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FORWARD IN CHRIST

April 2000

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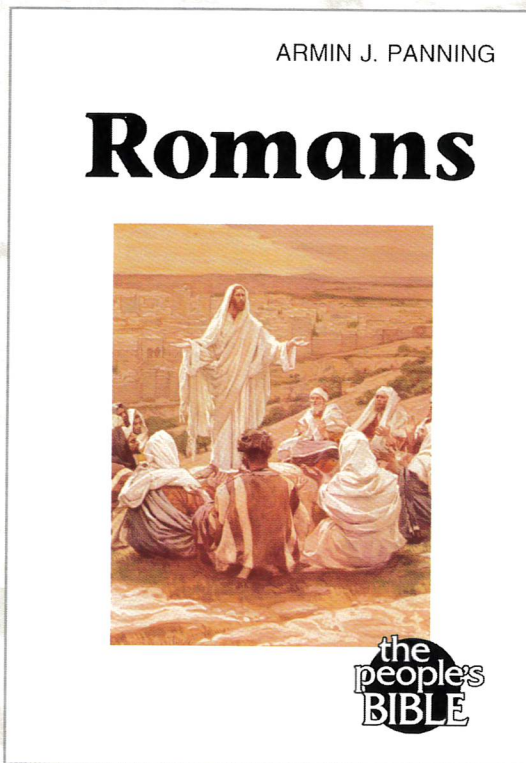
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The taunt of the VICTORIOUS

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?

1 Corinthians 15:55

Paul M. Janke

If you're going to taunt a bully, you'd better be ready to back it up. If not, you're apt to end up with a fat lip, a bloody nose, or worse.

At the end of 1 Corinthians 15 we hear the apostle Paul baiting a bully: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Is this the sort of thing we should watch through the gaps between our fingers while our hands cover our eyes? Is this the sort of behavior about which someone might say, "I wouldn't do that if I were you"?

Not anymore. Jesus rose from the dead. By his resurrection he routed death. Now we can taunt death with impunity.

The bully

A bully is habitually cruel to those who are weaker than he is. Death is a bully. No one escapes this bully. You can't take the long way home or voluntarily hand him your lunch money and thus avoid a bruising. We've felt the cruel sting of losing grandparents and parents. Our siblings, our spouses, even our children may already have fallen victim to this bully. Finally, he'll come looking for us, too.

The power of death comes not from a clenched fist, but from sin. We've all been stung by sin. The deadly venom of sin is in our systems from birth. The sins we commit each day are the symptoms that we've been stung. In due course, death will follow.

The battle

God wasn't content, though, to stand back and watch death intimidate and victimize us. He sent his Son to the bully's territory to challenge him. Jesus came into this fallen world to end death's horrible supremacy.

The bully didn't give up without a struggle, however. Jesus had to face Satan, who held the power of death. The devil and his evil gang thrust one temptation after another at Jesus, but did no damage. Then, though he'd never been stung by sin, Jesus laid down his life for us. The bully appeared to triumph. He struck a victor's pose over the lifeless corpse of Christ.

But the celebration was premature. On Easter morning Jesus used his authority as true God to take up his life again. He broke the power of the grave. He put death to flight. In

hell the sounds of rejoicing suddenly stopped.

The boldness

Taunting is usually considered to be impolite. General Grant didn't taunt Robert E. Lee at Appomattox. He treated him with dignity and remarked that he was "depressed" about the fate of an opponent who "fought so long and so valiantly."

But when the opponent is death—well, let the taunting begin. This was no valiant foe. If not for Christ, death would have destroyed us forever. Now that the bully has taken to his heels, we can live in boldness rather than cowering in fear. Even when death comes close and glares at us, we can be bold. Jesus rose. Our Redeemer lives. Death no longer can appall us.

Through faith in Jesus we can join the bold taunt of the victorious: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"



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

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Cover Illustration by Glenn Myers

A sign of life

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bits & pieces



Happy Easter! To celebrate, we're offering the magazine in full-color. We're also featuring many articles that focus on Christ's tomb—rather, Christ's empty tomb.

- On Easter morning, Jesus broke the power of the grave and of our bully, death. So Paul Janke says, "Let the taunting begin" (p. 3).
- Jim Aderman focuses on how cemeteries, places for tears of grief, can be places for tears of joy—all because of Christ's empty tomb (p. 8).
- John Eich shares that even though graves are normally evidence of death, Christ's is evidence of life (p. 20).
- John Brug answers a question on how we count the three days and nights between Christ's death and his resurrection (p. 32).
- Many react differently to Jesus' resurrection and the empty tomb. See their reactions and how you can help them in their search for truth (p. 36).



Generation X—who are they and how can we reach out to them? John Parlow offers suggestions on how we can lead what is called "the lost generation" to Jesus (p. 18).



Our series on church musicians ends this month with tips from Mary Prange on encouraging young musicians (p. 12). We hope that this series proves practical for pastors, teachers, and laypeople.

—JKT

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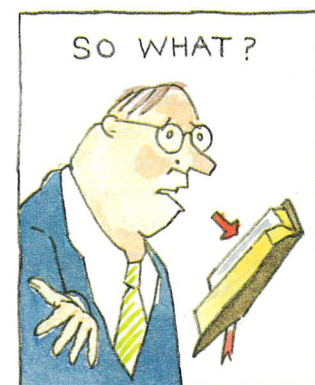
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A letter to our readers: Having unexpected room in this column allows our editorial staff to thank you for your interest in our magazine. We always welcome hearing from you, whether for publication or some private words. Let us know what you are thinking and if you have ideas for us to consider.

The lull allows us also to outline briefly the policies we apply to the "Readers forum." We will read and tend to all letters, but we print selectively as follows:

1. Letters must be short. We reserve the right to edit for length.
 2. We print no letters that in any way contradict the clear teachings of Scripture.
 3. We will not allow the forum to be used to attack or contradict established policies of the synod. We might debate issues that are yet to be decided, however.
 4. We will limit letters on any subject so various viewpoints might be heard, but not to create dialogues. We may exclude letters referring to articles long past.
 5. We will not publish unsigned letters or mean-spirited letters. Let's speak always in love.
- Again, thanks for being with us. Let us hear from you.

*In Jesus' service,
Gary Baumler, editor*

I agree with Pastor Westendorf's concern for the casualties of divorce and the devastating effect it has on our churches, both clergy and members [January]. Divorce leaves in its path anger, despair, a feeling of betrayal, blaming oneself, and sometimes blaming God.

The "casualties of divorce" should be instructed in and directed to God's Word where they will find comfort, acceptance, and peace through faith in Jesus. They should be welcomed with open arms by loving and caring Christian brothers and sisters, and

directed, if necessary, to Christian counselors to help them deal with the devastation.

These are the areas our synod should address concerning the "breakdown of the family," to help us stay focused on "seeking first the kingdom of God."

*Glen Wilson
Colgate, Wisconsin*

I thought the article "The keys of the kingdom" [February] was edifying. It made me go back to my catechism to read the section on the "Use of the Keys."

The article correctly points out how the law and gospel keys work together. This is vital to remember when we oppose the legalistic manner that the keys are sometimes used.

Then it follows that when there is abuse of the keys it is not "valid and certain in heaven." We must guard against the misuse of the keys in our dealings as individuals and within our congregations.

*Gretchen Bassett
Cahokia, Illinois*

This letter is regarding the article "Unopened letters" by Carl Henkel [February]. While I enjoyed the symbolism of the unopened letters, the facts were not all accurate. Elizabeth Barrett's mother died [before Elizabeth married Robert Browning]. After his wife's death, Mr. Barrett became quite attached to his children, especially Elizabeth. He could not abide the thought of any of his children being courted or marrying. Elizabeth, therefore, married Robert Browning in a secret ceremony, and the couple moved, again secretly, to Italy.

This may sound a bit nit-picky because, after all, the basic story of rejected attempts at reconciliation is true, and it is a good way to think about God's love for us. I only mention these facts because if an

unchurched person reads this article and sees the inaccuracy of it, will he think we are also wrong about biblical things?

In most publishing businesses, it is up to the editors to make sure the things they print are correct. I have no doubt that you and the other editors on staff do a great job of making sure the important biblical facts and doctrines are correct. I don't think, however, that the same is true for the historical and worldly things. I just want our synod's magazine to be as accurate as it can be.

*DeLyn Davis Wagenknecht
Yorba Linda, California*

Correction: In "The spirit of Michigan" [Feb. p. 12], Arthur, not Carl, Wacker and Edgar Hoenecke explored mission possibilities in Africa in the 1940s.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

May 2000

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| 1. Jeremiah 48 | 17. Phil. 4 |
| 2. Jer. 49:1-33 | 18. Ezekiel 1 |
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| 16. Phil. 3:12-21 | |

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Searching for a reason to live

Kenneth A. Cherney

What will be the next major public-health crisis? Many people say it won't be a new killer virus or environmental toxin. It will be suicide. In my own state of Minnesota, more people are currently murdering themselves than are being murdered by others. Elsewhere, the problem is even more serious. For example, in Communist China, 500 women commit suicide every day.

How do you explain that? In a recent interview, author Kay Redfield Jamison (*Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide*) suggests it's because rural Chinese women have access to deadly chemicals, like farm pesticides, and they can't get to an emergency room once the deed is done. I think there's more to the story. I wonder whether there isn't a link between China's female suicide rate and its abortion rate.

You may know that China's "family planning" policy is probably the harshest in the world. Couples are allowed one child. An unauthorized pregnancy can lead to a state-mandated abortion or forced sterilization. Keep in mind that these measures have been imposed on a culture that loves children deeply. The number of Chinese women whose longing to give birth has been brutally thwarted and who are carrying burdens of guilt we can barely imagine must be staggering. If many of them are seeking relief in suicide, that's even sadder. But it's not really surprising.

Even if not all the suicides are direct victims of the "one-child" policy, it's hard not to see a connection. Essentially, the policy is a statement that individuals don't matter. Individual values—even when they're as fundamental as motherhood—can't be allowed to stand in the way of the "good" of society as a whole. The worldwide abortion movement says

the same thing. An unborn child can't be allowed to stand in the way of a supposedly higher good: in our country, that's a woman's "freedom" to make her own "choice."

And as the Germans say, once someone says "A," sooner or later he has to say "B." Ideas have consequences. It's an easy step from "Individuals don't matter" to "I don't matter," from "People are expendable" to "I'm expendable." Abortion is just one facet of what's been called the "culture of death." Once you accept one component of that culture, the others—suicide among them—follow naturally.

How do we defeat the "culture of death"? Jamison quoted U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher as saying, "We have to care more about people." Jamison added, "I know that sounds saccharine, but I think it's true." She believes we have to communicate to people that they're not simply "in the way" of things that are more important. People, all of them, matter—to us, if to nobody else.

Why not tell them that they matter to Almighty God? God cares passionately about each human life. He created it. He sacrificed his own Son to redeem it. And in that sacrifice, God filled the life of every single human being with meaning—no matter how small they are and no matter whose "greater good" they appear to be in the way of. In God's eyes, there is no such thing as an insignificant human life. Jesus' cross and empty tomb prove it.

Why not share that message with someone today?

Who knows? You might even save a life.

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

In God's eyes,
there is
no such
thing as an
insignificant
human life.

Places for

Cemeteries are places for weeping, but Easter transforms the bitter tears of loss into sweet tears of victory and jubilee.

James A. Aderman

Cemeteries: places for weeping. Their gracious trees, manicured lawns, and carpets of flowers barely cloak the tear-stained headstones. I've shepherded many grieving families through those fields, sniffing back my own tears and laboring to overcome my quavering voice as we've committed earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. A 10-year-old girl killed in a car accident. A year later, her father overcome by cancer. A 30-something woman who, until the last weeks of her life, poisoned her liver with alcohol. My father.

One place to remember

Cemeteries: places for weeping. It's always been that way. And it was that way on Good Friday when a pair of well-to-do Jewish aristocrats pried Jesus' body from its cross, quickly washed it, wrapped it in linens and spices, and buried it in a hand-hewn cave.

Just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem is a tomb that may have been Jesus' burial place. It wasn't discovered until 1867. It's

called the Garden Tomb. The grave was carved into a sheer rock face. It's a hundred yards from a quarry next to a main road. Romans crucified lawbreakers in public places like this. A garden, complete with a huge underground cistern and a winepress, decorates the area in front of the tomb.

Jesus' empty tomb provides grief-torn Christians the proof that life doesn't end at the cemetery.



A stone similar to what may have been covering the Garden Tomb's entrance.

Is it Jesus' grave? Two thousand years of history erased any chance of knowing. No matter! Our assurance of the events that transpired that Passover weekend finds its basis in the truth of God's Word, not a place near Jerusalem.

Today the tomb is surrounded by a lush garden, verdant with a variety of plants, including olive and mustard trees, rosemary and myrtle, pines, date palms, and some cacti. The fragrance of lavender scents the air. Narrow, tree-canopied paths, designed to slow one's pace and to hasten one's meditation, meander throughout. Towering stone walls, bedecked with ivy, mute the city traffic outside, while birdcalls provide the garden with its own symphony-like song track.

