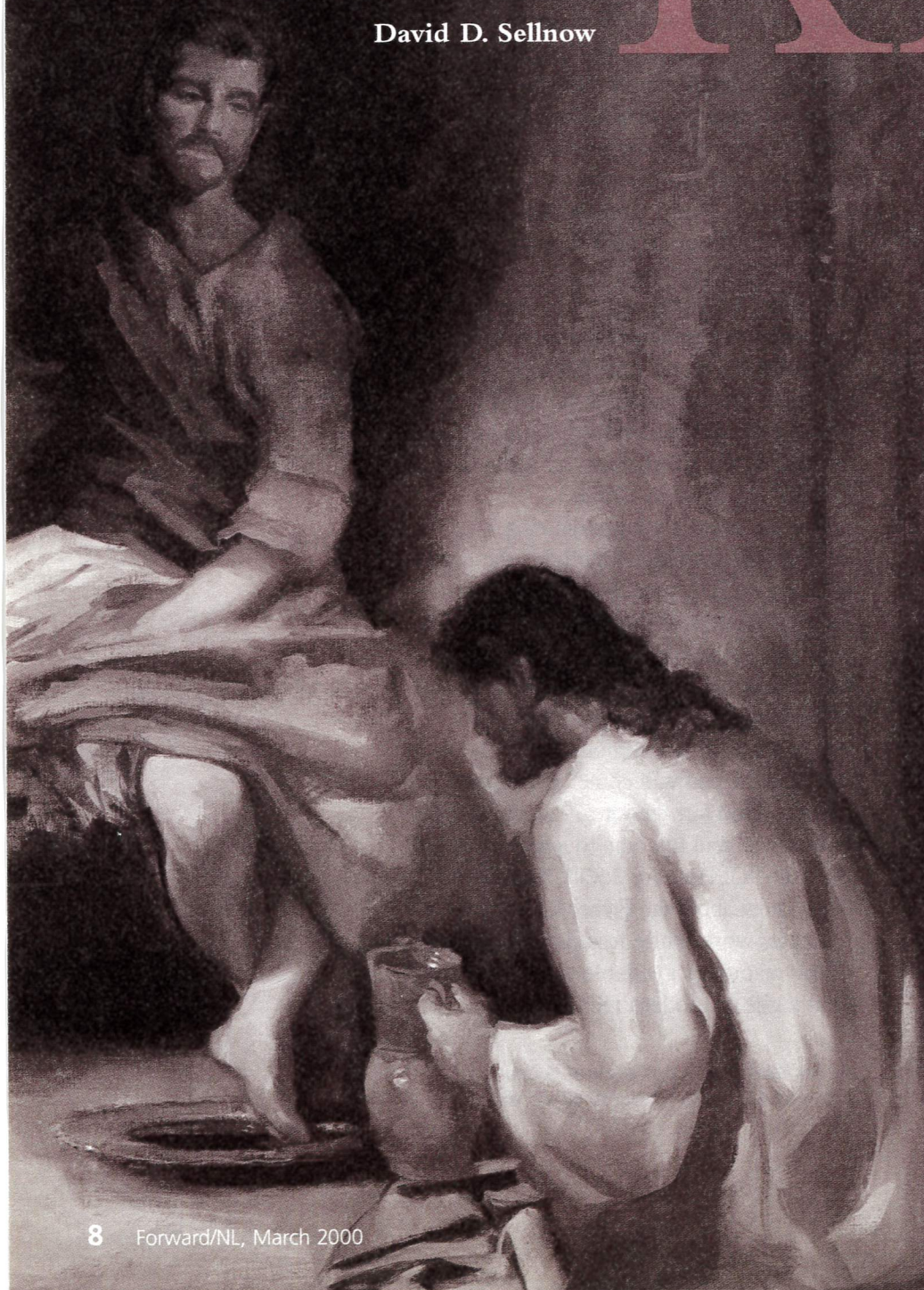
Armin Panning is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Modern
technology
is a gift
from our
gracious God,
to be used
for his glory.

The gentle King

Jesus is the only 100 percent gentle and righteous king this world will ever see.

David D. Sellnow



Pol Pot was a despot. He was ruthless. He was ruinous. He was rouge—as in Khmer Rouge or “Red Khmers,” the radical left wing group that seized control of Cambodia in April 1975.

A ruthless king

Under the leadership of Solath Sar, alias Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge renamed Cambodia “Democratic Kampuchea” and proceeded to turn it into anything but a democracy. Their communistic dream was to create an absolutely classless utopian society. They emptied all Cambodian cities of their populations; abolished banking, finance, and currency; outlawed all religions; and completely eliminated ownership of private property.

Obviously, not everybody willingly went along with this plan. So Pol Pot’s party proceeded to get rid of opposition. Of the total Cambodian population of seven to eight million at that time, it is estimated that anywhere from 15 to 40 percent were killed—one to

three million people. It was a time referred to as “The Killing Fields.”

Not until three and a half years later—when neighboring Vietnam invaded and took control—did the killing stop. Khmer Rouge guerrillas, calling themselves the “National Army of Democratic Kampuchea,” continued to wage an internal war in the ensuing years.

Pol Pot was so cruel and his legacy so hurtful that when he died in April 1998, the lead paragraph in an Inter Press Service report from Bangkok read: “Not many figures in history have suffered the fate of former Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot—the world demanding to see his body, not to mourn over it but to make sure he is really gone” (IPS, April 16, 1998).

Pol Pot was a despot—ruthless, ruinous, rouge as in red—blood red from the millions he massacred.

Our gentle King

Jesus Christ is not a despot, a dictator, or a leader of a ruthless regime. Jesus is gentle. Jesus is humble. Jesus is kind.

Jesus once said to his disciples, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves ‘benefactors.’ But you are not to be like that” (Luke 22:25,26). Jesus proved his point on that same night by getting down on the floor and washing his disciples’ feet (cf. John 13). “I am among you as one who serves,” he told them (Luke 22:27).

Jesus is not like any other king or president or prime minister on this planet. He is completely gentle and compassionate, com-

pletely truthful and righteous. He is the King of kings predicted by Zechariah’s prophecy: “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

Just how gentle is Jesus? Jesus is so gentle and humble in heart that when he makes his grand entrance into Jerusalem, he does it “riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Jesus is so gentle and tender of heart that when he sees a woman accused of scarlet sins, about to be stoned by the men of her town, he defends her, spares her, forgives her.

**He is humble
enough . . . to
scrub between
your toes if
necessary to
make you clean
for his kingdom.**

Jesus is so gentle and compassionate of heart that when he sees a widowed woman about to bury her only son, he raises the young man from the dead and gives him back to his mother.

Jesus is so gentle and loving in his heart that he welcomes back a friend who ran from him and denied him not once, but three times.

Jesus is so lowly and humble-hearted that he did not consider

it beneath him to die in derision by crucifixion—because of his profound love for you.

Jesus is gentle enough to love you in your loneliest moments. He is humble enough to come down to your level, hug you till the hurt goes away, even scrub between your toes if necessary to make you clean for his kingdom. He is kind enough not to scream at you when you blow it, not to reject you when you are less than perfect, not to humiliate you by announcing a list of your sins. He’d prefer to use his own blood as an eraser, so your sins are no longer seen.

Jesus is the gentle and righteous King. He’s the only truly 100 percent gentle and righteous king this world will ever see. Other lords lord it over their people—dominate them by brute force, threat, and sword. Or they sway them by sweet talk and political promises with little or no substance. Jesus is never like that. He is not harsh. He is not phony. He is not Pol Pot. Nor is he a politician.

Jesus Christ is the King and Lord that you need: righteous, to take away your sins, and gentle and humble to be willing to do so. If he would ride a donkey for you, suffer beatings for you, die on a cross for you—he can and will do anything for you. Put all your trust in him.



David Sellnow is pastor at Shepherd of the Plains, Lubbock, Texas.

A severe mercy

The Use of the Keys has eternal consequences—for better or worse.

Wayne A. Laitinen

“**T**o make sure we get it all, we’ll have to give you a lethal dose. . . .” he said in a clinical tone.

Before he could continue, she looked up at him, her pillow already moist with tears. “Is it really that bad?” she interrupted. “I mean, what are the chances of it going into remission by itself?”

He shuddered. She probably never noticed it. But he was sure that she had. It was one of those collisions between the head and the heart—between what he wanted to tell her and what he must tell her. He chided himself that after 15 years of practicing medicine he couldn’t recite the next lines of the script with the conviction of his trade without that miserable little empathic twitch.

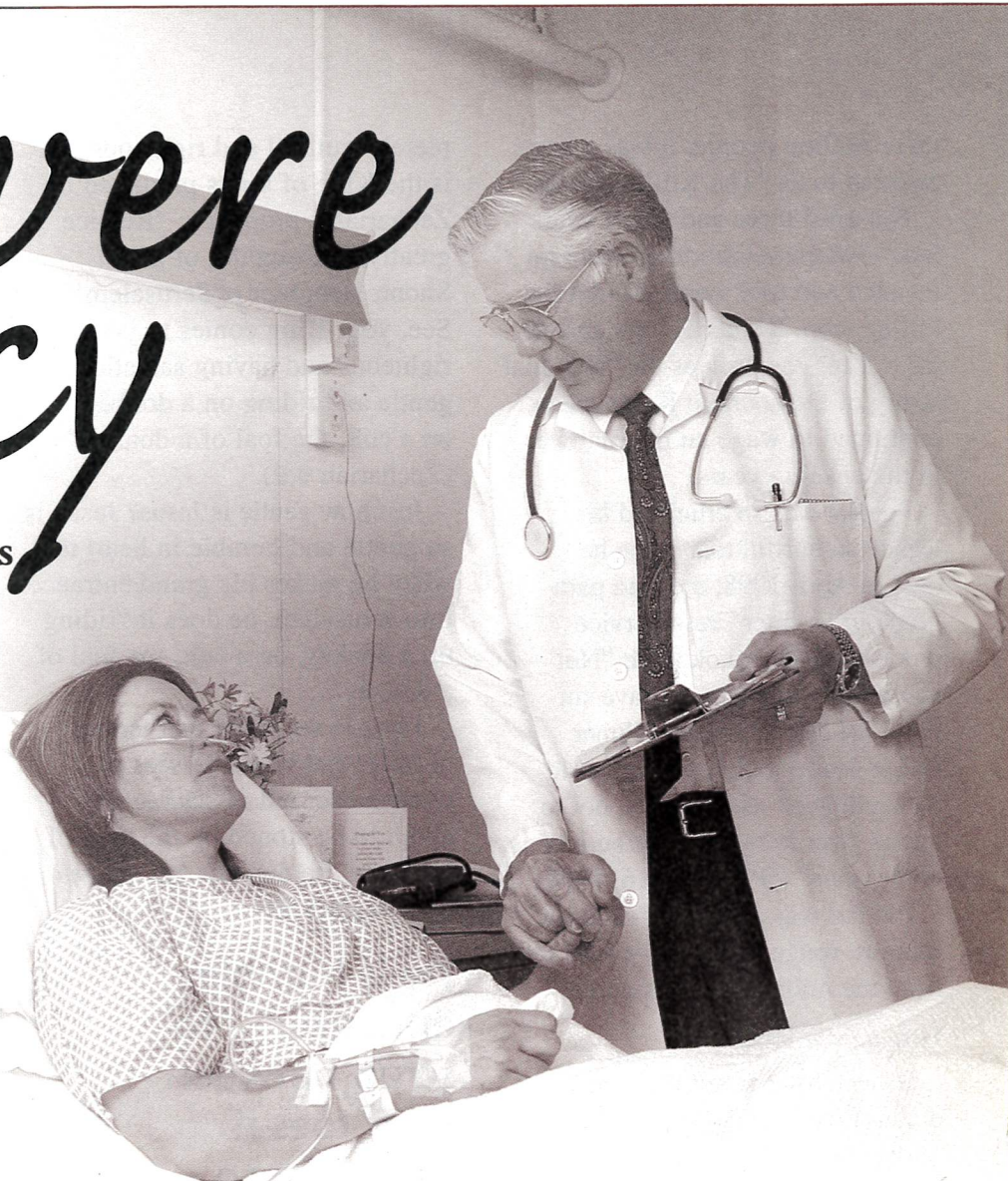
So, to compensate for this weakness, he rallied his wits, looked her straight in the eye, and said, “Maureen, this kind doesn’t just go away. If we don’t kill it, it will kill you.”