A place for real burial after real death

Still this garden can't hide that it's a cemetery. All the paths eventually lead to the corner where a wall of rock rises 20 feet above the flowerbeds. A stone stairway leads down to a 15-by-30-foot plaza paved with rough, white cobblestones. Across the plaza is the tomb.

Visitors duck to enter the

weeping

tomb's vestibule where mourners said their farewells. It's a 10-by-seven-foot room with a low ceiling. I was struck by the whispers in which fellow pilgrims spoke as we stood there and peered into the adjoining room of equal size where there were two stone beds separated by a narrow walkway. We labored to etch into memory the place where Jesus' lifeless body may have laid.

In that grave's chilled darkness, it's not hard to imagine the tears Joseph and Nicodemus choked back as they laid Jesus' battered body in Joseph's tomb. Was that an ancient wisp of a sigh and hint of weeping? Was that the grief-sounds of Jesus' female followers who stood outside the tomb and watched Jesus positioned for what they supposed was his final rest? The pall of death still hangs in the grave.

A place for hope

But step out of that tomb into the bright Israeli sun. Step out of the tomb and see its door agape. Step out of the tomb and recall the God-given words of angels: "He is not here. He is risen, just as he said."

Listen to the echo of the Savior's promise as it cascades through the treasury of Scripture stored in your heart, "Because I live, you also will



The Garden Tomb. Many use the tomb, in the middle of a bustling Jerusalem, as a place of quiet meditation about Christ's resurrection.

live . . . you also will live . . . you also will live."

Jesus is the first fruit of the resurrection that will harvest every believer for an eternity with the Lord. His rising from the dead demonstrates he is "God with us" and that he completed his mission to seek and to save us. Jesus' empty tomb provides grief-torn Christians the proof that life doesn't end at the cemetery. Life—real life, heaven's life—only begins there.

At that Jerusalem cemetery—at least for me—there were still tears, but these were tears of joy, not grief; tears born of a struggle to take in the beauty of God's grace, not tears wrung from a heart's horror. Yes, I cried at that

cemetery, too. But those tears had nothing to do with sadness. Quite the opposite!

Cemeteries: places for weeping. Even Christians shed tears there. But Easter transforms the bitter tears of loss into sweet tears of victory and jubilee.

Outside the Garden Tomb my wife, daughters, and I hugged a big family hug, and we celebrated that Jesus' empty grave is the guarantee that even though death will probably separate us some day, we won't stay separated. Our tombs will be just as empty as this tomb. And we'll be together—with Jesus—forever.




James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.



THE GREAT CONDITION

Our desire to bring law and gospel to a
lost world is always connected with our
forgiven status before God.

Wayne A. Laitinen



Fish swim. Birds fly. That is the way God made them.

Even so, the forgiven forgive. The moment the Holy Spirit created saving faith in our hearts, he gave us wings to bring that forgiveness to the lost world. We've grown fond of calling it the Great Commission.

But fish do not swim because they are under contractual obligation. Nor do birds fly because they have been commanded to do so. They do it because that is what they were created to do. Perhaps the whole idea of sharing the gospel with others would be a lot less intimidating if we called it more nearly what it is—the Great Condition.

Spreading salt and light

Our Savior declares that his believers are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13, 14). Notice that the verb Jesus uses, “are,” expresses a present fact. He declares that we have a new status before God. The Christian at different times may or may not be aware that it shows. However, his faith life is so radically different from pagan piety that the world cannot miss it. Just as the bite of salt or the brightness of

a lamp cannot be divorced from their chemical natures, neither can the heart of faith avoid giving witness to God's law and his grace.

So the Savior bids us to be what we are: “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). This inspires us to live up to the high calling that we have in Christ—not because we are under compulsion, but because we are under grace.

Yet Christian bookstores can't hold all the books that tell us we “ought to,” “should,” and “must be” a Christian salt and light. Each book offers a different method on how to be what (they imply) we are not. After reading these, what can the poor Christian conclude except that he must try . . . try again . . . and try harder . . . until he can be sure he has done God's will. His mind is no longer on what Christ has done for him, but on what he has not done well enough for Christ. Finally, when he has found no peace in his own efforts, he resents Christ, in whose name this horrible burden was laid upon him, and he despairs of ever pleasing God.



Bearing fruit

But let Jesus tell you how the redeemed let their light shine. By the grace of God we recognize that Jesus gave us a righteousness that “surpasses that of the Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20). Therefore, our sins are forgiven, and ours “is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3,10)—again, notice the present tense.

This Great Condition sets our hearts free not only to avoid murder, but to repent of hatred. Not merely to be faithful to one’s spouse, but to crucify lust. Not merely to avoid revenge, but to love our enemy. To give without expecting recognition, to pray to God without fanfare, to covet heaven and trust God with earth, to rejoice in the fellowship of those who are persecuted for the sake of the gospel. These and all other things our Savior mentions in his Sermon on the Mount are the fruits of Spirit-borne faith, seen by the world.

This new life in Christ makes the common, ordinary deeds of life uncommon and extraordinary. For instance, the chaste life of the single woman is a witness to everyone around her. She remains pure not merely to avoid disease or a broken heart, but because, in Christ, she is a new creation. The working man seasons his conversations with grace because in the grace of Christ he lives and moves and has his being. The faith with which a mother does her daily chores makes her home the nursery of the Holy Spirit.

Usually when the priesthood of believers declares the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light, it happens in the common, ordinary, even homely acts that, except for faith, seem unexceptional.

But every age grows tired of God’s commandments, so it invents a heroic piety of its own: from pilgrimages to cloisters to crusades. The religion of our age has a counterpart for each one of them. It usually begins, “If you love God and love your fellow man, you’ll want to be a part of the program, won’t you?” But remember, Jesus commended a Syrian woman and Roman centurion. And for what heroic deed? For a great faith as evidenced by their prayers.

**Fish swim. Birds fly.
That is the way God
made them. Even so,
the forgiven forgive.**

Glorifying God

Fish swim and birds fly. They each do different things. But both glorify God by what they do. The forgiven bring the message of forgiveness to the world. Some have a penchant for words. Others speak volumes with their example. Both give glory to God.

Either way, our desire to bring law and gospel to a lost world is always connected with our forgiven status before God. Paul tells us that we were saved by grace, through faith, without any works of our own. Then—without missing a beat—he tells what God’s grace made us: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

Have you ever noticed how uncomfortable living saints seem to be when people recognize their good works? Perhaps it has nothing to do with false modesty. They may

have trouble saying, “Thank you,” because they know to whom the thanks really belongs.

And when a Christian is attacked for not doing enough, he is equally ill at ease. First, he is painfully aware of how far short of the mark he has fallen. For this he turns to the blood of Christ.

But, worse yet, the challenge puts him in the awkward position of recalling his acts of charity. After all, whatever was done well was his duty. Furthermore, he knows that this accounting is best left to anyone except himself. That “anyone” is, of course, the King, who, on the Last Day, will give the kingdom to his faithful servants. Those servants will be genuinely surprised when their King draws attention to their common acts of courtesy. “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in? When did we see you sick and visit you?”

To their amazement, the King explains, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:37-40). To contemplate one’s good works before that day is a bit like a child finding his presents before Christmas.

Through Word and sacrament, the Holy Spirit made you salt and light in a dark world! “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).



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



ENCOURAGING YOUNG CHURCH MUSICIANS

Tips on how you—whether you're a parent, pastor, teacher, church leader, or young adult—can encourage WELS youth to be involved with church music.

Mary J. Prange

It all began at home. There was always singing—a hymn following the evening devotion and Bach chorales in harmony when the family gathered around the piano on special occasions.

Piano? There was no question. Lessons were required, and a persistent mother made sure that at least

30 minutes a day were spent practicing, in spite of efforts to escape to the nearest ballgame.

Attending sacred choral concerts in which family members participated was an accepted part of life.

The result? A budding church musician.

Why youth need to be encouraged

I suspect that this little scenario used to be somewhat common among families who devoted quite a bit of time to the church as full-time workers or as dedicated volunteers. But times have changed. Priorities in families' lives are not the same as they once were. There's no time for having family devotions, singing hymns, attending concerts, or taking music lessons. The result? A growing shortage of qualified church musicians.

Does it really matter? It is certainly possible to worship with computer generated music or with no music at all. But to do so robs the worshiper of one of God's greatest gifts—music: real, live music played on real instruments by real people who are sensitive to the needs of the people whom they serve.

Music in worship is certainly God-pleasing since music and singing are referred to in Scripture

well over 200 times. Music has always been a part of worship in both Old and New Testament times, and the church today has the responsibility to keep it that way.

How youth can be encouraged

In seeking a solution to the shortage of church musicians, four groups of people need to be addressed.

Parents—If at all possible, make your child take some kind of music lessons for several years at the least. Lessons at a young age will ensure that a person has the background necessary to pursue further studies in music. A student who begins studying music at the age of 18 or 19 hardly has a chance to develop enough skills by the end of college to be able to serve as a church musician.

Even if that young child never uses his or her musical abilities in church work, the lessons will still have served a purpose. They will have a greater appreciation for the church's music, and it is well documented that those children who take music lessons at a young age often have academic advantages over those who have no exposure to music as a child.



Mary Prange gives Brian Kent his piano lesson. Starting children when they're young helps ensure that they have enough of a background to further study music.

 **Lutheran elementary school**

teachers—Give every student who sits in your classroom, whether in kindergarten or in eighth grade, as much experience in hymn singing as possible. Teach as many hymns as you can, and don't shy away from those that seem difficult. Children will learn whatever you are willing to teach them.

Then, identify those students who have a particular love for singing and for hymns, and nurture them. This may mean offering to give them piano or organ lessons at no charge. It may be as simple as showing them how the organ works and letting them play occasionally after a rehearsal in church. Invite them to attend senior choir even if they are still in grade school. Give them a chance to sing part of the Psalm in a small group. If there's a microphone involved, the opportunity will be especially appealing to a child. (Since a child's voice used correctly will not carry in a large church, there is nothing wrong with amplifying it subtly.) Each worship experience in which children are directly involved will make an impression that may lead to increased interest in church music.

Pastors and congregational

leaders—Address the issue and be willing to nurture young musicians by giving them opportunities to use their gifts in wor-

ship. If necessary, offer to pay for lessons for someone who would like to improve his skills on the organ or piano. Encourage musicians to attend workshops and conferences dealing with church music, and pay the bill for them to go. Don't lock down the organ and allow people to play only with special permission. Rather, welcome youth to use church instruments for practice.

Young people—Take some responsibility for carrying on musical traditions in our churches. Join the church choir. Pick up that trumpet that you once played in grade school and start practicing hymns. Find a way to serve in the music ministry of your congregation. It will be an edifying experience for you, and your presence will encourage others.

Those who had the privilege of attending the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts in July 1999 couldn't help but be encouraged by the large number of young people who attended and participated as singers, organists, instrumentalists, and choir directors. The Lord has supplied his church with the gifts necessary for ministry. Identify them and put them to work.

Mary J. Prange is a teacher at Atonement, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Another way parents can encourage a young musician is to send him or her to a music camp. Here are just a few of the camps available:

Martin Luther College music camp

The MLC music camp in New Ulm, Minn., encourages students entering seventh through ninth grades to continue to study piano or organ. In the past, participants have come from 10 WELS districts and Japan.

Activities included worship, lessons and practice, music classes, sequencing with keyboards, exploring music software, learning about pipe organs, a closing recital, a concert by the Minnesota Orchestra in Minneapolis, and professional recitals.

The camp is scheduled from June 11-16. For more information, contact camp director Wayne Wagner, 507/354-8221, or look on the MLC Web site <<http://www.mlcwels.edu/SpecialServices/frames.htm>>.

Milwaukee area music camps

- Wisconsin Lutheran High School hosts two summer choral camps. One is for children entering third through fifth grades and the other for sixth through eighth grades. Each one-week camp is scheduled in the morning, Monday through Friday. Goals include developing vocal technique, experiencing children's choral literature, and improving part-singing skills. Camps include rehearsals and a vocal musicianship class. The camp closes with a performance. Contact 414/453-4567 ext. 2371 for more information.

- Wisconsin Lutheran College hosts a music technology camp for high schoolers during the mornings of June 5-9. The camp will focus on using MIDI, synthesizers, and software programs such as Musicshop and Finale. A similar workshop for teachers will be held during the evenings of June 5-8. Contact Lisa Sorensen, 414/443-8813.

SCIENTIFIC

Creation and evolution don't just disagree on how this world was made or how long it took. They disagree on whether or not there is a God who made and saved us.

Forrest L. Bivens and John D. Schuetze

“They just assume that evolution is a fact,” David’s father, Jim, commented as David and Matt entered the family room. Matt, David’s friend from college, had come home with David for the weekend.

“These specials on the Discovery Channel are interesting,” Jim said, “but they sure approach things from the viewpoint of evolution.”

“That reminds me of a question I have,” David remarked. “Our discussions on apparent contradictions have given me a better understanding of the Bible. I can appreciate some of the points that you and Mom made about the Bible and how to understand it. But do we always have to take the approach that the Bible is right? Maybe what’s wrong is our interpretation of God’s Word.”

“David, I’m not sure I know what you mean,” said his mother.

“Take evolution. We often feel that the biblical teaching of creation and the scientific theory of evolution are at odds. But can’t both be right in a sense? Last week Matt and I went to a lecture on the subject ‘Harmonizing Creation and Evolution’ that a non-denominational campus ministry group sponsored. The speaker made some good points,” remarked David.

“Like what?” Jim asked curiously. “Like the six days of creation,” Matt suggested. “If we consider them six long periods of time, we can allow for many of the scientific discoveries that seem to support evolution.”

“Yes, and the Bible account seems to allow such an understanding,” added David. “The speaker pointed out that the word ‘day’ is used in a number of different ways in the Bible. Sometimes it is even used to refer to a long period of time.”

Picking up the Bible, David opened it to Genesis 2:4. “Even though this translation states, ‘When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,’ the Hebrew actually says, ‘In the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens.’ So even in the creation account the Bible uses the word ‘day’ to mean a long period of time.

“Why then couldn’t the six days of creation also be six long periods of time, each consisting of several million years?”

“Don’t forget about the other passages that would support this view,” Matt reminded David. “I think somewhere in 2 Peter the Bible says, ‘With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.’”

“Then there’s Psalm 90,” David

said, “where Moses, who also wrote the Genesis account, states, ‘For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.’ Both passages seem to indicate that to God a ‘day’ can be a long period of time. So we really don’t have to feel that creation and evolution contradict each other.”

“You are right that the word ‘day’ can have a number of different meanings,” Jim conceded. “It can refer to the daylight hours as opposed to the night. It can refer to a 24-hour period. Or it can mean an era or a period of time. You have often heard me refer to what things were like in my day. So, how do we know which meaning is intended? We have to look at the context. Let’s apply this to the creation account. Is there anything in the context that would indicate how God is using the word ‘day’ when he speaks of the six days of creation?”

“I suppose you are referring to the phrase, ‘And there was evening, and there was morning,’” David responded. “But don’t we also speak about the dawn of a new age? Maybe evening and morning refer to the beginning and ending of an era.” “Yes, but there is nothing in the context of Genesis 1 and 2 that would support such a view. Rather, the Lord speaks about the two parts of a 24-

DIFFICULTIES

hour day—the evening and the morning. The reason why the evening is mentioned first is that the Hebrew people considered sunset rather than sunrise as the event that marked the beginning of a new day—more support for understanding the six days as 24-hour days. Otherwise it would seem strange to speak of the end of an era before its beginning. So the context does not support a view that the six days of creation are six long periods of time.

“And when we look at the context of 2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4, we see that these passages have nothing to do with creation. Both writers are describing the eternal nature of God. He is not bound by time. However, he did create time when he made the world. According to the time he established, he tells us that it took six 24-hour days to make the world.”

David thought for a moment as he studied the Genesis account in his Bible. “But how could God have possibly done everything the Bible says he did on the sixth day?”

It says that he not only created the animals, but also made Adam, put him in the garden, gave him directions regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil, had him name the animals, and then created woman. All of this would have taken more than a 24-hour day.”

“There’s no doubt that God accomplished a great deal on the sixth day, yet for a perfect and all-powerful God it would be possible.

The context [in Genesis] does not support a view that the six days of creation are six long periods of time.

“But aren’t we missing the important point in all of this?” asked Jim. “When we try to harmonize creation and evolution in this way, we are really accommodating the Bible to fit the theory of evolution. Without the theory of evolution, it is doubtful that people would see more than a 24-hour day in the Genesis account. And when we accommodate the account in this way, we also question whether the opening chapters of Genesis are historical. The creation of Adam and Eve and the fall into sin quickly become only stories, and the reality and seriousness of sin are questioned.”

“So what you are saying is that creation and evolution are opposite views that cannot be harmonized?” Matt asked.

“That’s correct,” responded Jim.

“Creation and evolution don’t just disagree on how this world was made or how long it took. They disagree on whether or not there is a God—a God who made us and saved us. You see, David and Matt, an attack on creation is ultimately an attack on Christ. If we take God out of the picture, we also eliminate sin and salvation. So we always need to look at Scripture as a unit. When we change one part, chances are it will affect other parts as well. In the case of creation and evolution, it hits at the heart of the gospel—the hope of heaven we have through Christ.”

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

THIS OLD HOUSE

The Minnesota District, like a well-built old house, brings a sense of stability and of potential to WELS.

Gary P. Baumler

How is an old WELS district like an old house? Both have storied histories, have experienced wear and tear, and have great potential for a new look on the old foundation.

Laying the foundation

In many ways, “old house” describes the Minnesota District of WELS. A synod before it became a district, its solid foundation was laid already in the 1860s. It joined WELS in 1892.

By 1884 the Minnesotans had their own Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC, now MLC) in New Ulm, Minn. In a short time, the people had endured a killer blizzard, a plague of locusts, and a New Ulm tornado. Ironically, too, the college was planted in a city that began as a



Martin Luther College entrance to the Luther Student Center during the 1999 synod convention. The college regularly hosts the Minnesota district conventions too.

community dedicated to resist organized religion as they had experienced it in Europe. Lesser folk may have faltered, but these forebears pressed on.

In a state with more Lutherans than any other state in the union, our Minnesota friends faced the challenge of establishing and maintaining a firm foundation for confessional Lutheranism, even as the rest of society grew increasingly secular and liberal. In this struggle, shared by our brothers and sisters of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (headquartered in Mankato, Minn.), the question asked to settle all issues was and remains: “What does God’s Word say?”

The Minnesotans built a beautiful house in which God is glorified. Doctrinal unity, brotherly and sisterly love, and a love for missions prevailed there. Dedication to Christian education grew. St. Croix (West St. Paul), West (Plymouth), and Minnesota Valley (New Ulm) Lutheran High Schools became important additions to the landscape, and MLC is now the WELS College of Ministry. The first full-time WELS president, Oscar J. Naumann, also came from the Minnesota District.

Christian love led to special ministries. The Lutheran Home Association, headquartered in Belle Plaine, Minn., serves the elderly and the mentally handicapped. The Lutheran Institutional Ministries Association provides two hospital chaplains



Two Hmong girls in festive clothes at a Hmong New Year celebration. Two Hmong pastors, a Hmong ministry coordinator, and other area pastors are working among the sizeable settlement of Hmong in St. Paul.

(one in the Twin Cities and one in Rochester, Minn.) and two college student chaplains (Twin Cities and Mankato). Both the Mission for the Visually Impaired (St. Paul, Minn.) and WELS Prison Ministry (New Ulm) distribute religious materials, encouraging people to grow in faith.

Weathering the wear and tear

Over time, this old house withstood its share of storms and weathering. When it joined with the Wisconsin Synod in 1892, some congregations dropped away. Subsequent doctrinal controversies, such as the split with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, rocked its foundation. In all such times, two things remained constant: the district’s dedication to the Word and the strong support of the DMLC faculty.

The house stood strong. Long-time DMLC and MLC professor Arnold Koelpin says, “After the dust settled [in each case], resolve for service to the synod and the

church strengthened, as seen by continued growth and expansion in the district and its financial commitment to go forward in Christ.”

Time has taken its toll in other ways, too. Many churches in the district began in strong farm communities. Today, however, farms are growing larger and some farm communities smaller. Most population growth is in the Twin Cities area. The district faces a major challenge. “Many of our rural congregations are shrinking and ‘aging,’” says District President Larry Cross.

First Vice President Charles Degner describes a polarization in this state between the Twin Cities and outstate cultures. “We have to make a conscious effort in our district not to let that polarization of culture influence our fellowship or our mission,” he cautions.

Creating a new look

The foundation of this old house is as firm as ever, but some exciting remodeling has been taking place. The congregation in Bloomington, Minn., already a leader in starting a daughter congregation, now has established a satellite congregation in Savage, Minn. Good Shepherd, St. Peters, Mo., is also seeking to start a daughter congregation. In view of the shrinking country communities, our churches in Johnson, Graceville, and Clinton, Minn., are working to form a tri-parish, and across the river in Hudson and Nye, Wis., a dual parish has formed.

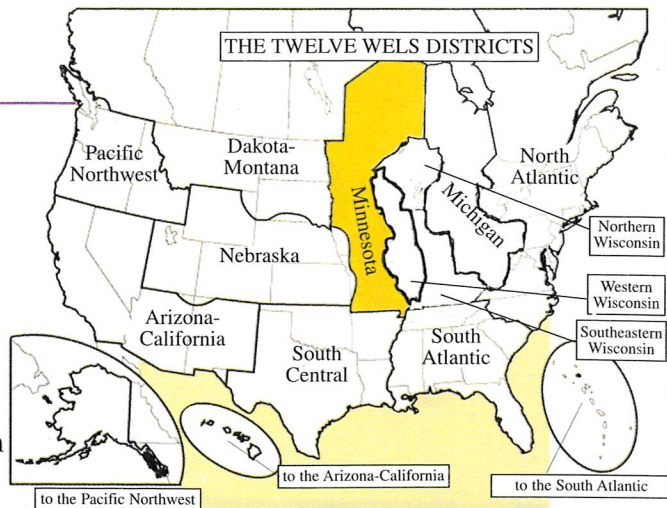
Changing cultures offer new opportunities to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. In the Twin Cities, a sizeable settlement of Hmong moved near Emanuel, St. Paul. What started as an outreach ministry to them blossomed into new visions for doing mission work across cultures in our parishes.

Soon after Pastor Loren Steele of Emanuel began serving the Hmong, steps were taken to train Hmong pastors to serve their people. Pastors Steele, Leon Piepenbrink, Jon Landner, and Don Fastenau gave them thorough theological training. The first man trained, Ger Yang, died suddenly, but God provided others. Last fall, Pheng Moua and Jay Lo were ordained and called to serve two Hmong congregations in the Twin Cities. “This certainly is something that ‘was not done this way before’ in WELS—at least not in the United States and not in this century,” says Cross.

More opportunities beckon. “We are beginning to see an outreach to the Hispanic community in rural Minnesota,” says Degner. “God willing, this will grow. My goal is to establish a mission that serves several rural congregations under the auspice of one coordinator.”

New issues and challenges await. Call it home maintenance, if you will. Cross lists the following:

1. Missions and outreach—Opening new missions and revitalizing outreach on the part of established congregations. Having our established congregations realize the need for and provide the manpower (lay and called) for meaningful outreach.
2. Celebrating the 2000th birthday of Christ.
3. Celebrating the 150th anniversary of our WELS.
4. Encouraging our called workers to a renewed interest in and dedication to the mission of Christ’s church and to their personal calls to serve.



Minnesota District

Stats at a glance Minnesota District

Conferences: 7
Circuits: 16
Congregations: 163
Mission churches: 4
Exploratory churches: 3

Baptized members: 55,251
Communicant members: 43,402
Average attendance: 43.3%
Pastors: 150

Adult baptisms: 48
Adult confirmations: 269

Sunday school enrollment: 6,408
Bible class attendance (teens): 702
Bible class attendance (adults): 4,630

Early childhood education schools: 39
Lutheran elementary schools: 42
Area Lutheran high schools: 3
Martin Luther College

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

Degner echoes: “We have a message to get out to our communities. It’s time to pull out all the stops and proclaim that simple, dignified, saving gospel, just the way Jesus gave it to us.”

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

The neXt generation of Christ



The church must find Gen Xers, often labeled “a lost generation,” and show them Jesus, who was sent to seek the lost.

John M. Parlow

They are called Generation X, a tag affixed by Douglas Copland in his 1991 novel *Generation X: The Tale of an Accelerated Culture*. They are dubbed 13th Gen., since they are the 13th generation of Americans since the American Constitution. They have been called twenty-nothings, slackers, the marginalized generation, and even the baby bums.

Labels are inevitable. But I like to think of people born between 1961-1975 as the searching generation, seekers, and the wandering generation. Regardless of what you call them, they are people loved by a Savior who was sent to seek the lost.

Sadly, many “experts” regard this generation as unreachable, do-nothing dropouts. Many have announced that “we have a lost generation.” Nothing could be further from the truth. If history records that Gen X was a lost generation, it will also show that they didn’t wander away on their own. Rather, history will tell of a church that often closed its ears and looked the other way when it could have been leading in the right direction. This generation can be won for Christ, and the result will be a different label.

The Word works

“I’m psyched that Pastor gave me the chance,” Mike said to Cathy, “but I’m not so sure he’s that com-

fortable with it all. He says these Bible studies are a great way to reach out to unchurched friends, but somehow I think he’s afraid I’m going to say something wrong. Or, I won’t say it the right way, and the group will end up looking for the next comet to ride into eternity!”

“I think you’re paranoid,” Cathy replied. “He trained you for this, even put it in the bulletin. If he didn’t want you to be a part of the Home Improvement ministry, you wouldn’t be. Remember what Pastor said in class . . . ‘The Word works in spite of our verbal foibles.’”

The Word works. That’s the foundation of Lutheranism. This is a

great truth to remember, whether you are nurturing life-long Lutherans or reaching out to skeptical Xers. "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).