When the issues of life and death are in the balance, we expect our doctors to do the hard thing—to do the right thing. And when they do, we hold them in high esteem. We occasionally hear of medically licensed people who will say whatever the patient wants to hear or, without a diagnosis, write whatever prescriptions the patient requests. We have names for them, but “doctor” isn’t one of them.

Our Savior uses stronger words for those who deal recklessly with blood-bought souls. He calls them “evildoers” (Matthew 7:15-23). The

slip of a scalpel may result only in the loss of life or limb. The Use of the Keys, which Christ gave to his church, has eternal consequences—for better or worse.

Last month we saw how the law key is the only proper prescription for the heart that is not sorry for its sins. Likewise, the gospel key should be used only on those who have been humbled by the law to see the horrible nature of their sins against God. The only hope to bring sinners to saving faith (and to keep them in the faith until the end) is found in these two prescriptions, correctly applied.



Finding the right diagnosis

First, we must understand that sin is a violation of God's commandments, not man's. There are many popular substitutes for God's commandments. The world's commandments of political correctness or the pronouncements of social scientists are compelling to those who are more sensitive to the culture of the lost world. But if one strips away all the layers of the world's agenda and happens upon a kernel of truth, he will find that it has been most clearly written in God's Ten Commandments all along. In the last analysis, each person will not plead his case before a court of his peers, but before our just and omnipotent Maker.

Second, we need to know the desperate dilemma that our sins brought upon us. From president to pauper, the world describes our sin-sickness in euphemisms like "indiscretion" (silly me) or "poor judgment" (as if I merely hired a secretary who didn't know how to type).

And most compelling of all is the concept that sins are merely diseases. We Christians knew all along that original sin works in us like a disease. But inherited sin may manifest itself in a myriad of deviant behaviors for which we are responsible. What the world means to say is, "How can God (or anyone else) blame us if we were born with the gene for lying or theft or homosexuality or drunkenness or cheating or murder?"

Like a good doctor, however, God does the hard thing—the right thing. He gives a truthful diagnosis. "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). He holds each person responsible for his own sin. God's law

tells us that our condition is desperate because the holy and just God cannot leave the guilty unpunished.

In a sense, this stern diagnosis is the "lethal dose" we must take before there can be any healing. It is strong medicine for a life-threatening condition. And when we read it in the pages of Scripture, we ought to be as humbled as when the doctor announces that our biopsy was positive for cancer.

Offering a placebo

What do you do when you discover that someone is disobeying God's commandments?

It's easy to give false comfort that there's security in numbers: "Don't worry, I've done that, too." And who hasn't heard the concessions people make to the short-term pleasures of self-worship: "The important thing is: Are you happy?" Or the same idolatry may be fortified with the name of God: "God would want you to be happy!"

Are we sometimes tempted merely to deal with the coincidental problems of sin: "How do you think your family will take it?"

How easy it would be to give the impenitent the prescription that belongs to the penitent: "God forgives you. God loves you."

When God's children are tempted to deal superficially with sin, we see how powerfully the world fights to keep its own from entering God's kingdom.

Applying the cure


When the temptation to avoid using the law arises, remember that you were once a lost sinner, too. The cure began when the Holy Spirit put to death your old self. No one wants to die—least of all

our sinful flesh. But in God's severe mercy, he dragged our sinful nature into the water of baptism and drowned it there. Without that death there could have been no resurrection to life everlasting.

Remember, too, that you were not only drowned in the water of baptism, but you were raised from the water, "just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). Ever since your death and resurrection with Christ, the Holy Spirit has quieted your guilty conscience, assured you of complete forgiveness and guaranteed you heaven. You now live a new life of faith. Calling a sinner to repent has the happy goal of proclaiming free and full forgiveness in Jesus as well.

More than that, to remain a Christian, death and resurrection must be our daily experience. Each day we despise our sins, turn to Jesus' cross and plead, "Forgive us our trespasses." Each day our baptism is renewed, and the comfort of Christ's cross and open tomb sends us on our way in peace. Though the lost world does not yet know it, this is what they need the most. And you know the Word that brings such peace.

There is one difference between conventional medicine and God's prescription for our souls. In the last analysis, the physician's arts will fail. The Word of God can be rejected, but it can never fail. For it is written, "So is my Word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).


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

THE PERFECT CHURCH . . .

Perhaps we need to rethink what the ideal church should be.

Mark J. Cares

What's your idea of a perfect church? Maybe you picture an impressive building with immaculate grounds. As you enter, it is filled to capacity. All the members attend services regularly and contribute generously. The church's weekly calendar is highly organized and filled with meaningful activities. Each committee runs smoothly with plenty of volunteers to go around.

We're in a war

I have to admit that sounds nice. But over the years my picture of the ideal church has changed. Instead of the above, envision a land that has been completely devastated by war. In the midst of the devastation, people are struggling to get out. Most are injured in some way.

Their clothes are torn and dirty. People are supporting each other as they slowly limp away. Every once in awhile, they stop and help another survivor whom they stumble upon. As they slowly make their way out of the devastation, they are on the lookout for more survivors. Their ears are always perked to hear the anguished cries of the hurt. That is my picture of an ideal congregation.

Sin has made our world a war zone. But is that something we might forget? How many congregational evangelism committees resemble a team of medics who study or regularly discuss among themselves numerous life-saving techniques but rarely use them on the injured? They might even do a lot of advertising, telling people that they know all the life-saving techniques.

"We have the means to save you. Come to our headquarters and we will use them on you!"

Or how many of our congregations resemble armies who have never fought in battle? They can march with precision and do wonderful things with their rifles, but they have never shot them in battle. How many WELS members can recite with great precision numerous Bible passages, but have never once fired them in the war we call mission work?

We're in for joy

Before the 1997 synod convention, one of our synodical commissions conducted listening visits with leaders of 81 congregations representing all 12 districts. Their first finding? "There is little passion for the lost, evidenced by few expressions of urgency and personal responsibility to reach out with the gospel worldwide."

That's troubling. That's extremely troubling. Why did they find so little passion for the lost in our synod? Is it because WELS is filled with bad and evil people? Of course not!

What is it then? Could it be that many of us have never experienced the joy of witnessing firsthand?



IS A MESSY CHURCH?

Look at Jesus at the well of Samaria. He and his disciples arrive tired and hungry. Jesus rests while his disciples go into the village to get food. While they are gone, a Samaritan woman comes to the well. Jesus engages her in conversation and brings her to faith. As she leaves, his disciples return.

How many of our congregations resemble armies who have never fought in battle?

We pick up the story there. “Meanwhile his disciples urged him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’ Then his disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought him food?’ ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’ ” (John 4:31-34).

Do you see what witnessing did for Jesus? It energized him. When the disciples left him, he was hungry and tired. Now he doesn’t want to eat. In my mind’s eye, I see Jesus pacing back and forth excitedly as he says this. That is what witnessing does. It excites and energizes people.

How many of us have experienced the “rush” of witnessing? How many of us have witnessed adult baptisms on a fairly regular basis? Fewer things are more exhilarating. Or, when was the last time you had the opportunity to talk with Christians new to the faith—to hear

and see their excitement over knowing that Jesus has forgiven them? That’s energizing. Even more to the point, when was the last time you shared Jesus and his wonderful works of salvation with somebody who didn’t know Jesus as his Savior?

We’re in for a mess

Besides not regularly experiencing the joy of witnessing, could another reason we don’t always share the gospel passionately be that it will make our church messy? Outreach often makes churches messy. For example, it could force a Sunday school teacher to depart from her planned curriculum and instead tell the simple story of salvation because Ashley brought Shannah to Sunday school, and Shannah doesn’t have a clue who Jesus is or what he has done for her.

Quite likely it means that people who don’t know what proper church etiquette is will attend services and not do everything “the right way.” Witnessing easily could attract people who don’t look like us or dress like us. Very likely, it will bring people into our congregations who have lots of problems and baggage, people whose rough edges will be much in evidence in the fellowship hall after church, people who will increase the pastor’s counseling load tremendously. And it will bring people with new ideas—people who will want to do things differently and who might express their views quite forcefully.

Growth usually is messy. Ask the parents of growing children as they struggle to keep them in clothes that fit. Ask the citizens of a growing

community as construction makes a mess of their streets. Ask members of growing congregations. Growth doesn’t make for tidy church calendars or squeaky-clean members.

We’re in for blessings

But it’s well worth it. Being used by the Lord to bring hurting and lost people into his kingdom is a tremendous privilege and joy. Fewer things can put more sparkle into our lives. It’s special when we can help save somebody’s life. Playing a part in saving someone’s life—for eternity!—is all the more special. It can impart an inner warmth that can last for all eternity.

Yes, only the Holy Spirit can bring people to faith and grant growth to a congregation. And, yes, sometimes people witness faithfully and the Holy Spirit, in his wisdom, grants them little visible fruit for their efforts. But is that the case with you? Is that the situation in your congregation?

There is one good way to find out. Do some self-examination. Don’t examine the Holy Spirit’s fruit (new members), or even how you talk about mission work. Rather examine your outreach activity. How abundantly are you, personally, and how abundantly is your congregation sharing the gospel with unchurched people? Which of the above pictures does your congregation resemble?



Mark Cares is pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.

Dedication to education

Western Wisconsin District displays its dedication to education through its support of schools, campus ministries, and Bible study programs.

Nicole R. Moline

Dedication to education has never been in short supply in the Western Wisconsin District, especially when that education involves God's Word.

Even before the district was founded, a ministerial education school was established. Elementary schools, area Lutheran high schools, and campus ministries also give those in the Western Wisconsin District opportunities to learn more about God's Word. And, innovative Bible study programs ensure that all members continue to grow in their faith.

Ministerial training schools

When the Western Wisconsin District was organized in 1918, Northwestern College and Preparatory School already existed in Watertown, Wis., and was seen as a single institution. Originally dedicated to preparing future pastors on the secondary and college levels, it allowed the district to lead the way in educating its youth. In time, the preparatory department became a separate school and extended its curriculum to include a teacher track.

While neither school exists in its original form today, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, is serving the same function as Northwestern Preparatory School. And, the Lord is blessing the school. It is enjoying a record enrollment of 561 students this year.

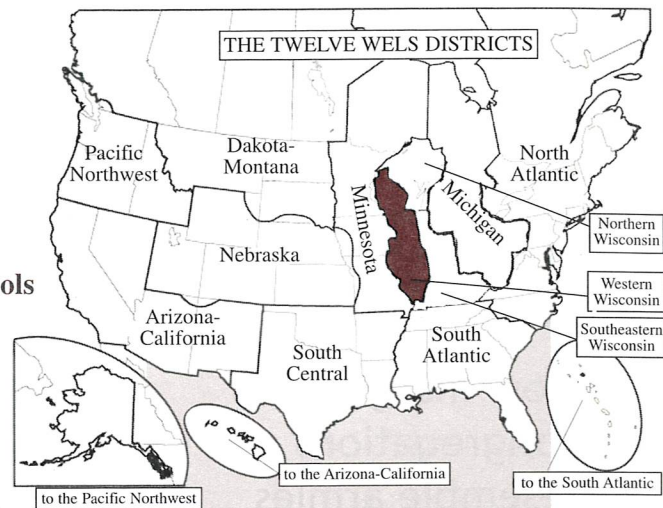
Lutheran elementary schools

Even as the ministerial training schools were being established, Lutheran elementary schools were also beginning. The Western Wisconsin District had its fair share of one-room schoolhouses dotting the open farmlands of the Midwest. As the years have gone by, these one-room schoolhouses have given way to larger schools with larger faculties. Currently, the Western Wisconsin District has 44 elementary schools filled with 5,458 students taught by 323 teachers.

As Western Wisconsin District President Herbert H. Prah1 notes, these schools create a sense of community between townspeople and members of the congregation. As a result, people are more open to hearing the message of salvation proclaimed by these schools.