If verbal foibles in the pulpit or classroom disqualified us for the ministry, the synod call list would be longer. The Lord works through the double-edged sword of his Word regardless of who swings it.

Methods change

"The next thing I thought he was going to do was pull out a tape and tell me if I didn't listen to it he would beat me into submission with his Bible." Jeff didn't exactly appreciate his brother's approach to "reach out" to him. In an effort to save Jeff's soul, Jeff's brother trampled Jeff's spirit. I have a hunch Jeff's brother isn't the only one who has made that mistake.

We have what Gen X is searching for. We have the truth that is beyond their ability to imagine or hope for. We have the life-changing story of Jesus. It is, therefore, imperative that we know our audience. Gen Xers are often skeptical and slow to commit, apathetic and disillusioned, floundering in the river of relativism.

Although our message must never change, our methods of outreach can and must. Think of Jesus' ministry. Jesus preached the truth to the people on a hillside or by the seashore in one method and to the Jews in the synagogue with another method. Likewise Paul reached out to the Jews in the synagogue and the Greeks in the marketplace with the same truth, just different approaches (Acts 17:17).

If we love people and want to win them for Christ, we will seek to communicate God's truth in the

best possible manner in the culture in which God placed us. Paul says: "I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

It's the middle of the night, and Xers are sleepwalking through life. We need to check our approach. Are we boldly leading people into the 1950s or seeking better ways to teach timeless truth to modern people? Instead of simply advertising our faith, we need to focus on living it. Instead of grand strategies, we may want to emphasize one-on-one relationships. It's time for us to climb off our mountain of faith and go down to the river where people are struggling and drowning and trying to get across. Reach out a hand. Grab hold of a struggling soul. Pull someone to shore.

The Word lives

"I came here looking for something that works," Janet said, "something that makes sense on Thursday night at the club and Monday morning at the desk. I didn't want 'religion'—it doesn't work!"

Dave prepared himself for a flood of disappointment but instead marveled at Janet's gentle mist of discovery. "What I found in this course is that . . . what I was really looking for was not something but someone."

"And that someone was Jesus," Dave said softly.

"It's like waking from a dream," Janet said. "Dave, you've been a Christian all your life. You've always known the story. Up until 12 weeks ago I didn't. I didn't know I was the center of God's love and plan. I didn't know that the "X" [Greek chi] on

the altar was the shorthand symbol for Christ, who was nailed to a "T" in my place. I didn't know that this Jesus knows and cares about my struggles and pain. Man, I didn't know about forgiveness."

"Kind of weird, isn't it," Dave said. "When you know about Jesus' story, yours takes on a fresh look."

It's the middle of the night, and Xers are sleepwalking through life.

To a generation torn up by the "Five Ds"—divorce, daycare, digitalization, debt, downsizing—we bring the story of reconciliation and peace. To this "Starbucks" generation that hungers for belonging, justice, and family, we bring a story of a new way of life—a new family system in which there is no racist, sexist, or economic division but equality in Jesus. To an empty post-modern generation we bring the story of one who fills the holes in our souls and who opens the door to transcendent, supernatural realities. To a generation that has lost its sense of direction, that has lost its belief in universal truth, that has become drenched in disappointment and death, we bring the story of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

If we believe the Word works, and it does; if we believe methods can change, and they can; if we believe there is only one story worth telling, and there is; then let's pray that the term "Generation X" can be invested with a beautiful new meaning: the "Generation of X" (Christ).

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

What good is an EMPTY

TOMB?

While all other tombs are evidence of death, Christ's tomb alone is evidence of life.

John L. Eich

On Easter Sunday we stand in spirit before the grave of Jesus.

What is it that magnetizes the faith of Christians all over the world? What is it that draws even the most casual Christian to this tomb on this day?

History knows far more pretentious burial places: the tomb of Tutankhamen with all its lavish wealth, the remains of Lenin displayed in Red Square, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington with its reverent pride. Mohammedans heckle Christian missionaries with the challenge, "We have the tomb of our great prophet Mohammed. You Christians have nothing." The Chinese have the tomb of Confucius. Others can point to the tomb of Buddha. All we Christians have is an empty grave.

That's exactly the point! While all other tombs are evidence of death, Christ's tomb alone is evidence of life. In an instant everything changed forever. Where once the grave held steady at 100 percent retention, now it skipped a beat as Jesus, Savior of all mankind, stepped out into life.

Why believe in some dead religious leader? Where's the proof that their teachings are right? Only one stepped forth from the tomb. Only one rose from the dead. Only one conquered death. Only one offers the guarantee of eternal life to those who follow him. Death is the last word no longer for Jesus' followers—life is.

"I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus said. "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26).

So why do Jesus' followers gather in churches on Easter morning? To show off their Easter finery? God forbid. Rather, to celebrate the victory of Jesus over death, to proclaim their faith, to declare that there is more to Easter than jelly beans, to renew their hope and strength for life and death.

What good is an empty grave? It makes all the difference in the world . . . and in eternity!



John Eich is pastor at Grace, Alma, Michigan.





Inter-Act

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

Introduction

Your blood boiled. You were so angry that your eyes crossed. And you were on the way to spew venom at the one who was to blame.

But the phone rang, and by the time you hung up, your anger had cooled. Just then a co-worker stopped you in the hall to discuss another matter.

By this time a few new thoughts edged into the picture. "Maybe I had something to do with this problem. Maybe I shouldn't attack him over this. Maybe there's a better way." Finally, you hear God's voice, "In your anger, do not sin."

Think of a time the Lord stopped you when you were "on the way" to do evil.

I. Text

Read 1 Kings 11:27-31,37,38

²⁷Here is the account of how he [Jeroboam] rebelled against the king: Solomon had built the supporting terraces and had filled in the gap in the wall of the city of David his father. ²⁸Now Jeroboam was a man of standing, and when Solomon saw how well the young man did his work, he put him in charge of the whole labor force of the house of Joseph.

²⁹About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country, ³⁰and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. ³¹Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. . . . ³⁷I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. ³⁸If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.'"

IV. Prayer

Dear Lord, because of Jesus' righteous life you forgive my unrighteousness—even while I'm on the way to do wrong. I don't want to abuse your second chance. Help me appreciate the blessings you bring me through your Word and the people who speak it to me. Give me ears to hear them. Surround me with people who have the courage to stop me when I'm on the way to disobey you. Please give me the courage to be that kind of friend. Thank you for your amazing grace. Amen.

II. Questions

1. We're not told why Jeroboam was plotting a rebellion, but from verses 27-28 what do you think were his reasons?
2. The Lord's timing is precise. Jeroboam would get his chance to lead the people, but not until Solomon died. So the Lord stopped Jeroboam. What does that tell you about current political events?
3. Today, God speaks through his Son: the Word. Long ago, God spoke through people like Ahijah, prophets who received messages from God and passed them on to the people. What would you have liked about having prophets to speak God's Word to you?
4. What advantages do you see to God speaking to us through his Word?
5. Verse 38 describes Jeroboam's side of the deal. What irony do you see in this "offer"—since Jeroboam was on his way to disobey God?

III. Applications

1. God doesn't send prophets to correct us on the way. He sends his Word and people who will speak it. Who are those people in your life? Thank God for them.
2. Jesus said, "He who listens to you, listens to me." Where is that likely to happen?
3. Why does it take courage to correct someone who is on the way to do evil?
4. Since God speaks to us through his Word, memorizing Bible passages is worthwhile. What are creative ways you have committed God's word to memory?
5. Only fellow believers will speak God's Word to us. That's one reason fellowship is so important. Do you tend to overestimate or underestimate the value of fellowship?
6. Go back to the introduction story. Evaluate: "The phone call and the co-worker's questions were coincidences."

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



I am . . .

"I am so confused sometimes."

"I am too stressed out."

"I am lonely."

"But I am a Christian."

"I am forgiven."

"I am at peace."

"And I am saved through Jesus Christ."

"Just like you."

These phrases will soon become familiar to millions of Americans and Canadians because they are taken from the WELS Outreach 2000 commercials.

These two 30-second commercials are running from the beginning of April through Easter. Their purpose is twofold: to make a statement of faith so that the gospel is spread and to create awareness about WELS. The final screen of the commercials attributes them to WELS, gives the WELS Web site address <www.wels.net>, and invites viewers to Easter Sunday worship services.

The commercials are playing on national cable stations TNT/TBS and on at least 58 regional networks both in the United States and Canada. Groups of congregations in over 20 areas are supplementing the national

and regional coverage by buying local coverage time. It is expected that 100 percent of viewing households will see the commercials and that the typical viewer will see them three or more times.

"The commercials were created to show that Christians are real people with real problems. But we are forgiven through Jesus Christ. Many do not have that comfort," explains Robert Hartman, administrator for the Commission on Evangelism.

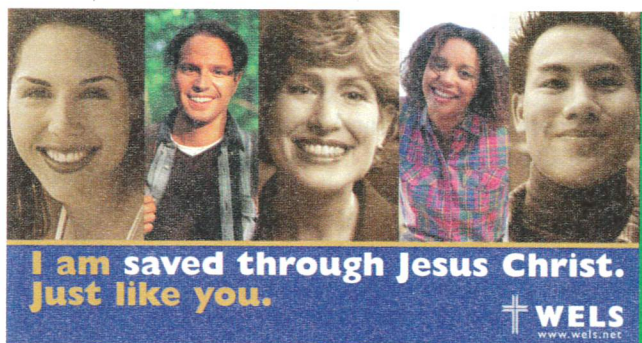
Along with the commercials, the Outreach 2000 campaign also features radio spots, newspaper ads, billboards, brochures, yard signs, and postcards. Congregations are encouraged to participate in different

aspects of the campaign so area residents begin to recognize and associate the campaign with WELS. Ideally, this will help lead residents to attend services at an area WELS church or to inquire further about WELS beliefs.

As Hartman says, "The 'success' of the campaign rests on the participation of local congregations."

So, as you are watching the commercials, consider how you can join in and become a part of Outreach 2000. There are many people out there "just like you" who don't realize that they can have the peace you have.

For more information, contact the Commission on Evangelism, 414/256-3287; <evan@sab.wels.net>.



This postcard can be sent in connection with the WELS Outreach 2000 campaign. The people pictured appear in the Outreach 2000 TV commercials that air in April.

Conference will encourage missionaries

Prepare the troops.

That's what the Board for Home Missions wants to do in its first ever WELS Home Mission Conference, "Mobilizing Missions for Millennium Three."

"This is a very special conference," said John Huebner, chairman of the conference committee. "It's designed to really give our missionaries a boost and have long-lasting effects."

The conference, held in Chicago from July 24-27, will include 60 workshops, four plenary sessions, a keynote speech, two worship services, and plenty of time for fellowship.

All these things will help the conference meet its four-point purpose:

- Encouraging missionaries and their wives. "We want them to come

away encouraged that they are doing God's great work," said Huebner.

- Equipping missionaries and their congregations for ministry.
- Exalting God through worship—both contemporary and traditional.
- Edifying missionaries by giving them the tools they need to nurture their people and help them grow as congregational leaders.

Missionaries and their wives are invited. "If you are interested in a study of the Word that will help make a good marriage better, you should come," said Huebner. Separate workshops for missionary wives will be offered as well as a special evening for couples.

The conference will also stress planning for personal, family, and

professional growth. To help participants follow their plans, missionaries will choose partners at the conference who will help them establish plans and encourage them to stay on task in the future.

The BHM and the conference committee have been planning this conference for three years. Monies from the Forward in Christ offering will subsidize much of the conference. Home mission participants pay \$100 per couple. Space for 800 participants is available, but people associated with home missions receive first priority.

For more information, contact the BHM at 414/256-3286. Or register on-line at their Web site <<http://www.wels.net/sab/frm-bhm.html>>.

Video celebrates WELS' past

One important part of celebrating an anniversary is looking back and remembering the past.

A new two-volume video docudrama that celebrates WELS' rich 150-year history will help WELS members, young and old alike, do just that.

Harvest of Joy, developed by WELS Mass Media Ministry, starts at the time of Martin Luther and spans the history of WELS. Divided into six sections, the video reenacts the founding of the synod as well as blessings and challenges throughout its history.

This feature-length video is "the biggest audiovisual project the synod has ever engaged in—both in length and in scope," said John Barber, director and producer of *Harvest of Joy*. The video, released in March, took two years to prepare, which included extensive research of WELS history. It was filmed in various locations throughout Wisconsin

and includes footage from Germany and WELS domestic and foreign mission fields.

A grant from the Marvin M. Schwan Foundation funded this project, which Barber hopes will be more than a reference tool. "This video will give us a much greater appreciation of what it is we have, historically speaking."

This video can be shown at WELS schools and in adult instruction classes to help foster an understanding of WELS' past. And, said Barber, "It's also a keepsake, something parents can get for their children."

Something that can remind WELS



John Barber (left) directs a scene featuring a *reiseprediger* (riding preacher) in *Harvest of Joy*. This video took two years to prepare and spans the history of WELS.

members where they came from as they go forward in Christ.

To order, contact Mass Media Ministry, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 1-800-884-9312; <usr14@sab.wels.net>. The video costs \$19.95 plus shipping and handling.

Forward in Christ objectives



This year, WELS turns 150 years old. As many congregations celebrate this milestone, it is important to keep in mind the objectives of the Forward in Christ (FIC) celebration:

- **Remember** God's blessings to us as individuals and as a synod. By remembering God's blessings, we are stimulated to celebrate his grace and goodness. Reading the keepsake history book *Together in Christ** or buying the WELS video docudrama *Harvest of Joy* can help you reminisce and recall WELS' blessings.

- **Rejoice** through prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. As Paul reminds us, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

(Philippians 4:4). One way many congregations are rejoicing is by holding special anniversary services. The official date designated for the synodwide celebration is Sunday, June 11, 2000.

- **Grow** in our understanding and appreciation of God's blessings. Perhaps your congregation is doing this by using the Anniversary Reflections* Bible study or creating a similar Bible study.

- **Anticipate** opportunities to spread the gospel. The Forward in Christ anniversary theme displays the importance of this objective.

- **Involve** members. The FIC celebration ought to be a celebration of the members and by the members of WELS—including the youngest members. Bette Feiock, a teacher at King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., shares this idea: To help younger children celebrate Forward in Christ,

help them know what 150 stands for. Consider marking off 150 days on a calendar. Or collect 150 objects—writing to and obtaining 150 pictures of churches, or collecting 150 pennies, nickels, dimes, or quarters, and using them for a mission project.

Please let us know ways you or your congregation 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>.

*The Anniversary Reflections Bible study and the keepsake history book *Together in Christ* are available from Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022. *Together in Christ* is available to congregations for the cost of shipping through the end of April.

Where are they now?

In Forward/NL, we report the news, but aren't always able to follow-up. "Where are they now" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

"New beginnings" ran in July 1996.

Here's a recap:

New Beginnings—A Home for Mothers is a WELS maternity home in the metro Denver, Colo., area for unwed mothers and their babies. The home opened in 1993 and was primarily funded by Christian Life Resources. As Robert Fleischmann, national director of Christian Life Resources, explained, "Our original intent was to help a woman who decides to keep her child but can't get her life together. This grew into also helping women who are placing their children for adoption."

Houseparents Craig and Judy Schwartz provide mothers and mothers-to-be with a family-like setting where they can learn how to care for themselves and their children. "Sharing Jesus with them is the most blessed part of the whole thing," said Craig, "and they're the least resistant to that."

In 1996, 31 women had been helped by New Beginnings and had lived in one of six apartments rented by New Beginnings.

So, where are they now?

New Beginnings continues to live up to its name and has undergone some big changes in the last year.

The biggest change is that the organization bought a 12-unit apartment complex. Two apartments have been converted into general living space shared by all residents. Two more apartments are used as living quarters for houseparents Craig and Judy Schwartz and relief lady Judy Nye. The remaining apartments are used to house mothers, mothers-to-be, and their children.

Probably the most popular feature of the new home is the fenced-in backyard, complete with a playground. Owning their own green space makes playing outside safer, and residents do not have to worry about disturbing others. It also creates a sense of togetherness because it is more like a home.

New Beginnings is changing in



Two residents of New Beginnings enjoy "family time" together.

other ways, too. Even though expenses have gone up, Christian Life Resources has not needed to increase its monetary support because more private donations are being received. The organization hosted a conference in August 1999 to provide delegates from pregnancy counseling centers with information that would help them better refer clients to New Beginnings.

Further changes are on the way. The Schwartzes plan on retiring at the end of this year, pending the arrival of new houseparents. So, the cycle of new beginnings continues.

Church set on fire twice

Early in the morning of Jan. 21, an arsonist poured gasoline down the outside vents of Beautiful Savior, El Paso, Tex. The gasoline caused the furnace to catch fire. Due to the metal floor of the furnace room, the fire died without spreading.

The church sustained little structural damage so no services were cancelled or moved. Most of the damage resulted from smoke spreading through the vents, causing soot to accumulate.

Two weeks later, early in the morning of Feb. 4, an arsonist broke a stained glass window at Beautiful Savior, poured gasoline inside the church, and threw a match under the altar. This time the fire spread throughout the entire sanctuary. All

contents in the sanctuary are ruined. The fellowship hall was not damaged though, so services are taking place there until the sanctuary is repaired.

Sunday, Feb. 6, Beautiful Savior's "Rejoice and be glad" banner hung proudly in the fellowship hall during the well-attended service. The banner, one of only five that was not destroyed by the fire, served as a reminder that "[arsonists] cannot destroy faith or salvation—they cannot burn God," as one member stated.

Within two to three months, members of Beautiful Savior should be able to worship in their sanctuary once again. First, though, the interior must be repaired, and all contents must be replaced. Steve Dorn, pastor



The arsonist broke this stained glass window in order to pour in the gasoline and throw the match.

at Beautiful Savior, reminds us that, "Even without a building, our mission would still be the same."

At least three other churches in El Paso have been victims of church fires during recent months. The FBI is analyzing the evidence to determine who caused these fires.

Obituaries

Marvin Edward Otterstatter 1928-2000

Marvin Otterstatter was born Sept. 26, 1928, in Merrill, Wis. He died Feb. 4, 2000, in Milwaukee.

A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Otterstatter served at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; St. Paul, Monroe, Mich.; Faith, Antioch, Ill.; and Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee.

He is survived by wife, Marilyn; one son, three brothers, and many nieces and nephews.

Robert A. Baer 1929-2000

Robert Baer was born June 20, 1929, in Chicago, Ill. He died Jan. 25, 2000, in Westland, Mich.

A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Baer served at St. Stephen, Adrian; Faith, Dexter; Darlington, Ann Arbor; and St. John's, Westland, all in Mich.

He is survived by wife, Sondra; three daughters, and six grandchildren.

Henry T. Peter 1930-2000

Henry Peter was born April 29, 1930, in Findlay, Ohio. He died Jan. 1, 2000, in Belle Plaine, Minn.

A 1956 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Peter served at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; St. John, Waterloo/Immanuel, Marshall, Wis.; and St. Paul, Sodus, Mich.

He is survived by wife, Ardyce; two daughters, two sons, and six grandchildren.

correction: John Henning is survived by three sons, not two, as was reported in the February obituaries (p. 26).

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Twelve Months Ended December 31, 1999

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received				
	Communicants 12/31/98	1999	Year to Date Projected	December Offerings	Twelve Offerings	Percent of Subscrptn	Annlzd Ave Per Commun
Arizona-California	17,469	\$1,044,147	\$1,044,147	\$156,367	\$1,053,085	100.9%	\$60.28
Dakota-Montana	9,156	440,574	440,574	95,103	447,123	101.5	48.83
Michigan	36,375	2,143,046	2,143,046	363,583	2,129,313	99.4	58.54
Minnesota	43,400	2,431,955	2,431,955	545,056	2,410,078	99.1	55.53
Nebraska	10,329	610,875	610,875	108,833	618,111	101.2	59.84
North Atlantic	4,039	350,734	350,734	59,082	374,619	106.8	92.75
Northern Wisconsin	60,967	2,622,104	2,622,104	543,907	2,598,683	99.1	42.62
Pacific Northwest	5,134	263,368	263,368	61,882	280,492	106.5	54.63
South Atlantic	6,830	494,337	494,337	76,086	514,633	104.1	75.35
South Central	4,585	450,143	450,143	68,242	456,171	101.3	99.49
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,332	3,396,332	3,396,332	694,493	3,343,863	98.5	58.32
Western Wisconsin	59,815	3,141,882	3,141,882	619,830	3,193,898	101.7	53.40
Total - This Year	315,431	17,389,497	17,389,497	3,392,464	17,420,069	100.2	55.23
Total - Last Year	315,355	16,967,923	16,967,923	3,664,061	17,053,347	100.5	54.08

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities

	1999 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$8,216,186	\$8,004,643	\$8,117,300
Gifts and memorials	2,479,507	2,327,418	3,531,700
Bequest/planned giving	626,806	734,892	683,400
Tuition and fees	5,830,841	5,263,974	5,341,500
Other	75,737	90,708	85,500
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	-	-
Transfers-endwmt earnings	201,387	141,753	144,000
Transfers-gift funds	5,629,648	3,931,818	5,595,400
Transfers-continuing programs	2,046,013	2,115,307	1,942,900
Transfers-other	-	-	-
Total revenues	25,106,125	22,610,513	25,441,700
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	4,723,698	4,812,837	5,183,200
World Missions	4,301,563	4,353,954	4,451,500
Ministerial Education	11,369,107	11,444,281	12,282,000
Parish Services	889,949	893,019	1,079,900
Administrative Services	2,657,055	2,738,964	3,517,800
Total expenditures	23,941,372	24,243,055	26,514,400
Changes in unrestricted net assets	(1,164,753)	1,632,542	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	-	-
Bequest/planned giving	-	-	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	-	-
Change in temp restricted net assets	-	-	-
Net assets - beginning of year	4,170,081	5,939,285	
Net assets - end of period	5,334,834	4,306,743	

Statement of Financial Position

	December 31, 1999	December 31, 1998
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,146,119	1,101,265
Due from other funds	45,385	653,932
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	125,250	105,250
Cash advances-schools	250,654	-
Other accounts receivable	346,936	90,778
Contributions receivable	3,454,400	3,024,800
Mortgage note receivable	11,764	13,895
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	69,495	69,443
Total assets	5,358,003	4,697,363
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	-	488,716
Accounts payable	23,169	171,904
Total liabilities	23,169	660,620
Unrestricted	1,880,434	1,281,943
Temp restricted	3,454,400	3,024,800
Total net assets	5,334,834	4,306,743
Total liab. and net assets	5,358,003	4,967,363

Mark Meissner, director of finance



District news

California

Members of Grace, Casa Grande, Ariz., honored **Lianne Schlittenhart** with a special service. Schlittenhart has been an organist at Grace for 41 years.

Minnesota

Two Minnesota Valley LHS freshmen received poetry awards. **Bradley Apitz** received honorable mention in the American Literacy Council's poetry contest. **Rachel Corona's** poem was chosen from thousands to be published in a book entitled *Celebration of Poets*.

Nebraska

J.R. Longshore, organist and member at Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo., performed with his high school band at Mile-High Stadium in Denver. Longshore is a percussionist whose band became state champion and won Best Percussion at the Colorado Bandmasters Association competition.

Northern Wisconsin



Students Take on Prevention—a Fox Valley LHS club that presents messages about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse to grade school and high school students—hosted many blacklight puppetry performances this school year. In blacklight puppetry, puppets and props are designed to “shine” in blacklight settings. Skits, songs, and shadow acting were also performed. Students wrote most of the pieces and designed and built many props and special effects.

North Atlantic

While little business was accomplished, the **southern conference's January meeting** was a memorable one. Host Michael Geiger never made it to the meeting and the other pastors were stranded for two days because snow covered the usually dry roads of North Carolina. One of Geiger's members, Kem Ahlers, cross-country skied to the hotel where the pastors were staying to bring them food.

Our Savior, Sterling, Va., dedicated a new worship/education facility on Jan. 16.

Pacific Northwest

Sarah Bishop, sophomore at Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash., rang in the new millennium in China. Bishop was one of 40 track and field and soccer athletes from Washington to be invited on a nine-day culture exchange that included a three-mile cross country race in Hong Kong.

South Atlantic

Northdale, Tampa, Fla., issued its first call for a teacher for its K-5 school that is opening in the fall of 2000.

South Central

Members of **Living Water, Hot Springs Village, Ark.**, have begun worshipping in their new building.

Western Wisconsin

Students at **Luther HS, Onalaska, Wis.**, held a miniature life convention on Feb. 18. Members of Luther's Pro Life Knights attended the national WELS Lutherans for Life convention and wanted the rest of their classmates to be able to experience a similar event. The convention is the culmination of the third annual Life Week held at Luther HS and included workshops conducted by trained counselors.

Happy Anniversary!

SEW—Calvary, Thiensville, Wis., held a special service to thank **Jonathan Winkel** for his 25 years of service in the teaching ministry. Calvary is also thankful for the 26 years that **Kathleen Baumann** has served as a teacher.

Southeastern Wisconsin



The National Train Advisors of Lutheran Pioneers and the District Counselors of Lutheran Girl Pioneers gathered for a weekend of training and idea sharing in October 1999. AAL provided a block grant to fund the training session and additional funds are being used to develop videos to assist volunteers.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Fifth and sixth grade members of **Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.**, participate in a program entitled “From the Ears of a Child.” The children write sermon summaries that are printed in church publications and on the church Web site <www.execpc.com/~calvary>.

Members at **New Life, Lake Zurich, Ill.**, celebrated the dedication of their first worship facility on Jan. 23.

Lutheran Pioneers, headquartered in Burlington, Wis., produced an afghan commemorating the 50th anniversary of the organization.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: CA—Hermann John; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Kevin Schultz; NE—Keith Petersen; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Mark Haefner; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

Prices for **Forward/NL** will increase slightly as of May. All subscriptions will go up \$1, bringing an individual subscription to \$10, every home subscriptions to \$7.25 per magazine, and bundle subscriptions to \$6.75 per magazine. Renew now to beat the price increase.