Area Lutheran high schools

Of course, education in God's Word does not end after elementary school. Members of the Western Wisconsin District know that even those teenagers who are not going to become full-time church workers need to continue their Christian education. That is why the district contains three area Lutheran high schools—Lakeside, Lake Mills, Wis.; Luther, Onalaska, Wis.; and Northland,



Western Wisconsin District

Stats at a glance Western Wisconsin District

Conferences: 6
Circuits: 14
Congregations: 175
Mission churches: 14
Exploratory churches: 5

Baptized members: 76,562
Communicant members: 59,818
Average attendance: 40.8%
Pastors: 175

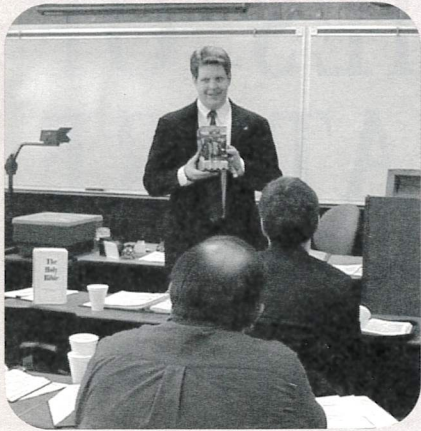
Adult baptisms: 74
Adult confirmations: 500

Sunday school enrollment: 6,350
Bible class attendance (teens): 564
Bible class attendance (adults): 6,155

Early childhood education schools: 45
Lutheran elementary schools: 44
Area Lutheran high schools: 3
Preparatory school: 1

Statistics taken from the 1998
Statistical Report, Commission
on Parish Schools, and Board
for Home Missions.

Wausau, Wis. These three schools make it their mission to prepare young people for life's battles.



Pastor John Boeder, St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., teaching "Growing in Christ," level three of the Basic Information Before Leaving Earth Bible study program. After only one year, over 200 people are involved.

Campus ministries

Those battles often get even harder to fight once a person enters college. Western Wisconsin District members maintain over 25 campus ministries so college students have the spiritual support they need. The largest of these is located at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and includes its own chapel and student center.

More often, campus ministry programs are similar to the one that Keith Free, pastor at Divine Word, Plover, Wis., coordinates at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point.

Students find a safe environment where their faith can be strengthened, a "church away from home," as Free calls it. Some students participate in ministry by serving as Lutheran pioneer leaders, visiting shut-ins, or singing in the choir.

The church benefits by having higher attendance and more workers for the Lord. Members also have the opportunity to help equip these young people with the tools of faith they will need as they become adults.

The ultimate, Free notes, is when

"active campus ministry students graduate, remain in the area, and become active members in the church. That is the ideal."

Bible study programs

Throughout the synod, the challenge to motivate members to attend Bible studies has grown. "The Sunday lesson used to be learned during the sermon, and members would further study God's Word in home devotions. Now, though, home devotions have fallen off. While tradition explains it, it does not excuse it," says Prahl.

Churches within the Western Wisconsin District are tackling this challenge by initiating new types of Bible study programs. St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., developed a five-course program entitled Basic Information Before Leaving Earth (B.I.B.L.E.). B.I.B.L.E. allows St. Paul to give its members a more thorough training in basic Christian faith and helps them continue to grow in their faith. Another positive result of attending B.I.B.L.E. is that "Members are serving where they are gifted. They have learned where they fit in with their gifts," says John Boeder, pastor at St. Paul.

Members at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., are also enjoying the benefits of a new approach to Bible study. St. Andrew's pastor, Randy Hunter, strives to make attending Bible study the norm, rather than the exception. "I want people to believe that coming to church on Sunday is really a two-hour commitment, not just one."

Another strategy Hunter uses is to offer a wide variety of classes. Angela Ebeling, a 22-year-old member at St. Andrew, comments, "St. Andrew is so cool because they have four or five different Bible studies to choose from on Sunday morning. Then you can choose a topic that interests you. . . . Sometimes I'm torn between which one I want to go to."

The commitment to studying God's Word that these churches display is the goal of each church in the Western Wisconsin District. Throughout the district's history, members have proven that they are willing to support ministerial education schools, Lutheran elementary schools, area Lutheran high schools, and campus ministries. The recent launching of new Bible study programs only reinforces their dedication. This dedication to education has served the district well in the past and is sure to serve it well in the future.



Nicole Moline is the communications assistant for Communication Services and Forward/Northwestern Lutheran.

QUICK QUOTES

From District President

Herbert Prahl:

QUESTION: What is the history of the Western Wisconsin District?

ANSWER: It is a history of transformation from the American frontier to America's dairyland/ heartland and a transformation from an essentially rural and Germanic culture to an increasingly diverse culture.

QUESTION: What do you consider the most surprising fact about the Western Wisconsin District?

ANSWER: The number of mission congregations that we have within our district. People think that because we have the most congregations of any district and we are in Wisconsin, we would not need to start any new congregations. . . . We are still actively doing mission outreach.



DISCREPANCIES OF A TEXTUAL NATURE

Manuscript errors and differences in texts have naturally occurred since the Bible was originally written. But Bible teachings have not been changed or jeopardized.

Forrest L. Bivens and John D. Schuetze

David came home from college that weekend because his brother was being confirmed. In the confirmation service, the pastor quoted Matthew 24:35: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

David found this promise more disturbing than comforting. Already on the way home from church he protested, “What the Bible says simply doesn’t square with reality!”

“David, what do you mean?” asked Joan, obviously concerned about her son.

David clarified, “Jesus supposedly said his words will never pass away. My own confirmation memory passage says something similar. It’s Psalm 119:89, ‘Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.’ We are taught that God’s Word in the Bible is inspired, eternal, and unchanging—always the same and always recognizable to us. But I know for a fact that many words of the Bible have already passed away. We can’t know for sure what the Bible originally said.”

Somewhat sarcastically, David added, “Jesus’ words may be firm in the heavens, but they’re not firm here on earth and, therefore, not reliable as promised.”

As soon as Jim heard his son’s words, a faint smile appeared on his face. “Are you talking about manuscript errors and ‘textual variants’ as they are often called?”

“Yes,” said David, “and there are hundreds of them! The Bible manuscripts that our translations are based on have missing and conflicting words, and no one knows for sure what the original manuscripts really said. That contradicts lots of Bible passages.”

Dishonest critics of the Bible overstate the significance of textual variants.

“Your mother and I understand your point and recently had the same kind of concerns,” said Jim, as Joan nodded in agreement. “May we share some things we learned that helped us?”

David said, “Okay,” and as soon as they arrived home, they went into the family room.

Jim began by saying, “Let’s freely admit, David, that there are thousands of variant readings in Bible manuscripts. Prior to the invention of printing, books were produced and multiplied by the

slow, laborious method of copying with a pen. In that kind of process, mistakes invariably appeared, reflecting for the most part weaknesses of the scribes who did the copying. On occasion a scribe would even purposely change the text to suit his personal preference or doctrinal bias. Since we do not possess the original manuscripts produced by the inspired writers of Scripture, we must settle for these later manuscripts with their variant readings.”

“Then how can we claim to have God’s Word or say that his words have not passed away?” David insisted.

“By keeping a few truths in mind. That a copyist misspelled a word or substituted a different one doesn’t make the original word uninspired or anything less than God’s Word. By analogy, that human nature is now corrupt does not alter the fact that mankind was created perfectly holy. Let us never confuse the original inspiration and inerrancy of the biblical text with the preservation of that text.

“Then, assuming the inerrant original text was later corrupted by copyists or damaged manuscripts, let’s examine the nature of those variants. Do they really make our

present Bible text unreliable or doubtful? That would be an unwarranted conclusion, a gross overstatement. The vast majority of variants do not in any way affect the sense of the message, but are comparable to the typographical errors often found in printed material.

“The few variant readings that affect the meaning of a verse consist for the most part of a single word or even of a single letter—and these few variants do not change any Bible doctrine. This last point deserves to be repeated: No Bible teaching is in any way changed or jeopardized by any variant reading or missing word due to a damaged manuscript. God’s Word, that is, his thoughts and message to the world, remains fully intact and reliably preserved for us.”

“Well, it seems to me that if God inspired the original manuscripts, he could have preserved that text without allowing variants or manuscript decay to take place,” stated David, logically and a bit sarcastically.

“We thought about that too,” said Joan softly. “Certainly God could have miraculously kept all transcribers from error just as he did the writers. But he didn’t. Just the same, he preserved his authoritative and accurate message and meaning despite textual problems. We have lost the original documents, but the words of those documents are still with us through copies made before their loss. The more we study all the evidence dealing with this subject, the more we see a wonderful, if not miraculous, preservation of the divine Word and the biblical text—even with fallible copyists.”

Jim then added, “Some have even suggested that God allowed textual variants to exist to stimulate people into examining the Bible all the more closely. Others have said God may have done it to keep people from

idolatry. If we had an authentic portrait of Christ or a piece of wood from the ‘true cross’ of Calvary, many would superstitiously treat them as sacred relics with magical powers. And if the original Bible texts had been miraculously transmitted in the handwriting of the authors, many would go mad over them but fail to use them properly as God’s message of law and gospel, of man’s sin and God’s grace.

“Actually, God never told us why he allowed variant readings to exist. But he promised us that his Word remains intact and we have it despite those variants.”

“So you’re telling me that what I lack is not a reliable Bible text, but faith in that text. Is that right?” asked David straightforwardly.

With equal frankness, Joan answered her son. “Yes, and we



admit to having the same problem to some degree, as do all of God’s people. Dishonest critics of the Bible overstate the significance of textual variants, and if we’re not careful we can be deceived into echoing their negativism rather than doing our homework and letting the Scriptures defend themselves. We encourage you to continue to ask honest questions and to seek honest answers.”

David silently admitted that this was good advice.

Forrest Bivens and John Schuetze are professors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Drinking

Your entire life—the good and bad all mixed together the way it is—is a cup set before you by your Father, to be drunk to the bottom.

Our cup

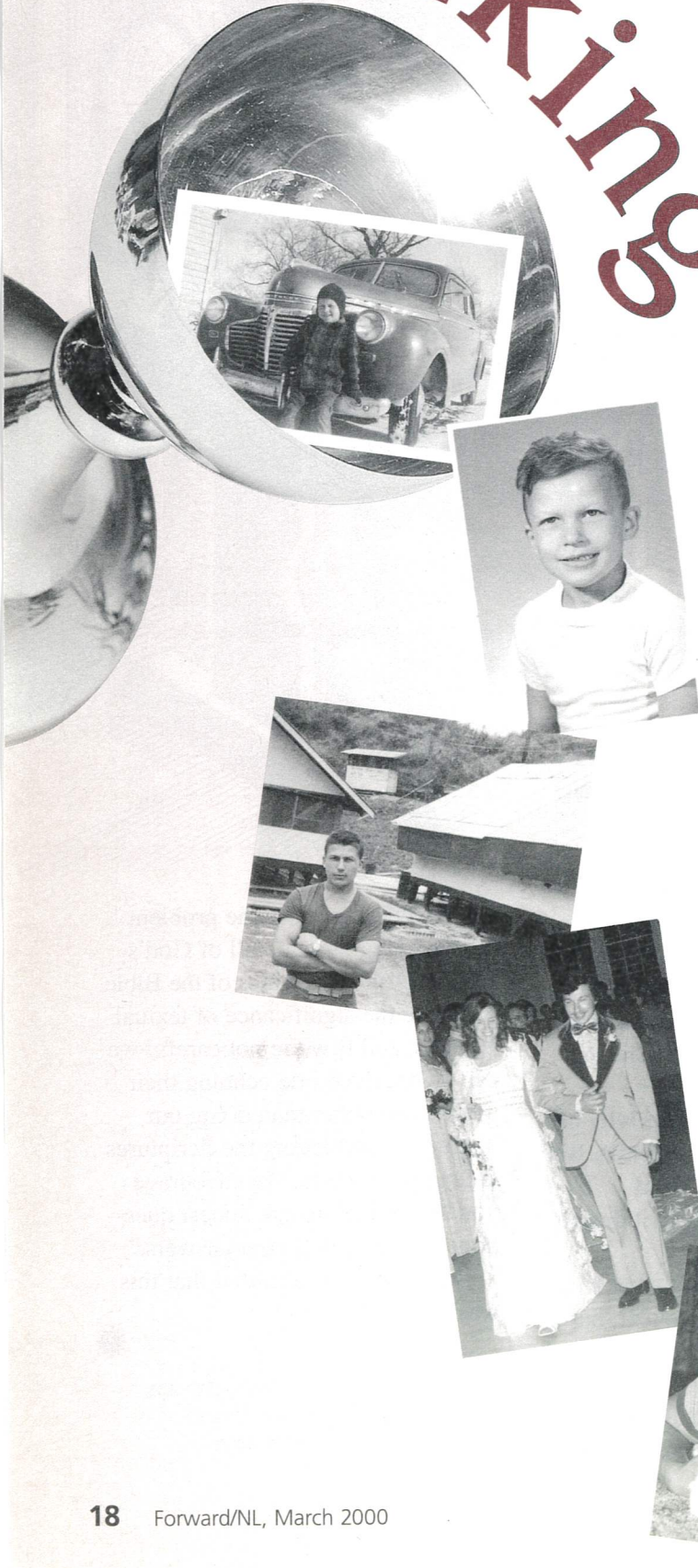
Mark A. Paustian

“Put your sword away,” he says to Peter. “Shall I not drink the cup my father has given me?”