District conventions

Arizona/California

June 12-14
Mesa, Ariz.
Contact: Pastor Kenneth Pasch,
480/986-0466

Dakota/Montana

June 13-15
Watertown, S.D.
Contact: Pastor Stephen Geiger,
605/665-4793

Michigan

June 13-15
Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw
Contact: Pastor James Seelow,
517/781-0980

Minnesota

June 20-22
Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Contact: Pastor Michael Hatzung,
651/777-5771

Nebraska

June 12-14
University of Northern Colorado,
Greeley, Colo.
Contact: Pastor Keith Petersen,
605/775-2462

North Atlantic

June 6-7
Elizabethtown College,
Elizabethtown, Penn.
Contact: Pastor Brett Voigt,
613/234-0321

Northern Wisconsin

June 19-20
Manitowoc, Wis.
Contact: Pastor Ronald Szep,
920/788-4408

Pacific Northwest

June 16-18
Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des
Moines, Wash.
Contact: Pastor Gary Kraklow,
360/256-6194

South Atlantic

June 12-14
Hilton, St. Petersburg, Fla.
Contact: Pastor Robert Krueger,
423/926-3112

South Central

June 5-7
Calvary, Dallas, Tex.
Contact: Pastor Timothy Spaude,
210/659-3311

Southeastern Wisconsin

June 6-7
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon
Contact: Pastor Robert Pasbrig,
414/259-8122

Western Wisconsin

June 11-13
Luther Preparatory School,
Watertown, Wis.
Contact: Pastor Mark Johnston,
715/635-7672

Youth participate in ministry

Have you ever wondered how to get your church's youth more involved? Maybe you should give Pastor Paul Tullberg, Good Shepherd, Wisconsin Rapids, a call. "Our teens are an incredible group of active Christians . . . [they] make adults think," Tullberg says.

For example, the youth at Good Shepherd actively participate in Lenten services. Some read the readings, while others show corresponding slides. The teens will often not dress in "traditional" church wear, but in their "coolest" shirts and new tennis shoes, which they would only wear to the "coolest" events. Congregation members smile openly at the teens and give them their thanks.

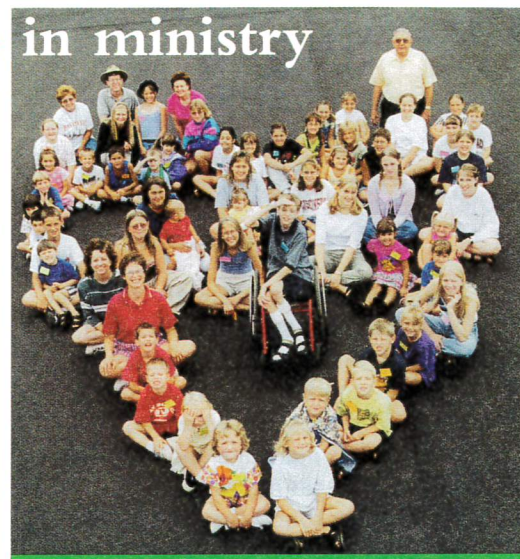
Peer pressure to look cool at all costs is one of the biggest issues facing teens. At Good Shepherd, teens look cool by helping shy, hesitant little ones that are uneasy about approaching the church altar for the children's devotion. The teens patiently escort the little ones to the front and sit through the devotion with them. This action both eases the little ones' nerves and gives them good older role models.

Tullberg has many teens that give input for ministry in his confirmation class. Since he acknowledges or implements the teens' ideas, they feel a sense of worth and ownership in the ministry.

That feeling translates into feelings of excitement about participating actively. One girl in Tullberg's confirmation class leaves parts of her weekly devotion book wherever she goes, so that others will see and read them.

"On and on I could go. Don't get me started!" Tullberg says.

The youth at Good Shepherd have the right idea, according to Jerry Kastens, administrator for the Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD). "Getting youth involved in worship, Bible study, and meaningful



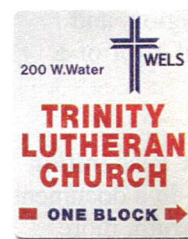
Students, teachers, and helpers at Good Shepherd's Very (exciting) Bible School (VBS) form a heart, symbolic of their love for Jesus, their Savior. Teen members help Good Shepherd's VBS run smoothly.

service are the key elements of a teen ministry," explains Kastens.

For youth involvement suggestions, contact the CYD, 414/256-3274.

Jon Koeller

Helping find the way



Church signs to help people find your church are still available from Northwestern Publishing House. The first sign (either 24x30 or

18x24) is free to the first 815 customers. The second costs \$36.48 (half price). This offer is only good during the Forward in Christ celebration (until July 31, 2001) or while supplies last. A gift from Lutheran Brotherhood and the cooperation of Northwestern Publishing House made this possible. For more information or to order, call Northwestern Publishing House at 1-800-662-6093 ext. 7.



Global poll finds majority support family, marriage

—A global poll taken for an organization interested in preserving families found that a majority of those surveyed affirm heterosexual marriage and families created by legal marriage.

The study found that 84 percent of respondents agree with the statement that “The definition of marriage is one man and one woman.” Seventy-eight percent agreed that “A family created through lawful marriage is the fundamental unit of society.”

Forty-three percent believe the quality of family life will be stronger 30 years from now, while 34 percent said it will be weaker.

Sixty-nine percent said children are very important for having a strong marriage, and 77 percent said having and raising a child is very important for the quality of family life.

This survey of 2,893 adults by Wirthlin Worldwide for the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society has a margin of error of ± 1.8 percentage points.

Religious leaders urge recognition for same-sex unions

—In a document that ignores scriptural truth, more than 800 religious leaders have signed a declaration stating that sexuality is “central to our humanity and . . . integral to our spirituality,” and urging that all faiths recognize same-sex unions and gay and lesbian ministers.

The Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing also advocates lifelong, age-appropriate sex education and “a faith-based commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, including

access to voluntary contraception, abortion, and HIV/STD (sexually transmitted disease) prevention and treatment.”

Endorsers represent a variety of faith communities—from Baptist to Episcopal to Roman Catholic—and secular organizations.

Virginia’s Senate approves minute of silence in schools

—In February Virginia’s Senate approved a measure by a 28-11 vote that would call for a minute of silence for prayer, meditation, or reflection at the start of each school day.

Supporters hope it might reduce violence in schools, but opponents argue that it is unconstitutional.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the 1960s that organized school prayer is unconstitutional.



It also decided in 1985 that an Alabama law calling for a “moment of silence” in public schools violated the principle of government neutrality toward religion.

The justices said it was clear that the Alabama law was designed to encourage student prayer. Their decision left open the possibility that a law that is not designed to promote religion might be considered acceptable.

About half of the states have some version of a law addressing a moment of silence.

Over 1 million Spanish-language Bibles sold

—Less than a year after its launch, The Nueva Version Internacional (NVI)—a Spanish-language Bible produced by the International Bible Society—topped the 1 million mark in sales in the United States and Latin America.

Spanish follows Chinese and English as the world’s third most-

spoken language. The United States has the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, with nearly 30 million Hispanics.

Who are the 20th century’s most influential Christians?

According to Christian History magazine, Evangelist Billy Graham tops the list of the 10 most influential Christians of the 20th century.

Scholar C. S. Lewis, African-American Pentecostal minister William Seymour, and Mother Teresa rank second, third, and fourth. Christian thinker Karl Barth ranks fifth, followed by Pope John XXIII, Soviet novelist Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Evangelist John R. Mott, and Pope John Paul II.

Ministers can revoke an exemption from social security

—In December, President Clinton signed the “Ticket to Work Act” into law. The Act has a provision that allows ministers to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes by filing a form with the IRS by Apr. 15, 2002. Some pastors chose this exemption when it was offered because they were conscientiously opposed to the tax.

Ministers who file the form must begin paying self-employment taxes as of either Jan. 1, 2000, or Jan. 1, 2001. To avoid paying back taxes, ministers should file the revocation form in December 2000 or January 2001, and elect to begin paying taxes as of Jan. 1, 2001.

The IRS has not yet released the form [as of printing date].

[*Church Law & Tax Report*, March/April 2000]

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**

Braun, Jerome H., to Shepherd of the Lord, Fredericksburg, Tex.
Holtan, Jeffrey O., to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.
Lindloff, Mark A., to St. Luke, Saginaw, Mich.
Marggraf, Paul H., to Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn.
Pieper, Gary L., to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio
Rockhoff, David A., to Trinity, Brillion, Wis.
Rosenbaum, Glenn T., to Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.
Russow, Richard S., to Emmanuel, Grover/St. Paul, Henry, S.D.
Satorius, Timothy J., to St. John's, Antigua
Wiederich, Larry L., to Immanuel, Tyler, Minn.

Teachers

Adelmeyer, Jennifer J., to St. John, Lomira, Wis.
Baxmann, Wayne W., to retirement
Bunde, Tracey M., to St. John, Westland, Mich.
Gray, Lisa A., to St. Mark, Brown Deer, Wis.
Hedberg, Dorothy L., to retirement
Hinz, Roger W., to retirement
Hohler, June M., to retirement
Klatt, Doris E., to retirement
Lanphear, Gerald E., to retirement
Lischka, Judith L., to retirement
Loescher, Cliss H., to Nozomi (Hope), Japan
Plath, Daniel L., to Emanuel, West St. Paul, Minn.
Sazy, Marie C., to retirement
Schultz, John R., to retirement
Siegler, Joanna R., to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Sielaff, Andrew C., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Tess, Paul A., to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.
Voecks, Marie A., to retirement
Vogel, Daniel M., to St. John, Lannon, Wis.
Wobeck, Clyde W., to retirement
Yotter, Harold D., to retirement
Zemke, Collene E., to St. Matthew, Port Washington, Wis.
Zuberbier, Theodore H., to retirement

ANNIVERSARIES

Morenci, Mich.—Trinity (50). Apr. 30. Service, 10 AM. Potluck follows. 517/458-6706.
West Allis, Wis.—Good Shepherd (75). May 14. Services, 7:45, 9:15, & 10:45 AM. May 15, 7 PM.
Alma City, Minn.—St. John (90). Apr. 9. Service, 10 AM. Potluck to follow. Former members, pastors, teachers invited.
Oak Creek, Wis.—St. John (150). Apr. 23. Easter, 6, 8, 10:30 AM. May 20. Homecoming service, 6 PM. May 21. Homecoming services, 8 & 10:30 AM. June 8. Anniversary service, 6:30 PM. June 11. Anniversary services, 8 & 9:30 AM. July 30. Picnic.
Hudson, Wis.—Emmanuel (25). May 7. Service, 10 AM. Potluck, 11:30 AM. Sept. 10. Service, 10 AM. Picnic, 11:30 AM. Dec. 3. Service, 10 AM. Catered dinner. RSVP to Steve Graczykowski, 115 Groaton Rd, New Richmond WI 54017.
Mobridge, S.D.—Zion Lutheran School (50). July 2. Service, 10 AM. Meal and program at noon. For reservations, call Ron Landis, 605/845-3904.
Sioux City, Iowa—Grace (75). July 9. Service, 10 AM. Noon meal. Anniversary service, 2:30 PM.
Goodhue, Minn.—St. John (125). July 16. Services, 10 AM & 2 PM. Noon meal.

Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.—Immanuel (100). July 16. Service, 10:30 AM. Picnic to follow. Gordon Peters, <clp1984@sault.com>.

Seaforth, Minn.—St. Paul (100). Aug. 6. Services, 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM. Catered noon meal. RSVP by July 15. Dale Arndt, 507/734-5101.

COMING EVENTS

Southwest Minn. Lutheran Chorale concerts—Apr. 9. St. John, Vesta, Minn., 3 PM. St. John, Fairfax, Minn., 7:30 PM.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Chorus tour

Apr. 12—Grace, Milwaukee, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 19—First, La Crosse, Wis., 7:30 PM
 Apr. 20—St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb., 6 PM
 Apr. 21—Good Shepherd, St. Peters, Mo., 7 PM
 Apr. 23—St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill., 9 AM; Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich., 7:30 PM
 Apr. 24—St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio, 7:30 PM
 Apr. 25—Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich., 7 PM
 Apr. 26—Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., 10 AM; Bethel, Bay City, Mich., 7 PM
 Apr. 27—Trinity, Minocqua, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 28—St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn., 12:15 PM; Trinity, St. Paul, Minn., 7:30 PM
 April 29—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 7 PM
 Apr. 30—St. Mark, Watertown, Wis., 3:30 PM; Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, 7 PM

National Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention—June 23-25. Nashville Music City Sheraton, Nashville, Tenn. Gloria Knoll, 920/739-5108.

Martin Lutheran Academy reunion—July 7-8. For 1972-1978 graduates. Hosted by class of 1975. Beth Leyrer, 608/836-3373.

Workshops for organists and choir directors—

July 8—St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.
 July 15—St. Peter, Savanna, Ill.

Hosted by Western Wisconsin District Commission on Worship. Sessions include new choral/organ music, practical helps for service playing, choral directing. \$15 per person or \$30 for two or more from same congregation. Franklin Zabell, 920/261-2131.

Women's retreat—sponsored by St. Mark's, Citrus Heights, Calif. Sept. 29-Oct. 1. Hayes Mansion Conference Center, San Jose, Calif. Kathy Taylor, 916/961-7891.

Study tour—"In the footsteps of St. Paul" through Greece and Turkey. Dec. 26, 2000-Jan. 6, 2001. \$2,200-2,400. Led by Martin Luther College professors Glen Thompson and Mark Lenz, <lenzmj@mlc-wels.edu>.

AVAILABLE

Monthly on-line newsletter—about missions in Mexico City. Tim Flunker, Mexico City. Send e-mail address to <flunker@netservice.com.mx>. No attachments. Please notify if unable to receive pictures through e-mail.

Basketball scoreboard—St. John, Jefferson, Wis. 5 years old. 7 ft x 6 ft. John Hartwig, 920/674-2922; <stjohns@globaldialog.com>.

NEEDED

Film projector—with NPH story-strip adaptor. Lord of Lords Sunday School, Casper, Wyoming. Natalie Seiltz, 307/235-2770.

Motor homes or trailers—Willing to borrow, rent, or purchase. For Christian Life Resources, Inc. June-September. For motion

picture production in Maine. Tim Snyder, 414/774-1331; <tims@clr.wels.net>.

Vans—15 passenger, 1 white delivery, multiple 24-foot moving/pick-up trucks (including crew cabs). For Christian Life Resources, Inc. June-September. For motion picture production in Maine. Willing to borrow, rent, or purchase. Tim Snyder, 414/774-1331; <tims@clr.wels.net>.

Drivers—Drive vehicles to and from Maine for motion picture production. June-September. For Christian Life Resources, Inc. Expenses covered. Tim Snyder, 414/774-1331; <tims@clr.wels.net>.

The Lutheran Hymnal, Agenda, & The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal—Red. Roger, 715/823-2245.

SERVICE TIMES

Holland, Mich.—Tulip Time visitors to Holland, Mich. Lord of Life (ELS), Holland, Mich. Sunday service, 9 AM. 290 E 18th St; 616/395-5275; <www.lordlife.org>.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Grace. Sunday services, 8, 9:30, & 11 AM. Bible classes, 9:30 & 11 AM. Sunday school, 9:15 AM. Fellowship time, 9:30, 10:30-11 AM.

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

Bella Vista, Ark.—Beautiful Savior. Now meets at the Wesleyan church, 107 Trafalgar Road. Sunday service, 8 AM. 501/876-2155.

NAMES WANTED

NW Wyoming—Resurrection, Powell, Wyo. Services, 2nd and 4th Sundays. Ken Nelson, 406/222-3372.

Bella Vista, Ark.—Beautiful Savior, PO Box 5215, Bella Vista AR 72714; 501/876-2155.

Fort Riley/Manhattan, Kan.—Phil Hirsch, 785/770-9656.

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

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

POSITION AVAILABLE

Food service director—Bethany Lutheran College. Applications being accepted for position in Marvin M. Schwan Retreat and Conference Center. Deadline, May 15. Send resume to: Ted Manthe, director, Marvin M. Schwan Retreat & Conference Center, N10884 Hoinville Rd, Trego WI 54888. 800/577-4848.

CORRECTION

Rachel Huebner was incorrectly reported (Feb., 2000) as accepting a call to be a teacher at Emanuel, New London, Wis. Huebner actually accepted a call to serve as a parish music coordinator.

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

Face to face with God

Remember that before God you have only one plea: you are a sinner declared not guilty because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Jon D. Buchholz

Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me" (Job 38:1-3).

What is it like to come face to face with God? To be called to give an account of your life on earth?

That's no hypothetical question. The date of our summons to stand in the divine courtroom will arrive unexpectedly. It won't be long before we appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Job questions God

Job figured he had a case to plead before God. With self-justifying indignation, Job was convinced he was getting the short end of God's stick. He deserved better from his Maker than this misery and suffering. No more shabby treatment for Job; he was ready to take his stand and demand his due. "I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. . . . I would give him an account of my every step; like a prince I would approach him" (Job 31:35,37).

Job forgot an important fact: Human encounters with the God who is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29) are rarely pleasant. Scripture is full of historical accounts relating what happens when sinful humans meet a glorious and holy God.

Adam and Eve fled in terror from the sound of God's presence. The children of Israel cowered in fear as the glory of God cloaked Mount Sinai. When Isaiah glimpsed a vision of God's throne room he reckoned himself as good as dead. The clash between human sin and divine holiness results in a terrifying experience for the sinner who stands before his holy judge.

"Brace yourself like a man!" declares the Lord. Where is the puny creature who dares to question his Creator? What ignorant fool presumes to question the decrees of the Almighty? "Tell me, Job," says God, "just who do you think you are?"

We stand with Jesus before God

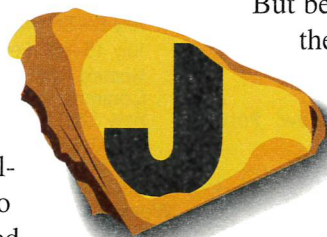
How far Job had fallen! The same man who so beautifully confessed his faith in the living Redeemer, had fallen into Satan's trap. When Satan couldn't succeed in getting Job to despair, he managed to lure him into a sense of self-righteous indignation. Job forgot his place before God, and when he fell, he fell hard.

Do you ever catch yourself getting too big for your britches? Earthly successes inspire overconfidence in our own abilities. We forget that we are only creatures whom our Creator has chosen to

bless. Life's problems and perceived injustices make us feel as if God owes us something better. It doesn't hurt to hear God ask, "Just who do you think you are?"

Remember that before God we have only one plea: we are sinners declared not guilty for the sake of Christ, our righteousness. We have no account to give of our lives other than the perfect life that Jesus lived for us and his innocent death as payment for our sins. On that fast-approaching day when we stand in the heavenly courtroom, we will stand before Jesus our judge. This is for certain.

But best of all, we will stand in the divine tribunal with Jesus at our side—Jesus our advocate, Jesus our Savior, Jesus our friend.



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

For further study: Read Job 38-41

Next month: Blessings beyond belief

The manly thing to do

“It was enough to make grown men cry.” The words imply that grown men don’t cry very easily.

Think of pictures you’ve seen that might make grown men cry. Would it be the newspaper picture of a child, cradled lovingly, but lifelessly, in a fireman’s arms? The implication might be that only scenes like this make grown men cry. Any other reason, it might be suggested, is unmanly.

Would you call Peter unmanly? His words were brave, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

Peter was a macho man. “Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear.” Did it make Peter unmanly, then, when, after denying Jesus, “he went outside and wept bitterly”?

I hope that you answered, “No.” I hope that you would also not think it unmanly to show love. Peter also loved.

After Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples went fishing. In the dawn’s early light, they noticed a shadowy figure on the shore. “It’s the Lord!” John said. Immediately, over the side of the boat went Peter, so anxious was he to be at his Savior’s side. He wanted to show his love for Jesus.

So, when moments later Jesus questioned Peter’s love for him, it had to come as quite a shock. “Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”

The word for love the Savior used meant the kind of limitless love God has for us. Peter responded, “Yes,” with a lesser word, friendship-love. The Lord repeated his question, using the same word for love. Peter responded as he had before. But when the Lord repeated the question the third time, he adopted Peter’s lesser word for love, friendship-love.

The Lord’s third repetition would hurt even if it only reminded Peter of his three-fold denial of Jesus. But the hurt went deeper. Jesus was questioning if Peter even had friendship-love for him.

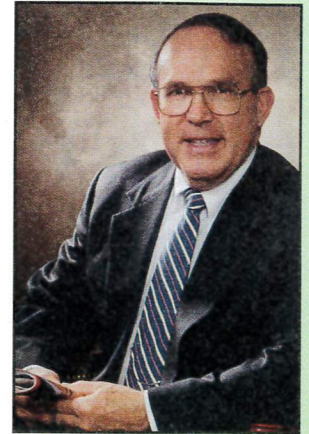
Wouldn’t that be a fair question for the Lord to ask us, too? Just as with Peter, his question reveals our crying need for his forgiving love. But he pardons us, drying our tears, and giving us all opportunities to thank him, and reflect his love in our love for him and for others.

That’s another goal we set for ourselves under our synod’s Mission Statement, “To encourage and equip each other for the application of our faith, reflecting Christ’s love in lives of Christian service to the Lord, his Church, and his world.”

I’m privileged to see it happening. Each time a natural disaster, tornado, hurricane, or flood, occurs, your love and compassion are evident in generous gifts to the synod’s Relief Fund. The people of St. Peter, Minn., or Oakfield, Wis., and the members of our mission in Antigua, are eternally grateful for the earthly assistance you offered them. Through the humanitarian aid offered in such places as Africa, Bulgaria, and Russia, people are not just helped physically. They are shown the love of Jesus, the same love that draws us to him and to them.

So this Easter season, it’s not unmanly, or unwomanly, to cry, seeing the misery our sin made in this world and the death it caused our Savior. But it’s not unmanly either to show love for a Savior who, by his death and resurrection, sealed to us forgiveness and eternal life.

Let’s reflect Christ’s love. In deeds of Christian charity, let our love shine forth for the Lord, his Church, and his world as we move forward in Christ.



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

It’s all right
to cry, seeing
the misery
our sin made
in this world
and the death
it caused
our Savior.

Reckoning time and the time of reckoning

John F. Brug

How do we figure the three days and three nights between Christ's death and resurrection? Some claim that Jesus could not have died on Friday if he was in the tomb three days and three nights.

It is clear that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, Sunday. The New Testament frequently says Jesus rose on the third day. By Jewish reckoning the "first day" would then be Friday. The day of his death was also the day of preparation for the Sabbath. This seems to refer to the regular weekly Sabbath, not to a special festival day, so the day of his death was Friday. It has also been the consensus of the church and of scholars throughout the ages that Jesus died on Friday.

The single plausible objection to this is Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:40 where Jesus says that he will be three days and three nights in the earth as Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish. This leads some to claim that if Jesus arose on Sunday, he must have been in the grave Saturday night, Friday night, and Thursday night. Therefore, we should celebrate Maundy Wednesday and Good Thursday.

This objection does not carry much weight when one examines the evidence of Jewish usage. In the Talmud, Rabbi Eleazar Ben Azariah, who lived in the first century A.D., states, "A day and night are an Onah [a unit of time] and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it." There is considerable evidence that "three

days," "on the third day," "after three days," and "three days and three nights" all refer to the same time, namely, part of three calendar days (Esther 4:16 and 5:1). This is discussed in considerable detail in Harold Hoehner's *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, p. 65-74.

It is not a doctrine of faith that Jesus died on any particular day of the week.

Matthew 12:40 must be interpreted according to the idiom of the time, not our idiom. This single reference that is, at best, uncertain in meaning does not seem sufficient to overthrow the preponderance of evidence that Jesus died on Friday.

There is no harm in believing that three nights must include parts of three literal nights. It really does not make any difference on what day of the week Jesus died, any more than it matters whether he was born on Dec. 25 or some other day. It is not a doctrine of faith that Jesus died on any particular day of the week. The preponderance of evidence, however, is that there is no need for the church to change its chosen day of commemoration from Good Friday to Good Thursday.

Where in the Bible does the doctrine of the rapture come from?

The Bible does not teach a rapture of the kind taught by many millen-

nialists, namely, the claim that all true believers will suddenly be removed from the world before the times of tribulation that will come during the last days of the earth.

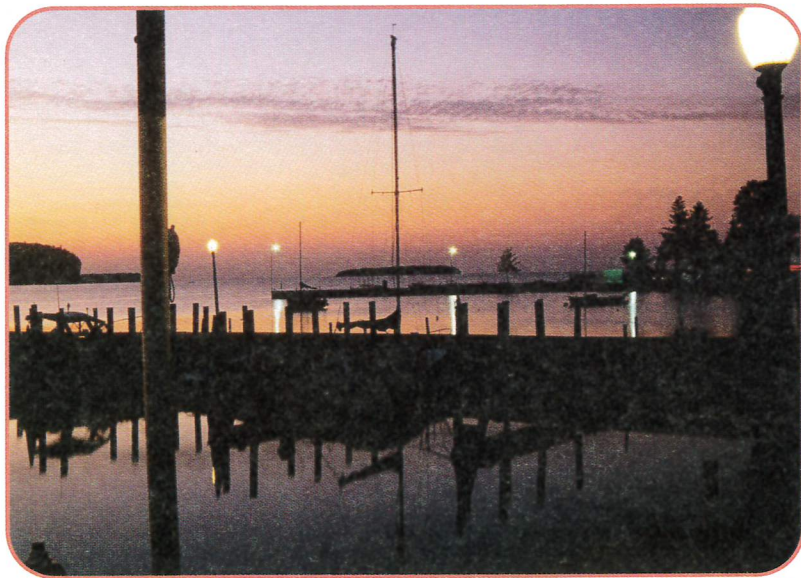
The Bible does say that the angels will gather all people together to be judged when Christ returns. As part of this gathering, all believers will be gathered together to meet Christ in the air as he comes to the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). This, however, is not a separate event from Judgment Day as many millennialists wrongly teach. There is only one return of Christ, the one Last Day during which all the events associated with Christ's return will occur.