Soon he is gone.

Before long his torn-open back is laid on the wood. A soldier holds a fistful of nails. Perhaps another is already sitting on his chest. Someone, maybe one of the women, offers him a cup. It’s gall, a narcotic mixture designed to dull his senses and take the edge off his pain. Try to imagine this moment, when the nails were about to be driven in. He takes a sip. See him realize what it is, spit it out, turn his head away. He’s got to be alert for his crucifixion. He’s not going to miss any of what was to come. He doesn’t want the edge taken off. What he wants is to drink the cup the Father has given him.

The Son of God snapping his head away from the wine vinegar—burn it into your mind. It’s critical for us to see him drinking us to the bottom, all the sin of each of us, and to witness that resolve to drink the entire cup, because it was from his Father.



The cup of your life

But did you know he's given you a cup, too? King David teaches us to think of our entire life—the good and bad all mixed together the way it is—as a cup set before us by our Father, to be drunk to the bottom. “Lord, you have assigned me my cup.” We didn't get to choose who we are: our face, our temperament, the shaping experiences of childhood, our gifts, our limitations, what opportunities would come and which ones wouldn't. So we talk about “playing the cards we're dealt.” The great kings of Scripture—David and his Lord—talked instead about drinking a cup.

I page through a collection of photos of myself arranged in chronological order, and in an instant I see and am overwhelmed. This is my cup—the one my Father poured for me.

Shall I not drink it?

Drinking your cup

That's the question. Do we ever really drink our cup? Think of the energy spent wishing that things were different, resisting the way things are, protesting our life. A cup sits in front of us untouched. We can pray, “Father, take it from me” with the best of them, but how half-hearted is our, “Let your will be done”? Or do we flee into the buzz of a little too much to drink? Do we escape into mindless television, throwing another evening away. “Is anything on?”

It's gall. The world is handing us gall. It's what we do instead of ever really lifting the cup of our lives to our lips. Drinking our cup is something more than bland acceptance,

“Okay, so this is my life.” It's, “I want this to

be my life.” It's something more than a resigned, “Let's make the best of it.” It means embracing our reality—all of it—because it's from our Father, who happens to love us. “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” Job wondered out loud. Let us “submit to the Father of our spirits and live” (Hebrews 12:9).

I take first sips from my cup as I look at those old photos and find myself just as thankful for the bad as for the good. I savor the memories of searching for Jesus in a lonely time, and begin to understand the strength that was found in weakness.

And I want this to be my life!

I page through a collection of photos of myself . . . and in an instant I see and am overwhelmed. This is my cup; the one my Father poured for me.

Drinking our cup means befriending our reality and looking for the unique potential to know God, to reflect him, and to be a blessing in this life I was given to live. Not a different life. This one.

The cup of salvation

But how? Well, you'd need to know that your cup comes from your Father, wouldn't you? You'd need to be convinced that he loves you, that he is immeasurably good, that he can be trusted. You'd need to be persuaded that this cup, your time in this world of sin and death, is not all you have from him. You'd need to know something about the life that comes after. You need to drink deeply from the cup of salvation.

“Eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,” Jesus said about the way he wants us to take him into ourselves by faith. Learn to draw more deeply from that well. Read John 3:16, understanding that you may need to start over a dozen times, each time you realize that the noise in your mind has distracted you and kept you from absorbing it. Begin again. “For God . . . (imagine that explosion of beauty when he said “Let it be”) . . . so loved . . . (you've seen a father having a “love burst” as he holds his little girl) . . . the world . . . (fill your mind with a thousand faces of every color, from every creed) . . . that he gave . . . (what does it mean just to give?) . . . his one and only Son . . . (“Peter, put your sword away.”) . . . his Son!

Drink deeply. The Spirit will meet you there, opening up to you the words.

The most precious experience I have had in ministry was standing beside a young woman's bed just moments before her baby boy was to be taken away, given up for adoption. She whispered, “Do you think God gave me this child to bring me to him?” In the most painful moment of her life, she found the God who knows about giving away a son. And she wasn't “making the best” of a sad situation. She was drinking her cup.

Even if he were all I had, “the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places” (Psalm 16:6). I look around and realize that not every life lived in this world includes a moment of finding God, that not every path ends up in him. But this one does.

I want this to be my life. My cup overflows.

Mark Paustian is pastor at New Life, Rockford, Illinois.



THE TREMENDOUS BLESSING OF CHURCH MUSICIANS

**How you can show your appreciation
for church musicians and the
music they add to worship.**

Randall R. Ott



Have you ever thought much about your big toe? Neither had I, until I broke it. Then I realized how great a blessing a healthy big toe actually is. Every step was a jolting reminder that something was not right. You may never have offered a prayer of thanksgiving for a healthy big toe, but I know that I have. I still do.

The church's "big toe"

Have you ever thought much about the men or women who sit on the organ bench as you worship on a Sunday morning? I have always acknowledged that the organists in our congregation are a blessing from

the Lord. But I never stopped to consider what tremendous blessings they are until I saw a neighboring pastor struggle with the "broken toe" of no resident organist. The organist who had faithfully served the congregation for a number of years had moved away. No one else in the congregation could serve as an organist. I listened to him describe the time he spent calling and scheduling guest organists.

The description of frenzied scurrying to find a last minute organist and a service with no organist opened my eyes to how blessed we were. Then I realized how much we as a congregation took the organists' gifts, abilities, and loving service to God and his people for granted.

How could we show our organists that we appreciated their faithful service to God and his people?

One church's way of showing appreciation

The desire to do something to publicly thank our organists became firmly nestled in the back of my mind, right alongside a lot of other good intentions. It remained there for some

time until a question from an Aid Association for Lutherans branch officer finally prodded me into action. He asked if there were any volunteers in the church for whom the branch could host a "thank you" dinner. Immediately the wheels began spinning as the word "organists" rolled off my tongue.

Organists are a blessing from our God of grace.

Food is a wonderfully sound and traditional way for Lutherans to gather together and say thank you, yet it seemed as though we should do more for this occasion. I approached the church council about having a special "organists appreciation" day at church. We discussed ways to honor our three organists and decided a worship service that highlighted the value of music in offering our praises to God would be most appropriate.

A budget was set for thank-you gifts to present to the organists (a beautiful tapestry of a country church). A councilman volunteered his wife to pick out appropriate corsages. Another man agreed to speak on behalf of the congregation at the thank-you dinner. It was with great

joy (not even a hint of frenzied scurrying) that I approached an organist from our sister congregation to play the organ on this special day.

The service was a joy to attend. Both the readings and the hymns celebrated God's gift of music and musicians. In the sermon we experienced the contrast between speaking the words of a beautiful hymn and singing those words to a beautiful melody. Everyone agreed, "He who sings prays twice."

After the service the members were able to offer their personal thanks and appreciation to our organists. Each organist stood with the pastor to shake hands and greet people after worship. The Lord blessed everyone on this special day. The organists appreciated the recognition from the congregation. The congregation also benefited from reflecting on God's gift of music and musicians.

How you can thank musicians

Organists are a blessing from our God of grace. As with all gifts we do well to thank the Lord who gives them and also thank the people who use his gifts faithfully. Do not let yourself or your congregation become so accustomed to someone on the organ bench that you fail to appreciate him until he is gone.

Seize the day and thank your church musicians. Thank them personally. Thank them verbally or with a card. Thank them as a congregation. Thank them with a special service. Thank them with a special gift. Thank them

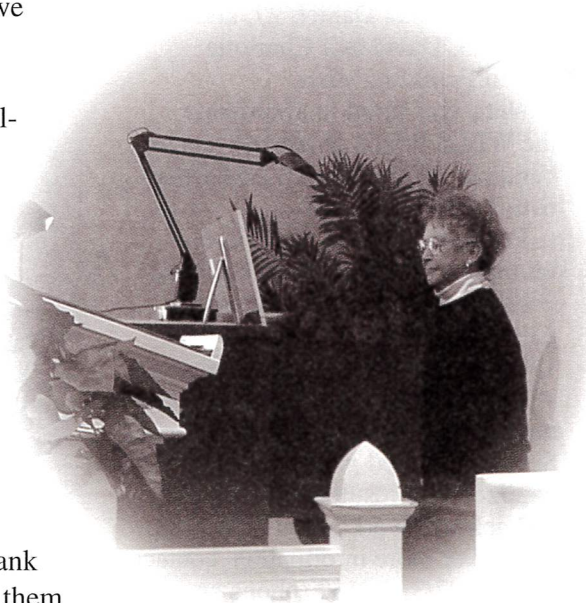
on a regular basis with generous compensation that acknowledges their faithful service. Thank them by making the most of the gifts God has given them. Encourage their ongoing training with actual support. However you do it, whether as an individual or as a congregation, thank your church musicians.

Whatever you decide to do, do it with a heart that reflects the love God has shown you in Christ.

Then you may also experience the simple joy of a card I received from one of our organists the next week. She wrote, "I admit it! I like to be appreciated! It was wonderful to be thanked and acknowledged for doing something that I love to do. Sunday was a thrill. Thank you so very much!"



Randall Ott, pastor at Trinity, Lake City, Minn., is the Minnesota District Worship Coordinator.



Right now, WELS has a shortage of young musicians. One way to reduce the shortage is to show appreciation for our musicians.

To help learn even more about the present music situation, the Western Wisconsin District conducted a survey of organists in the district.

The survey validated the concern for the shortage of young people. Sixty-nine percent of the district's organists are over 40 years old, and 40 percent of that group is over 55. The oldest reporting organist is 84. Many suggested using young people on the keyboard as part of the worship service to encourage them.

None of the organists added a comment about low pay as a deterrent for encouraging young people to enter the work. Yet, in spite of the many congregations that pay well, the average pay was low because of volunteers and low paying congregations. Seventy-two percent reported being paid. Compensation could be understood as an expression of the level of appreciation for our musicians.

Many of the 266 organists who responded expressed joy in having the opportunity to use their talents in accompanying worship. Thirty-four percent felt their work was greatly appreciated. Sixteen percent said no one notices what they do. (Several people added, however, that they are noticed when they make a mistake.) The efforts we make to show appreciation for our musicians is an excellent first step in reducing the shortage.

Franklin Zabell is the Western Wisconsin District Worship Coordinator.

Christmas around the world

Decorating Christmas trees, attending special Christmas services, and spending time with our families—these are Christmas traditions most people take for granted. However, WELS world missionaries often find that other countries do not observe Christmas the way they are used to. Many begin new traditions or adapt existing ones to the areas in which they live. E-mail excerpts from our missionaries follow:

“Two young boys had taken up the tribal drums to accompany our carols and struggled through “From Heaven Above” and “Away in the Manger.” But when we introduced them to “The Little Drummer Boy,” we hit upon a winner. Their rhythm was right on, and their friends picked up the tune in no time at all.”—Dan and Eunice Westendorf, Cameroon, Africa

“We finally used our 10-months-beyond-the-completion-deadline

chapel on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the Sunday after.

The building is far from completed; half the windows are missing, the floor is unfinished, only two lights, no chancel furniture, and many other items need more work. But, we did use it for four worship services: one in English, one in Chichewa, and two combining the two languages into a service.”—Dick and Sally Warnke, Malawi

“At two in the afternoon on the 24th, we presented the Christmas story to 25 Indians, mostly mothers and children. . . . We had an informal service in which we sang some of the easier Christmas hymns, and Charlie used colored pictures to talk about



John Vogt, missionary to Sweden, holds up a Christmas ornament so members of his church can try to guess what the ornament symbolizes. The game was part of a church Christmas party that he and his wife, Sandy, hosted.

the birth of the Savior and the need we have for him.”—Charlie and Beth Flunker, Brazil

“Over the past five years, Sarah and I have hosted Christmas Eve Outreach parties from our home. . . . We ended up with 45 in our home for Christmas Eve night. Everything went very well!”—Kevin and Sarah Stellick, Taiwan

Finding a “Nack” for prison ministry

David Nack was inducted as the first administrator of WELS Prison Ministry on Jan. 18 at the synod administration building in Milwaukee.

Nack graduated in 1971 from Dr. Martin Luther College. He emergency



Edgar Herman (middle), chairman of the Institutional Ministries Committee, led the induction service and extended God's blessings to David and Charlotte Nack.

taught at Bethel, Bay City, Mich., for one year before teaching at St. John, Fairfax, Minn., for 27 years.

David and his wife, Charlotte, have two sons: Daniel, 27, and John, 25. David and Charlotte live in Franklin, Minn.

Nack was hired to coordinate the WELS Prison Ministry program, begun in 1995, that now consists of over 1,500 volunteers.

Prisoners write to the prison ministry to obtain Bibles, self-study Bible booklets, and Christian pen pals. Volunteers have mailed over 150,000 Bibles and 320,000 Bible study booklets. Over 1,500 prisoners receive mail from Christian pen pals. Several hundred prisoners have been baptized as a result of this ministry.

Nack will work out of New Ulm, Minn. For more information, contact him at 507/354-3130 (phone and fax).

The word from the WELS

Our byline for *Forward/NL* calls the magazine “The Word from the WELS.” But we also want the word from the WELS from you, our readers.

- Let us know what you think about the magazine. Give ideas of subjects you think we should cover.

- Keep us informed about newsworthy events at your church. Get in touch with your district reporter or contact us directly.

- Send us a question for the column, “Your question, please.”

- Submit a photo for “Picture this,” a feature on our Potluck page.

Keep in touch. Let this magazine truly be “The Word and the word from the WELS.”

Contact *Forward/NL* at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210; <nl@sab.wels.net>.

Link and think: WELS' cyber classrooms

The class that you registered for is about ready to begin—for you anyway.

You turn on your computer, log on to the Internet, and with the click of your mouse, your class begins!

Where are the teacher and the rest of the class? They're out there, in cyberspace, easily accessible by e-mail, discussion forums, and chat rooms. You work with the instructor, complete assignments and team projects, take notes, ask questions—just like a regular classroom. Except that it's all done on your computer.

The Lutheran Cyber-Education Project (LuCEP) is using electronic technologies to help WELS bring the gospel, Christian education, and professional development activities to as wide an audience as possible.

"By God's grace, as we enter the new century and observe the 150th anniversary of WELS, our eyes will be opened to see new possibilities for sharing the gospel with those who do not know it and enriching the faith-life of those who do," says Karl Peterson, interim project director.

Under the guidance of the WELS Commission on Parish Schools and the Board for Ministerial Education, and in partnership with the synod's

Telecommunications/Technology Task Force, the LuCEP committee is designing a three-level curriculum:

- Post-secondary professional level—extension, certification courses; masters programs; biblical, missionary languages
- Elementary/secondary level—religion, foreign language courses; advanced placement courses; remedial instruction; on-line elementary/secondary curricula
- Parish services level—Personal Bible study, religious topics; training seminars for laity, church leaders; augmenting synodical activities (e.g. Forward in Christ).

LuCEP's pilot offering, a train-the-trainer course for facilitators of Jesus Cares (a division of The Lutheran Home, Belle Plaine, Minn., that works with the developmentally disabled), will be offered this spring. Instructors are receiving training in online course development and teaching methodologies for additional courses being offered in fall.

The Siebert Lutheran Foundation, Aid Association for Lutherans, and Lutheran Brotherhood provided initial funding for LuCEP.

The WELS Synodical Council has

asked LuCEP to begin planning how its activities can be turned over to existing ministries.

For more information, visit LuCEP's Web site, <www.lucep.org>.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

My husband Joel attended summer school at the Seminary in summer 1999. My daughters and I went to visit him one day, and we had our family picture taken in front of the Martin Luther statue.

When we were looking at our pictures from that summer, our six-year-old daughter, Magdalena, asked who that statue was.

When I told her that it was Martin Luther, her eyes got real big and she exclaimed, "Mommy, he's named after our church!"

Jane Petermann
Amherst, New Hampshire

Teaching about Jesus through teaching English

More and more, churches and missions are using English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) to build relationships so they can share Jesus with the students.

Kevin Stellick, a WELS missionary in Taiwan, writes: "On Dec. 19, we held our EFL Christmas Program. Al and Chanda Schleusener, our WELS coworkers here in Taichung and also our EFL teachers, and I worked hard to put a program together for our EFL students. The students had been singing Christmas songs for the past two months of classes and were able to sing all of

those songs as a part of the program. We had 62 in attendance, and they all heard again of the first Christmas."

Churches in the Appleton area are sponsoring ESL classes as just one way to reach out to the Hmong in their area.

To help promote and oversee these efforts, the Board for World Missions appointed an ESL/EFL steering committee in late 1998.

The committee's mission is "to foster the spread of the gospel by providing ESL/EFL information and materials and by training individuals to share their faith in Jesus Christ while teaching ESL in English speaking areas and EFL in other lands."

Training opportunities include a teaching-English-as-a-foreign-language certification course at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and weekend seminars that provide the information needed to begin an ESL program.

A listserv—TEFLTALK—provides a forum for WELS members to discuss and share ideas about ESL/EFL.

For more information or to subscribe to TEFLTALK, contact Lisa Hunter, project director, 507/354-6985; <lhunter@newulmtel.net>.

WELS news briefs

These updates are from the offices at the synod administration building. You can contact these offices and administrators at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Commission for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS) and Communication Services Commission (CSC)

Over 70 people from the United States and Canada attended a listening and learning session on Dec. 11, 1999. People attending the meeting included WELS representatives, district CCFS chairmen, lay representatives from district commissions, and synod CCFS and CSC boards.

The meeting served as a forum through which representatives could discuss the challenges and benefits they encounter as they carry out their duties as WELS representatives. Representatives responded favorably to the idea of expanding their roles. First, though, tasks must be more clearly explained and instruction must be given about what is expected of each representative.

A grant from AAL helped fund the session.

Telecommunications/Technology Task Force

414/256-3298

Videoconferencing is now installed at the synod administration building, joining pilot installations at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

Board for Parish Services

414/256-3228

Three dozen elders' training seminars were conducted around the country in the past six years. Pastors and elders from five or more congregations gathered together for a day and a half to learn what Scripture says about the spiritual leadership of the church. Emphasis was placed on visitation ministry, especially in exercising evangelical discipline.

Commission on Youth Discipleship

414/256-3224

The first Christ-Light® vacation Bible school (VBS) materials, entitled *The Impossible Mission,* will be available for use during summer 2000.



Northwestern Publishing House and the Commission on Youth Discipleship are offering VBS workshops in 2000. These workshops will provide congregations an opportunity to view the new *Christ-Light* VBS curriculum, to provide free planning and promotional resources, and to offer training and encouragement. There is no fee. Sample materials will be provided.

Workshops have already happened at Wausau, Wis.; Seattle, Wash.; Tomah, Wis.; and North Mankato, Minn. Workshops are scheduled for these areas: Mar. 25, Belle Plaine, Minn.; April 8, Fond du Lac, Wis.

For information on scheduling or attending these workshops, contact administrator Jerry Kastens.

Commission on Adult Discipleship

414/256-3277

The 1999/2000 stewardship emphasis is entitled *Taking God at His Word.* This program offers a one-week worship emphasis—theme, sermon study, readings, hymns, and prayers; a six-part educational resource on the stewardship of money to be used in every member visits or small group meetings; and a resource manual detailing how to conduct every member visits or small group meetings.

There will be no 2000/2001 stewardship program because of the "Forward in Christ" emphasis.

The 16 courses in the "His Word—My Life" curriculum will be completed by spring 2000. Copies are available from Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022.

"Openings" for the unchurched

Many WELS congregations are benefiting from the new Openings program of Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL). Openings provides some of the funding for congregational programs.

Grace, Charlotte, N.C., started a day-care program for infants and preschoolers. Demographic research and surveys by Grace show a need for full-day childcare in the area they serve. This new program is an extension of Grace's Pre-Natal Outreach Program and will target people who don't attend church.

King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., will begin a day-camp program next summer. The camp will be a full-day, summer-long program aimed at working parents who don't attend church but are looking for wholesome summer activities or daycare for their children.

Immanuel, Salem, Ore., is opening an elementary school that will serve families in the north Salem area who are not churchgoers. Members hope that this will lead to the start of a new church.

DEFINING RELIGION

inerrancy: The teaching that the Bible is without error and true in all that it says. Since the Bible is the Word of God, given through holy writers inspired by the Holy Spirit, everything it records is true because God cannot lie (2 Timothy 3:16, John 17:17, Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18).

District news

South Central

Thirty-five Vietnamese adults and children attended the Christmas service at **Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.**

Over 60 people from China and Taiwan attended a traditional Christmas dinner and worship service on Christmas Eve at **Beautiful Savior, College Station, Tex.** Four expressed an interest in learning more about the Bible, while seven are interested in taking an English-as-a-second-language course.

Western Wisconsin

Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., held a Walk/Run Benefit to support Lakeside students David Bristley and Peter Heyn, who were injured this summer in separate bicycle accidents. Bristley, who would have been a junior at Lakeside, was struck by lightning and sustained injuries that eventually led to his death. Heyn, a '98 Lakeside graduate, was hit by a car while riding his bicycle. He is now home and doing well.

Lakeside had a successful fall athletic season. The boys cross country team won the 1999 WISAA Division 2 state title. The girls cross country team won the Capitol Conference Championship and placed third in the state championship. In volleyball, the girls' team was undefeated during the season and placed second in the conference tournament.

Nicole Gurgel, St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis., was the state champion in the girls cross country competition. Nicole is a student at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills.

Minnesota



On Nov. 21, 1999, Pastor Robert Glasgow, of Friedens, New Prague, Minn., presented Irma Grassmann a plaque in appreciation for her 45 years of service in the Sunday school ministry. The congregation honored Grassmann, 83, who recently retired from teaching.

Minnesota

Current enrollment at **Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.,** is 905, a record for MLC.

The football team at **Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.,** won the Class 1A Academic Football Championship.

A pony escaped before a live nativity scene performance at **Christ, North St. Paul, Minn.,** on Dec. 19, 1999. After being chased down by shepherds and wisemen, the pony was safely returned to its stable for the 7 PM service.

Dakota-Montana

St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D., won first place in the nonprofit organization class of its town's annual Parade of Lights. The theme of their float was "Forward in Christ." St. Paul's choir was also honored by being asked to sing at the lighting of the city's Christmas tree.

Southeastern Wisconsin

On Jan. 12, **Affiliated Pregnancy Counseling Service, Racine, Wis.,** a division of WELS Lutherans for Life, received an envelope containing a powdery substance that an accompanying letter identified as anthrax. Anthrax, a highly lethal bacterial disease, is often used as a type of biological warfare. Authorities discovered that the envelope did not contain anthrax. A suspect was arrested and charged for mailing a threatening communication.

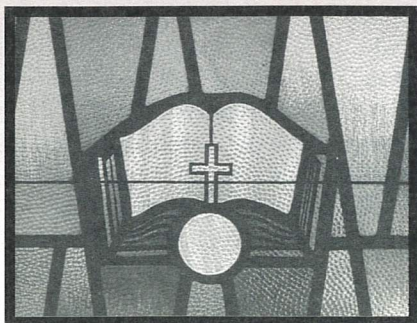
Happy Anniversary!

MN—St. Paul, Prescott, Wis., celebrated a double anniversary on Dec. 5, 1999. The congregation turned 125 years old, and the present church building was 25 years old.

SC—Members of Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex., thanked God for the 33 years **Vilas Glaeske** has served in the pastoral ministry. The congregation also gave thanks for his wife, **Ruth Glaeske,** a teacher and church organist for 25 years.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: DM—David Wendt; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

SYMBOLS for your life



Symbol: Open Bible

Background and meaning:

God's Holy Word is open to all of us to read and find our only salvation. The Bible, or parts of it, has been translated into over 2,000 languages and dialects.

Bible gems:

Psalm 119:16, 89, 133, 169, 170—
"I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your Word. Your Word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Direct my footsteps according to your Word; let no sin rule over me . . . give me understanding according to

your Word . . . deliver me according to your promise."