The word "rapture" means "to carry up." It could, therefore, be used to describe the gathering of believers on the Last Day. We usually don't use the term, however, because of the misuse of the term by those who claim that there is a "rapture" separate from the Last Day.



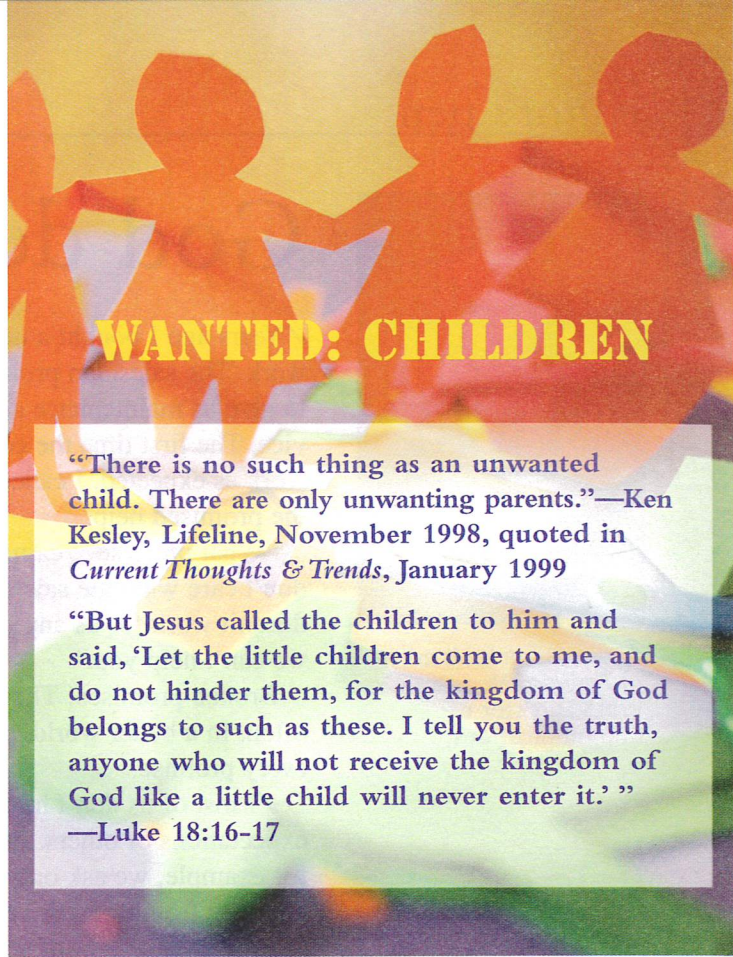
John Brug is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

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



Taken in Door County, Wis., during a completely unplanned stop at an ice cream shop. It was one of those scenes where all you can say is simply: "Thanks, Lord."—Brian Carter, Greenfield, Wis.

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.



WANTED: CHILDREN

"There is no such thing as an unwanted child. There are only unwanting parents."—Ken Kesley, *Lifeline*, November 1998, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, January 1999

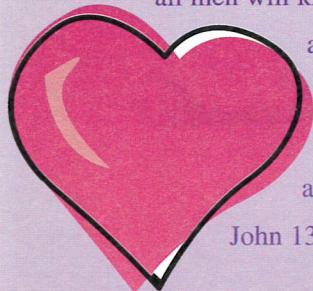
"But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' "

—Luke 18:16-17

Love one another

"If you are silent, be silent from love. If you accuse, accuse from love. If you correct, correct from love. If you spare, spare from love. Let love be rooted deep in you, and only good can grow from it."— St. Augustine

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."—
John 13:34-35



A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR.

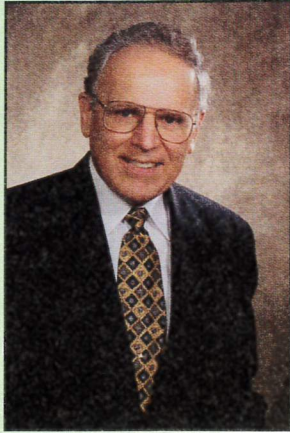
A Fort Lauderdale advertising agency launched a billboard campaign (including the inside and outside of buses) that included 17 different messages from God. An anonymous client sponsored this non-denominational campaign. Some examples include:

- Let's Meet At My House Sunday Before the Game.—God
- We Need To Talk.—God
- What Part of "Thou Shalt Not . . ." Didn't You Understand?—God
- Need Directions?—God
- Loved The Wedding, Invite Me To The Marriage.—God
- My Way IS The Highway.—God
- That "Love Thy Neighbor" Thing, I Meant It.—God
- Tell The Kids I Love Them.—God
- Big Bang Theory, You've Got To Be Kidding.—God
- Have You Read My #1 Best Seller? There Will Be A Test.—God

Some we'd like to add:

- You've fallen, and I can help you up.—God
- I'd like you to meet my Son.—God

- Have I got news for you.—God
- Yes, it is that easy.—God



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

In Jesus,
God has
exceeded
all our
expectations.

God delivers

✓Years ago I bought a new computer for work. The salesman promised personally to give us maintenance and support service. The first time the computer didn't work as expected, I called the company for the promised help.

"What promise?" came the reply. "We don't care what the salesman said. He doesn't work for us any more. Sorry, we can't help you."

Broken promises! They occur all too often. In a better world, people will keep every promise.

✓Most of us don't have really high expectations of others. In our daily drive, for example, we ask only for common courtesy from other drivers: signal for lane changes, yield right of way, don't tailgate. But about the third time a driver cuts us off without warning, we not only revise our expectations but we threaten to retaliate. What a relief when a driver goes out of her way to give us room to drive.

Things work the best when we exceed expectations. Give people more and better than they expect.

✓Do you wonder sometimes what's really behind the walls of the house you've bought or what's under the fresh paint job? In our home, there is a spot on the floor where you can feel a lump under the carpet. Apparently the workers didn't care as long as it didn't show.

Wouldn't it be nice always to get flaw-free products?

Some businesses have caught on to the dynamics at work above. They have found that the best way to succeed in business is to keep every promise, exceed expectations, and provide flaw-free products.

But they never quite reach their goals. They don't because they must use people who, by nature, fudge on promises, disappoint on expectations, and are themselves flawed. Yet we're happy just to see them try.

How much happier we are to have the real thing! What is an ideal formula for business success is the ideal fulfilled by our God.

• **God keeps every promise.** Was Jesus born of a virgin of David's line in Bethlehem? God promised it. Did Jesus live, suffer, and die as our substitute for our sin? It's as God said. All the Old Testament promises of the Messiah came true in Christ. All the promises of God since then also stand true. Jesus, for example, is always with us and is coming again visibly—as promised. He sees to all our cares—as promised.

• **God exceeds our expectations.** What most people expect from God is that, at best, we can try to earn his goodwill. When that fails, we can expect only the worst. But who would expect God to send his only Son into the world to save us? We could never expect God's Son to die for us, but he did. Even Jesus' closest friends didn't expect Jesus would rise from the dead, but he did. We can hardly expect God to care about our daily troubles, but he does. In Jesus, God has exceeded all our expectations.

• **God provides flaw-free products.** One look at his followers to this day may make us wonder, but it's true. God's Word will never run down or stop working in any part. God's Son, Jesus Christ, lived among us free from all the flaws of sin. Now, for his sake, God counts that flaw-free nature as ours. And, just as Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to glory, so we will one day enjoy a flaw-free resurrection body with him in heaven.

How can we be so sure? The crucified Christ completes the deal, and the risen Christ seals it.

Gary P. Baumler

STRENGTHEN

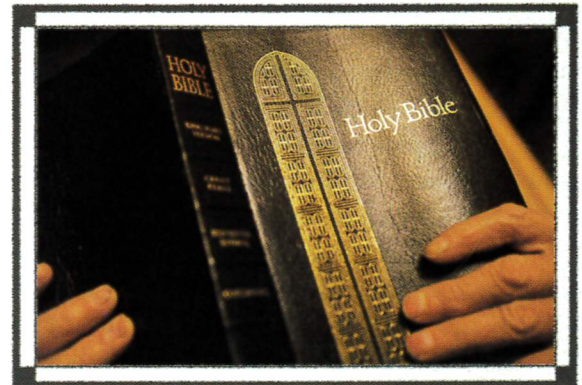
a congregation's ministry of the Word so that believers are fed and preserved in faith.

ENCOURAGE

each other to grow in grace through regular and personal study and application of scriptural truth.

EQUIP

ourselves with the good news of salvation.



HIS WORD—MY LIFE Repeating Courses for Adult Bible Study

The "revolving door" approach offers several entry points to new students while encouraging a certain degree of commitment once enrolled. These courses have such value in the spiritual growth of Christians that a congregation will want to offer them in a rotational sequence. The topics chosen offer a balanced introduction to Scripture, complementing a Basic Instruction Course (BIC), while whetting the appetite for further study.

Contact the Commission on Adult Discipleship at 414-256-3278 to order, or for more information.

OTHER RESOURCES:

Commission on Adult Discipleship

- Annual Stewardship Program
- 414-256-3278

Commission on Evangelism

- Church in Action
 - School of Outreach
- 414-256-3287

Commission on Youth Discipleship

- Strengthening Sunday School
 - Youth Retention
- 414-256-3274

Commission on Parish Schools

- Come Meet our Family
 - Nurture: Early Childhood Handbook
- 414-256-3223

Commission on Worship

- Come Worship Christ
 - Festive Communion Arrangements
- 414-256-3226

Commission on Special Ministries

- Special Education Resources
 - Ministry-By-Mail
- 414-256-3241

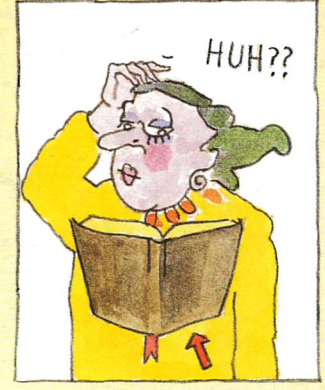
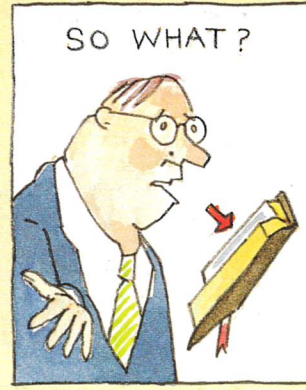
Parish Services

- Parish Assistance
 - Leadership Retreats
 - Elders Training
 - Men's Retreats
- 414-256-3229

CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE *HMPH!!*

Rejection of evidence—both scientific and biblical—can have consequences.

Carl R. Henkel



In the 1600s, Galileo built an improved telescope. With it he proved to his own satisfaction that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the planetary system.

The evidence was clear, but Galileo's colleagues could not be convinced. There were four major reactions to Galileo's theory:

1) Some simply refused to look through the telescope. They reasoned that if they did not look, the whole thing might just go away. They hid from the evidence.

2) A few looked through the telescope and claimed to see nothing. They preferred not to see the obvious.

3) A number never got around to answering Galileo's invitation to look through the telescope. They were sure nothing was there anyway. They prejudged the whole matter.

4) A small group never had seen a telescope, but they were sure it was an invention of Aristotle. Their ignorance was the deep-down, locked-in, sealed up variety.

Rejecting the resurrection *SO WHAT?*

It seems to me that many consider the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in similar ways. Some hide from all the clear, biblical evidence. They refuse to look into the empty

tomb. They refuse to accept the recorded accounts of his numerous post-Easter appearances.

Some look at the biblical evidence of Jesus' resurrection from the dead but see nothing. They choose not to see the obvious. They close their eyes and cover their ears. You won't find them in church on Sunday mornings, not even Easter.

A much greater number of people just never stop to consider the resurrection of Jesus and its impact on their own lives. They prejudge the Bible to be "just another book" or "just another person's opinion." They wonder why some folks get so excited about a story (myth?) that tells of a man from Israel coming back to life nearly 2,000 years ago.

And, yes, unfortunately some in the world are still totally ignorant of the Bible, of Christianity, and of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Rejoicing in the resurrection *HUH??*


I hope it's much different for you. I hope you truly believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross on Good Friday, came forth bodily from the grave on Easter Sunday. Alive!

I pray that you believe that he died to take away all your sins and rose

again to assure you that everything he said was true. I pray that you find the certain hope of your own resurrection to eternal life in Jesus' resurrection. I pray that you feel "connected" to Jesus' death and resurrection through your baptism.

Do you feel sorry for those who do not share your conviction that Jesus died—and is alive again? Do you wish that they could share your joy in Jesus' resurrection and your hope in his promise to take you to be with him in heaven? What must it be like for those who regard Easter as just another day?

I read someplace that there are still educated(?) people who believe that the earth is the center of the universe. In spite of the evidence to the contrary, they cling to their erroneous "faith." Not even undeniable scientific evidence has convinced them that they are wrong.

Far more serious are the consequences to those who reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pray for them, won't you? Share your faith with them, and pray for the Spirit to make that faith alive in them also. 

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