Romans 1:16—"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

A symbol for your life:

Read Psalm 119. It is one long testimony to the importance of God's Word. Our gems give just a few reasons why the Bible is important. What are they? What must you do with it throughout your life? What is the "mission" of the church? How is this mission sometimes lost or forgotten in some churches today?

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. If you have an example to share, send it to us at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <nl@sab.wels.net>.

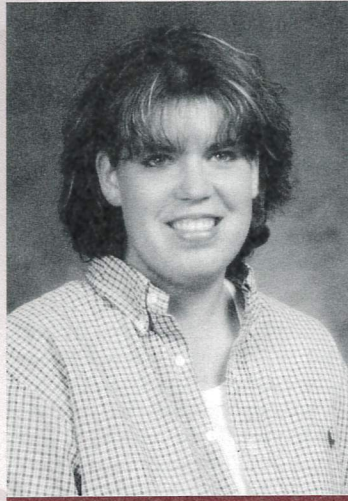
On Jan. 29, 1999, Joanna Behrens, a 25-year-old teacher at Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill., died suddenly from invasive strep A. Here, Katie Martin, "JoJo's" close friend, shares how JoJo let her faith shine during her life, and how God used her death to help bring someone to faith. Katie writes:

Much was found through the death of JoJo. Most touching was when a lost soul found faith in Jesus through JoJo's life and death.

Angie had only met JoJo once at a wedding shower in the Twin Cities. The two of them hit it off and formed an instant bond. After the weekend, JoJo and Angie parted company but stayed in touch.

When Angie heard the news of JoJo's death, she was inconsolable because she was not sure of the peace that Jesus gave us. Until this time, Angie had been unchurched. She flew down to Downers Grove for the memorial service and joined JoJo's family and friends at her apartment after the service.

Here Angie was given an envelope from JoJo—an envelope that didn't quite make it to the post office before JoJo got sick. Its contents were simple: a picture frame with the word "smile" inscribed on it, and some pamphlets. We learned that these "pamphlets" were printed sermons that JoJo had copied from her church. We also discovered that



Joanna Behrens

JoJo witnessed to Angie over the telephone and had been convincing her to go to church.

Now Angie, too, has found the peace that Christians have in the news that Jesus died for us. Through the loss of JoJo's life, the Lord found another soul for heaven. Now Angie has started to attend church services regularly.

This story made me think about my own life. What am I doing to share the peace I have in Jesus? How often do I back down instead of giving the reason for the hope that I have?

Through JoJo, I have been given a gentle reminder of why we have all been put on this earth. We have no other purpose than to grow in Christ and share the news of him with all people.

*Katie Martin
Hastings, Minnesota*

Obituaries

Dorothy Marie Gieschen 1907-1999

Dorothy Gieschen was born Oct. 28, 1907, in Milwaukee. She died Dec. 9, 1999, in Lake Mills, Wis.

Gieschen taught at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.

She is survived by one son, three daughters, seven grandchildren, and one sister.

Gerald J. Jacobson 1938-1999

Gerald Jacobson was born May 13, 1938, in Appleton, Wis. He died Dec. 28, 1999, in New Ulm, Minn.

A 1961 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Jacobson taught at Bethel, Menasha, Wis.; Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.; and Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. He also served as librarian of the college.

He is survived by his wife, Eileen; two sons, two daughters, and several grandchildren.

Eleanor M. Lahmann 1910-1999

Eleanor Lahmann was born Oct. 13, 1910, in Owosso, Mich. She died Dec. 27, 1999, in Owosso.

A 1933 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Lahmann taught at St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.; Emanuel, Flint, Mich.; First, La Crosse, Wis.; and Salem, Owosso, Mich.

She is survived by several nephews.

Grace Wolfrath 1904-1999

Grace Wolfrath was born April 17, 1904, in New London, Wis. She died Dec. 12, 1999, in New London.

A 1922 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Grace spent 36 years teaching at Emanuel, New London.

She is survived by three sons, eight grandchildren, and one sister.

Forward in Christ updates

This year, WELS turns 150 years old. From the 1999 synod convention to the 2001 synod convention, WELS will celebrate this anniversary, along with the 2000th anniversary of Christ's coming.

News

• A part of the Forward in Christ celebration is the opportunity to help members glorify God by faithful financial stewardship. Part of that stewardship effort is a thank offering.

“Our major focus is not on funding projects, but on raising giving overall in WELS,” said Ron Roth, administrator for the Commission for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS).

From January through March, circuit pastors and district officers will meet with pastors and teachers and share information—through videos,

brochures, and booklets—about this stewardship program.

From April through June, congregational leaders will receive this same information. This will give congregations plenty of time to plan and organize their stewardship program by fall 2000.

For information about the stewardship program and the thank offering, contact CCFS, 1-800-827-5482.

• Forward in Christ bulletin covers will be available soon. Watch for a sample with ordering information.

Celebrations

One landmark time of the Forward in Christ celebration was Dec. 31, 1999-Jan. 1, 2000.

King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., celebrated the New Year in a special way—an entire evening of

activities for its members and the community. They started with a special Communion service, followed by games, snacks, and an organ/keyboard recital. The evening concluded with a special candlelight vigil that brought in the New Year. About 60 people came to all of the evening's activities, with additional attendance at the services. “It brought in the New Year focusing our attention on the name of Jesus and his Word,” said Brian Hennig, pastor at King of Kings. “It was a special moment in history, and this made it a memorable one.”

Let us know how you are celebrating WELS' 150th anniversary. Contact us at Forward/Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3231; <nl@sab.wels.net>.

REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

In this section, you'll hear news from missionaries and their families that came via e-mail. We hope you enjoy these tidbits from our missions.

From Tim Vogt, 14-year-old son of missionary John Vogt in Sweden:

Hej! Jag heter Tim Vogt. I live in Göteborg, Sweden. My dad, Pastor John Vogt, has been a missionary here since March 1999.

He serves two congregations, one here in Göteborg and one in Västerås, 250 miles away near Stockholm. We hold the service in Göteborg every Sunday, and the people in Västerås listen over the phone. Once a month, he preaches there in person.

All services are done in Swedish, so I (still learning Swedish and knowing very little) don't understand a word of it. Instead, I read the Bible readings in my English Bible and read a translation of the sermon.

Life in Sweden is very different. The language is the most difficult. For example, if I meet someone on the elevator and they start to talk to me in Swedish, I must tell them “Jag talar bara Engelska” (I only speak English).

Things are also more expensive over here, and you sometimes cannot get everything you could normally get in the States. Luckily, a family from Kentucky owns Gray's, an American food store. There you can get marshmallows, Skittles, Doritos, and just about anything else. Unfortunately, it is very expensive.

I go to an international school. I have friends and classmates from about every country in the world. All classes are taught in English, but we also have Swedish class and a choice



Lutheran Confessional Church members in Sweden meet for fellowship at the home of Missionary Vogt and his family.

of French or German. I like it a lot.

My closest friends are the teens in the Lutheran Confessional Church. I get to see them at church camps and youth outings and in their congregations when my father presents Bible workshops. So far I have gone with him to several places in Sweden and three times to Norway. I am thankful that I have the opportunity to experience the Lord's world and his work.



Pass the remote: more radio and TV stations carry Christian programming—The number of radio and television stations broadcasting Christian programs has increased for the third year in a row.



Radio stations carrying Christian programming increased from 1,616 in 1998 to a record 1,731 in 1999, reports the 2000 Directory of Religious Media, published by the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB).

The number of TV stations airing Christian programs increased from 242 in 1998 to 285 in 1999.

The previous record for radio stations was in 1996, when NRB counted 1,648. The highest number of TV stations was 346 in 1989.

State supreme courts wrestle with gay couples' rights—Two state supreme courts made decisions regarding gay couples' rights in December.

The Hawaii Supreme Court ended efforts to legalize gay marriage in Hawaii, which once was expected to approve same-sex unions.

The court ruled that the attempts by homosexual couples were rendered moot by a 1998 state constitutional amendment that gave lawmakers authority to limit state-recognized marriages to opposite-sex couples.

The court considered an appeal of a lower court decision that the state could not justify its 1994 ban on same-sex unions.

A week and a half later the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that gay couples are entitled to the same benefits and protections that the state provides heterosexual married couples.

The court said it is up to the state's legislature to determine whether benefits will come through domestic partnerships or through formal marriage.

"We hold that the state is constitutionally required to extend to same-

sex couples the common benefits and protections that flow from marriage under Vermont law," the court ruled.

The decision cannot be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court because the Vermont court based its decision on the state constitution.

At least 30 states have banned homosexual marriages. Congress has also passed the Defense of Marriage Act, which denied federal recognition of gay marriage and permitted states to ignore same-sex unions licensed elsewhere.

Barna study: Christians slightly more likely to experience divorce than others—A new study by the Barna Research Group says that born-again Christians are more likely to go through a marital split than non-Christians.

According to a nationwide survey of nearly 4,000 adults, 11 percent are currently divorced but 25 percent have experienced at least one divorce during their lifetime.

Among born-again Christians, 27 percent are currently or have previously been divorced, compared with 24 percent who are not born again.

The Christian group whose adherents have the highest likelihood of getting divorced are Baptists. Christians associated with non-denominational Protestant churches were the only group to surpass Baptists.

Of the nation's major Christian groups, Catholics and Lutherans have the lowest percentage of divorced individuals—21 percent.

Sistine Chapel restoration complete—With the restoration of frescoes by Botticelli and other important Italian painters of the 15th century, the Vatican has completed a 20-year restoration project of the Sistine Chapel.

These 12 brilliantly colored panels on the chapel's side walls show scenes from the lives of Moses and Christ.

The restoration cost \$3.1 million and took almost five years. It followed

15 years of work on Michelangelo's paintings and other decorations. The total cost of two decades of restoration was about \$25 million.

U.S. sex education focusing on abstinence—Abstinence has increasingly become a focus of sex education in the nation's schools, according to two new studies.

More than a third of U.S. school districts teach abstinence alone, while a majority urge students to delay intercourse until marriage but to use birth control and practice safe sex if they don't.

The twin surveys, conducted by Kaiser Family Foundation and the Guttmacher Institute, polled secondary school principals and district superintendents.

More babies born to unwed parents—The percentage of babies born to unwed parents has increased fivefold since the 1930s, a new U.S. Census report reveals.

The report examined first births to women between the ages of 15 and 29.

From 1990 to 1994, 41 percent of these births were out-of-wedlock, compared to just eight percent from 1930 to 1934.



The report also gave details about how many couples marry after learning that they have conceived a child, but before it is born. Until the 1960s, about 50 percent to 60 percent of couples married after discovering a pregnancy. That figure dropped to 29 percent in the early 1980s, the Associated Press reported.

The report attributes changes to the relaxation of abortion laws, the questionable stability of a forced marriage, and the greater likelihood that women are educated.

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**

Baur, Paul T., to Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla.
Bilitz, Jonathan P., to Luther HS, Onalaska, Wis.
Woldt, Michael A., to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
Wolff, Jon N., to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.

Teachers

Griffith, Brenda H., to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.
Johnson, Sandra L., to Redemption, Milwaukee
Kallies, Rebecca L., to St. Paul, Saint James, Minn
Lambrecht, Jessica, to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Rittierodt, John J., to Calvary, Bellevue, Wash.
Schmal, Mary I., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee
Struck, Deborah A., to Our Savior, Zion, Ill.
Turpin, Denise R., to Zion, Hartland, Wis.
Warning, Kimberly A., to Jesus Cares Ministries, Milwaukee

ANNIVERSARIES

Oak Creek, Wis.—St. John (150). Mar. 4. Service, 6 PM. Mar. 5. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Dinner & program to follow late service. RSVP, 414/761-0782. May 20. Homecoming service, 6 PM. May 21. Homecoming services, 8 & 10:30 AM. July 30. Picnic, 9:30 AM.
Alma City, Minn.—St. John (90). Apr. 9. Service, 10 AM. Potluck to follow.
West Allis, Wis.—Good Shepherd (75). April 9. Services, 7:45, 9:15, & 10:45 AM. Apr. 10. Service, 7 PM.
Milwaukee, Wis.—St. Peter (140). May 21. Service, 10 AM. Reception at Wisconsin Lutheran College, noon. 414/645-7326.

COMING EVENTS**Regional campus rallies—**

Mar. 3-5 Philadelphia, Penn.
 Mar. 17-19 Jefferson City, Mo.
 Mar. 24-26 Stevens Point, Wis.
 Apr. 14-16 Tempe, Ariz.
 Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279;
 <usr20@sab.wels.net>.

Wisconsin Lutheran College choir tour

Mar. 4—St. Paul, Fond du Lac, Wis., 7 PM
 Mar. 5—Emanuel, New London, Wis., 9 AM & 10:30 AM; St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., 6 PM
 Mar. 7—Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis., time TBA*; St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis., time TBA*
 Mar. 8—Emanuel, St. Paul, Minn., time TBA*
 Mar. 9—St. Croix LHS, St. Paul, Minn., 9:50 AM
 Mar. 10—Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn., 9:36 AM; St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., time TBA*
 Mar. 11—St. John, Caledonia, Minn., time TBA*
 Mar. 12—St. Paul, Tomah, Wis., 10:30 AM; St. John, Baraboo, Wis., 3 PM

* For times listed as TBA, please contact the church or school for more information.

Ladies Time Out—Mar. 11. 8:30 AM-4 PM. \$12 if postmarked before Mar. 4. Includes continental breakfast, lunch, Bible studies, crafts, & workshops. Lynn, 262/796-1814.

Luther Preparatory School choir tour

Mar. 16—Divine Savior, Indianapolis, Ind., 7 PM
 Mar. 17—Sola Scriptura, Decatur, Ga., 7 PM
 Mar. 18—Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Fla., 3:30 PM
 Mar. 19—Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla., 8:30 AM; King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., 10:30 AM
 Mar. 21—Cutler Ridge, Miami, Fla., 6:30 PM
 Mar. 22—Ascension, Sarasota, Fla., 7 PM
 Mar. 23—Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., 7 PM
 Mar. 24—St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla., 7 PM
 Mar. 25—Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga., 7 PM
 Mar. 26—Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga., 8:30 & 11 AM; Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn., 7 PM
 Mar. 27—Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill., 7:30 PM
 Randy Bode, 920/261-4352.

Circle of Love retreat for women—Mar. 17-19. Oshkosh, Wis. Karen, 920/757-9401.

WELS handbell festivals—

Apr. 1—Emanuel, Lansing, Mich., 7 PM
 Apr. 2—Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis., 2 PM
 Apr. 2—New London High School, New London, Wis., 2 PM
 Apr. 9—Zumbrota-Mazeppa High School, Zumbrota, Wis., 2 PM
 Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

S.H.A.R.E. spring seminar—Singles Helping One Another on the Road to Eternity. April 29. Milwaukee, Wis. Doris, 262/534-7852.

WELS-CLO meeting—WELS Church Librarians' Organization meeting. Apr. 29. Grace, Prairie du Chien, Wis. Joanne Weber, 414/256-3222.

Christian writers workshop—June 12-16. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Conducted by Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Board for Parish Services, and Martin Luther College. Enrollment limited to 10 participants. For scholarship information, contact WELS Board for Parish Services, 414/256-3224.

National Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention—June 23-25. Nashville Music City Sheraton, Nashville, Tenn. Central office, 414/321-6212.

Third annual Run for the Prize 5K Run and Walk—Oct. 21. 10 AM. Sponsored by Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. Dave Braun, 800/688-8151 ext. 210.

AVAILABLE

Wooden pews—14, each 8-ft. long. Free for the cost of shipping. Hope, Indian River, Mich. James Dunham, 231/238-7246.

Altar cloths—Set. Olive green. Raw silk in good condition. Free for the cost of shipping. Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis. Kenneth Fisher, 414/354-7320.

Organ—Small Hammond electronic organ. Two keyboards and pedals. Waukesha, Wis. Lois Leverence, 262/544-9240.

NEEDED

Sunday school Bible maps—Beautiful Savior, Fayetteville, N.C. Will pay shipping. David Schmidt, 910/868-1907.

Host family—To house WELS member from Japan for one or two weeks this summer. Midori Yamaguchi wishes to improve English and do volunteer work while visiting the United States. Single woman in mid-30s. Will pay own transportation plus room and board. Jim Sherod, <leccjws@po.net-ibaraki.ne.jp> or Board for World Missions, 414/256-3233.

Volunteers—to teach English and religion at Martin Luther School (ELS), Plzen, Czech Republic, during 2000-01 school year. Airfare, apartment, & utilities provided. Matthew Luttmann, <meltorf@sml.cz> or David Meyer, 608/243-3227.

SERVICE TIMES

Smyrna, Tenn.—Abiding Faith. Sunday service, 10:30 AM. Bible class & Sunday school, 9:15 AM. Mark Kaesmeyer, 615/220-9528.

NAMES WANTED

Presenters—for WELS Tech, a conference on the use of technology in the church. July 15-18, 2001. 414/256-3210; <garyb@sab.wels.net>.

Smyrna/Murfreesboro/Nashville, Tenn.—Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn. Mark Kaesmeyer, 615/220-9528.

Madison/Huntsville/Decatur/Athens, Ala.—Lamb of God, Madison, Ala. Jim Turriff, 256/464-3900.

LaPorte/Michigan City/Chesterton/Porter, Ind.—Beautiful Savior. Don Schultz, 219/874-2465.

Commission on Special Ministries—names of WELS members who are developmentally disabled. Letters and memorabilia are sent each year to the recipients of the He Cares-We Care Ministry-by-Mail program. Include mailing address, parent/guardian's name & address, home congregation, & pastor's name. 414/256-3241. <usr10@sab.wels.net>.

Former S.H.A.R.E. members—for alumni reunion. Names and addresses of former members. Doris, 262/534-7852.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Volunteer RNs/EMTs—as health care directors for one-week and half-week sessions at Camp Phillip's Son Shine camp this summer. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202; <campphillip@vbe.com>.

Summer jobs—Camp Phillip. Counselors, waterfront director, lifeguards, assistant cook, adventure coordinator, junior staff director. Dates of positions are June 4-Aug. 16. Must be WELS, experienced, and motivated to work with children. \$1,650-\$3,100 plus room and board. Tom Klusmeyer, 920/787-3202; <campphillip@vbe.com>.

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

Nobody's perfect

As Christians we have no need to try to justify ourselves. God has already done the justifying.

Jon D. Buchholz

As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit. I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live (Job 27:2-6).

Most people will acknowledge that they are sinners in general. "After all," goes the standard pseudo-confession, "nobody's perfect."

It's another thing altogether to confess that one is a sinner in particular—to confess in deep humility before a righteous God, "I have sinned. I have been greedy. I have lusted. I am guilty of apathy and contempt for God. I have earned God's punishment."

Spiritual pride

Facing his friends' accusations, Job remained adamant. "I have not sinned," he insisted. Perhaps in one sense Job was correct. Job's suffering was not the direct result of some hidden sin, and Job wasn't going to 'fess up to a crime he hadn't committed.

But in his zeal to assert his innocence, Job crossed the line. He became guilty of spiritual pride, and he failed to confess in deep humility his unworthiness before God. "God

has denied me justice," he moaned. That's another way of saying, "God owes me something, and he's not giving it to me."

Job forgot his place. Instead of bowing before his holy God, Job challenged God. Instead of pleading the righteousness of God, Job held out his own righteousness and demanded vindication for his personal integrity. Job justified himself rather than God.

It's easy to try to justify ourselves. If I've strayed, I'll chalk it up to a "mistake" or a "shortcoming." That's much easier than calling it a "sin." You've justified personal laziness by saying, "I did the best I could," haven't you?

You've excused your guilt by insisting, "I had no other choice," or "It was the lesser of two evils." Remember, "Nobody's perfect."

When the stark reality of your own sin smacks you in the face, isn't it convenient to pass the buck to someone else?

Self reality

It's so easy to self-justify, but it's so deadly. Many years after Job, the apostle John wrote, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). At the same time, the apostle offered an alternative to self-justification: "If we

confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

As Christians we can claim to be perfect in God's eyes. Isn't that amazing? In God's eyes, we are as pure as Jesus. That's because it is Jesus' righteousness that covers our guilt. As Christians we have no need to try to justify ourselves. God has already done the justifying. Because of Jesus' perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, God has already decreed justification—the verdict of "not guilty"—that gives life to every human being on earth.

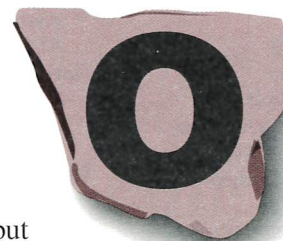
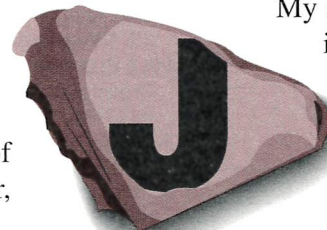
My sin is real; there's no denying that. You and I must confess that we are not only sinners in general. We are sinners in particular.

But in Christ, forgiveness is free.

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

For further study: Read Job 32-37

Next month: Brace yourself like a man!





Inter-Act

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

Introduction

It's easy to be patient on vacation or strolling through the woods. But how about when you miss your connecting flight or company is on the way and you're not ready? Is your faith more "fleshed out" or "flushed out?" What situation has recently tried your patience?

Patience is more than waiting. It's keeping a good attitude while you wait. And the Israelites didn't. They grew tired of wandering in the desert. It seemed they were forever "on the way." They became impatient with their leader and with their God.

God didn't lose his patience with them, though. "On the way" to Edom, the Israelites learned that God is serious about his Word but that he finds a way to forgive and stay with his people.

You're on the way, too. From these ancient travelers, learn about patience: God's and yours.

I. Text

Read Numbers 21:4-9.

They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; ⁵they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

⁶Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

II. Questions

1. What went wrong on the way to Edom?
2. Earlier, the Israelites had doubted God's ability to lead them into own land. For their doubt, everyone 20 years or older would die in the wilderness (14:29). That's what they were waiting for. Why would that wait be difficult?
3. God had provided food—manna and quail—and water. So why did they complain?
4. What do the venomous snakes tell you about God's view of sin?
5. What does the Lord's solution, the "snake on a pole," tell you about his heart?

III. Applications

1. The Israelites didn't just reject the food and water God had sent. They rejected God. If they got their way, they would not only perish in the desert, but worse, they would die eternally. God used the poisonous snakes to alert them to the serious consequences of sin. The snakes were God's "wake up" call. What "wake up" calls from God do you see in our world?
2. In John 3:14, Jesus compares his being lifted on a cross to Moses lifting up the snake on a pole. What similarities do you see in the two? What differences?
3. Jesus is patient. His close friends bickered about who was best. They tried to keep him from people who didn't fit into their idea of church. They were slow to understand his mission. They tried God's patience. But Jesus gave his life to forgive impatient people. He didn't give up. Now when sin troubles us, we can go to the patience of God. Why?
4. How does Jesus' cross make you a more patient person?

IV. Prayer

Lord Jesus, you know who and what tries my patience on the way. Show me again how patient you are with me. Impress me with your commitment to love and save. I ask for a heart that trusts you to keep your promises and a heart that bears with others. Because of your cross, I pray. Amen.

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

Luther and anti-semitism

John F. Brug

I read a Lutheran apology in a Milwaukee paper for Luther being anti-Semitic. Remarks attributed to Luther sounded anti-Semitic. What was Luther's attitude toward the Jews?

Late in his life Luther wrote some strong denunciations of the Jews that we cannot condone. But to evaluate them fairly we have to understand them in the context of his lifetime and all his writings. The claim that Luther's views were similar to those of the Nazis ignores the historical context of his comments.

Early in his career, Luther wrote in defense of the Jews. He hoped that when the persecutions and false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were taken away, the Jews would turn to Christ. He wrote:

The fury of some Christians (if they are to be called Christians) is damnable. They imagine that they are doing God a service when they persecute the Jews most hatefully. . . . Whereas according to this psalm (Psalm 14) and Paul (Romans 9:1), a man ought to be most heartily sorry for them and continually pray for them. . . . By the example of this great cruelty they are, as it were, repelling Jews from Christianity, whereas they ought to attract them by all manner of gentleness, patience, pleading, and care. (*What Luther says*, Pless, p. 683)

When the Jews continued to reject Christ and to speak against him, sometimes in blasphemous terms, Luther wrote some harsh judgments against the Jews because of their unbelief (as did such Jewish

prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah). A few years before his death, he wrote his harshest remarks in a tract, "Against the Jews and their Lies." His opposition against the Jews was not racist as Hitler's was but based on God's judgment against rejection of his Word.

Luther did not believe that Jews had the right to propagandize against Christianity in Christian territory. Religious rights then were territorial. Lutherans did not have rights in Catholic lands nor vice versa. Luther, therefore, advocated that those Jews who remained opposed to Christianity be forcibly expelled from Germany and be given their own territory in Palestine. He also proposed that wealth they had gained by lending money at interest, which he regarded as an immoral practice, should be confiscated to support the needy. In Luther's time usury and blasphemy were crimes punishable by law.

Luther used harsh language, but in this he was a child of his time.

Even in the preface to these comments, Luther says, "We must indeed with prayer and the fear of God before our eyes exercise a keen compassion towards them and seek to save some of them from the flames. Avenge ourselves we dare not."

Luther used harsh language, but in this he was a child of his time. Roman writers attacked him even more sharply. We cannot defend the tone and many of the specifics of Luther's denunciation of the Jews, but it is unfair to misrepresent them

by detaching them from their context and times.

What about apologizing for Luther? We neither condone his sins nor defend his errors, but it is presumptuous to think that we have the right to repent or apologize for him. The current fad of apologizing for the past sins of someone else smacks of self-righteousness. If we want to apologize for sins, we have more than enough of our own to keep us busy.

As to our attitude toward Jews, we must oppose two common errors.

First, we must strongly speak against anything that promotes prejudice or persecution. Second, we must not neglect preaching the gospel to bring them to Christ. Jesus, born of Israel, is the Savior for Israel. If we are making a list of things to apologize for, our own slackness in preaching the gospel to them should be at the top.

The Christian attitude toward Israel is expressed in Romans 9-11, the reflections of Paul the Jew. His prayer is ours, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1). This was Luther's prayer too.

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

**Send questions to your question, please,
Forward/NL,
2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398;
<nl@sab.wels.net>**

ON WISDOM

"Maanu oonse takhali mu mutwe omwe."

"All wisdom does not reside in one skull."

—Tonga Proverb

"Stupid is as stupid does."—Forrest Gump

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

—Proverbs 1:7

And the only wisdom we really need to know:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his
one and only Son, that whoever believes in him
shall not perish but have eternal life."

—John 3:16

Looking back

From the Jan. 1, 1950, *Northwestern Lutheran*:

Acknowledgment and thanks

From a very generous person, far from our school, who, however, wishes to remain anonymous, we received a donation of \$150, to be applied on the purchase of a potato peeler for the kitchen of Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

With sincerest thanks, and may God bless the donor.

—Otto J.R. Hoenecke

It seems that this potato peeler would come in handy since area farmers used to provide potatoes for the students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary to eat.

Many others things have changed for Michigan Lutheran Seminary over the past 50 years.

- For the 1949-50 school year, 133 students attended MLS under a faculty of nine men. In 1950 MLS started construction on the "New Academic Building" on their campus of more than 10 acres.
- In 1999, opening enrollment was 367 students under 27 full-time faculty (men and women). The "New Academic Building" still exists, though much remodeling has altered its appearance. The campus has grown to 19.5 acres, which includes faculty housing and Cardinal Field, an eight-acre area off the main campus.

WELS IN THE '50s

1951	1953	1954	1955
Lutheran Boy Pioneers starts. WELS calls its first missionary to Japan to minister to those in the military and to investigate mission opportunities.	Oscar Naumann is elected president. First English service is held in Lusaka, Zambia, Africa, and the first African service in Matero, Zambia.	Arizona-California District is formed. Lutheran Girl Pioneers starts. Mission work begins in Florida and in Missouri.	The General Mission Board is divided into separate boards for home (North America) and world missions.

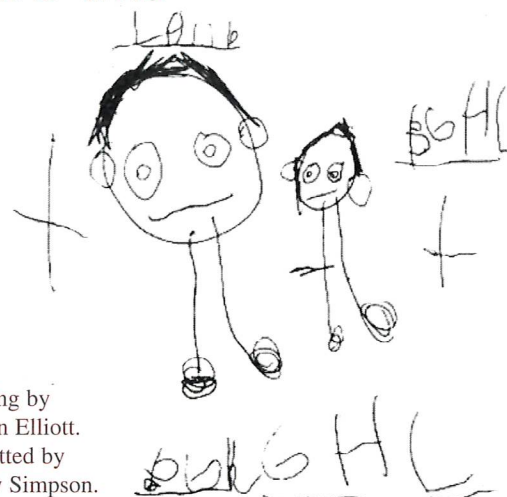


potluck

Tomorrow, the world

A quickie: "The three richest officers of Microsoft—Bill Gates, Paul Allen, and Steve Ballmer—have more assets, nearly **\$140 BILLION**, than the combined gross national product of the 43 least-developed countries and their 600 million people." (*Chicago Tribune*, 7/12/99, quoted in *Context*, 10/10/99)

Picture this

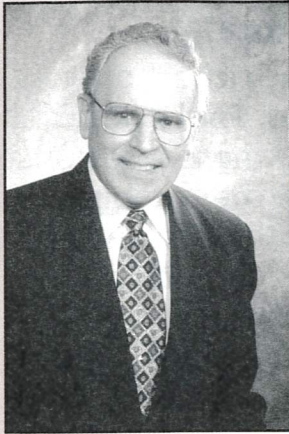


Drawing by
Deaven Elliott.
Submitted by
Cherry Simpson.

Cherry Simpson writes:

"My three-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter, Deaven, drew me this picture for my birthday. She told me, 'Look, Nana, I put Jesus' cross next to you and me.' Words of wisdom from such a small one! I told her, 'Yes Deaven, this is how it will be for all your life! Jesus with you watching over you and me!'"

Send pictures to Picture this, *Forward/NL*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.



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

Being non-judgmental leaves no room for truth.

A precarious, but necessary path

“OK, I’m tired of it,” begins the e-mail message. The writer proceeds to complain about how WELS judges other Christians. He scores WELS as “superficial, arrogant, intolerant [sic], and self-righteous.”

Forgive me if you see this matter as something we have visited before, but the underlying attitude is so much a part of our society, it bears another look. The writer thinks it is wrong for us to be judgmental. “Being judgmental” is the newest deadly sin.

Well, maybe not so new. Didn’t Jesus say in his Sermon on the Mount, “Do not judge” (Matthew 7:1)? He did, and he said moments later, “Watch out for false prophets” (7:15), which calls for us to judge.

So, how do we resolve the apparent tension between the two words of Jesus? In the first place, he warns against being hypocritical and self-righteous, looking for wrongs in others while harboring greater wrongs in ourselves. In the second, he calls for us to judge the fruits of the prophets’ teachings. His Word is our measure.

You can hardly read a book of the Bible without seeing a call to godly judgment. The prophets often spoke harsh judgments against God’s own people because the people strayed from God’s ways. Jesus condemned Israel’s religious leaders and cleansed the temple, twice. Paul warned us to “watch out for” false teachers and “keep away from” them (Romans 16:17).

We call ourselves Lutheran because we agree with the judgments Luther made on the basis of God’s Word that led to his break from Roman Catholicism.

Back to society’s cry to be tolerant and nonjudgmental. Not so long ago we admired people who stood up for their

convictions. Is now the time not to do so if we contradict the convictions of others? Won’t we always contradict someone? Jimmy Long, Christian observer of societal trends, typifies the issue this way: “You can believe whatever you want, as long as you don’t believe it is true.”

Being nonjudgmental leaves no room for truth. It also condemns itself when it judges others of being judgmental. (Did you pause at the harsh judgment of WELS by the e-mail writer?) In fact it is impossible to be completely nonjudgmental.

Still, we walk a precarious path. Even as we tremble at God’s Word and seek to apply it faithfully, we face the temptations we are accused of falling to.

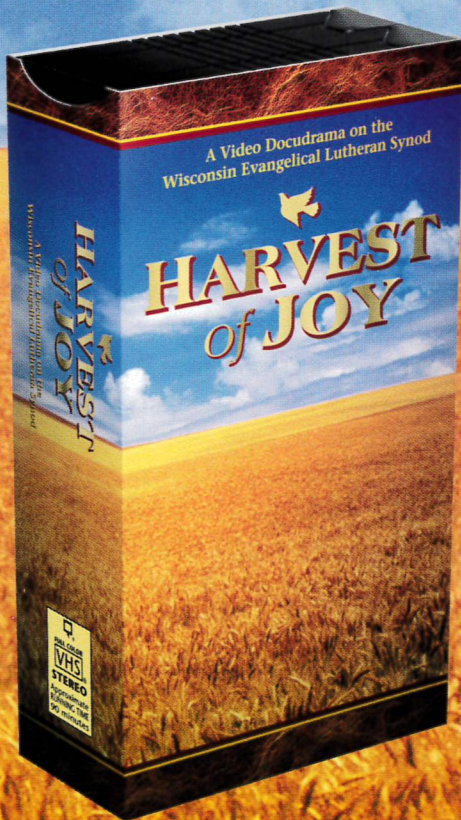
- It becomes a “superficial” judging whenever we merely parrot pat positions without studying the offending teaching and the Bible’s teachings.
- We are “arrogant” if we have anything but God’s truth as our motive. The Lutheran way is to let God’s Word stand and to let the Word interpret itself when questions arise. We should not act as if we have superior knowledge.
- It is “intolerant” not to recognize the right of others to teach as they do even though we find the teachings not right. It is also intolerant to deny freedom where God’s Word has not clearly spoken.
- We are “self-righteous” if we conclude that our thoughts are right on an issue just because we are thinking them. We do not gain extra points for heaven by holding to all of God’s teachings. We hold to them because God has won us for heaven. God himself is the final judge, the source of true righteousness, and the revealer of truth.

Gary P. Baumler

A Video Docudrama on the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod



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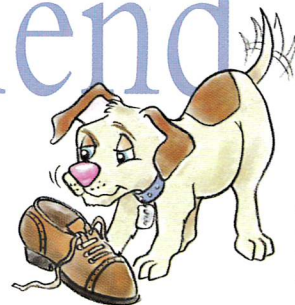
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Man's true best friend

Jesus, friend of sinners, answers our craving for friendship.

Eric S. Hartzell



Man's best friend, a dog, isn't always friendly. Whoever coined the phrase had a high opinion of dogs and a low opinion of human beings—as friends.

Maybe the person who first called a dog "man's best friend" was disappointed with friendship among humans. But his dog was willing to listen, was loyal, and seemed happy to be there. We desire friends with those qualities.

Friendship is one thing we crave the most, enjoy the most when it is good, and suffer from the most when it is bad. But man's best friend is not a dog or a fellow human being. It's God himself.

Jesus: the perfect best friend

Men love Jesus because they truly find "man's best friend." Jesus, friend of sinners, answers our craving for friendship. Lonely and bitter enemies pointed at Jesus and accused, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." He was their friend, too, but they died with that haunting possibility echoing unfulfilled in their souls. To one even in the dark garden of betrayal, Jesus said, "Friend, do what you came for."

Everything we desire about friendship we find in Jesus. He tells us the truth, even when it hurts. He has our best interests at heart. He emptied himself of glory for us, to meet us on our level. He took our beating, our punishment. He understands us. He knows how to weep with us and how to laugh with us. He wants his joy and riches to be ours. He talks to us. He doesn't hold any secrets from us. "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). And he showed he was willing to pay the ultimate proof of friendship: his life. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Jesus: the friend who chooses us

Sadly, some try so hard to make a friend. They sell themselves body, soul, and dignity to buy a friend; and it doesn't work. The harder they try, the less interested their friends become. But not Jesus. He is the friend who chooses us. He came to us before we made any overtures of friendship to him. We don't have to perform or impress. He tells us our worth to him. We don't have

to prove it. We just have to believe him, and then we love him. He is our friend, not because we made friends with him but because he made friends with us.

But Jesus himself can't be a friend to everyone. Some choose to be his enemy. That is the greatest heartbreak of all. Jesus' offer of friendship is spurned with a yawn, a laugh, or a sneer.

Still, he laid down his life also for them. When I think about it, I don't have a single friend I know who would die for me. What about you? Do you have a friend who would actually give up all the hopes of the future for you? And, if I am honest, I can't think of a single friend I have for whom I would actually be willing to step up and say, "Take my life so my friend can live."

I'm glad man's best friend is not a dog. But I'm also glad that man's best friend is not like me or you.

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

