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# FORWARD IN CHRIST

May 2000

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

Seeking  
the straying

Ministry  
by walking  
around

Dangerous  
prayers



*'Til death us do part*



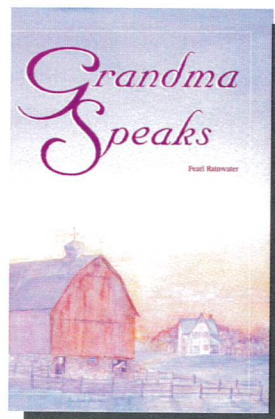
# What Goes Around Comes Around



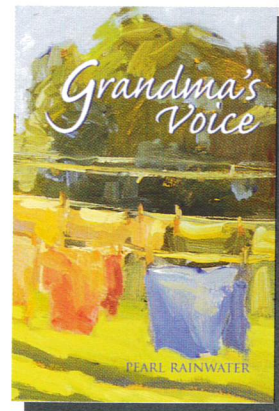
Remember when your mother said, "Someday you'll have children, and you'll get what's coming to you." I can hardly wait for great-grandchildren!

—a portion of "What Goes Around Comes Around" from *Grandma's Voice*.

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# Living stones

*As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4,5*

Eric S. Hartzell

**Y**ou don't hear it much any more, but people used to weigh themselves and other things in stones. A stone, as a measure of weight, stood for 20 pounds.

Stone stands for many things. It stands for what is lifeless . . . *as dead as a stone*, for what is hard . . . *as hard as stone*, for the absence of motion . . . *as still as stone*, for cold . . . *as cold as stone*. Something about the nature of stone makes it useful to spruce up our descriptions.

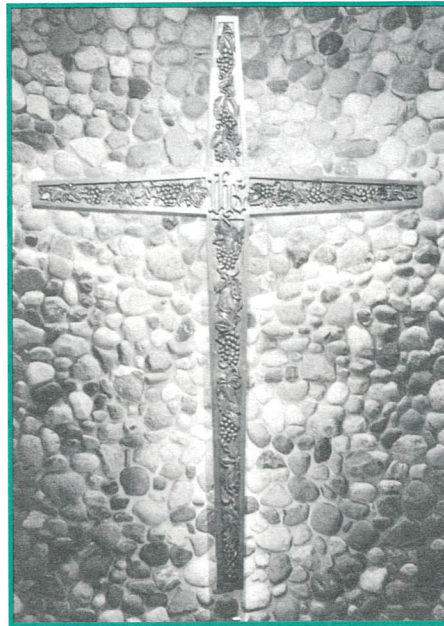
## Jesus is our living Stone

God describes us as living stones. The Lord of creation does something impossible and reverses the very nature of stone—to be dead and motionless and cold—and makes it live.

Our Father did this by taking his own living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, and doing the unimaginable. He gave his living Stone to die so that all the dead stones could live. That is how he valued us and how he made us to live.

## We are living stones

He then fits us stones into the wall of his spiritual house. He builds that house. We are part of it. We are not part of it because somehow from the silent rock pile of this world we volunteered. We did not get into the



right shape or color by ourselves. The Lord saw something that he was going to do with us when he chose us to be stones in his house.

Jesus threatened to turn the stones along the roadway into talking and praising stones on Palm Sunday, and those stones would have praised him! So the living stones in the spiritual house of God talk from their niches in the wall. They even sing! They speak about the one who chose them and brought them to this noble use and honorable place. They praise his goodness in choosing them. They praise his knowledge in finding just the right place for them to fit into his house.

Stones also stand up. Living stones support the wall of God's house. They hold up under affliction and pressure. They fulfill the very idea of perseverance—they stay under the burden and don't give way. The one who chose them made it their nature to hold up and stand up. "Having done all, to stand," the apostle Paul said.

Living stones are beautiful. God looks at his living stones, and they look beautiful to him, of inestimable worth.

In 1871 Sir Henry Morton Stanley pushed into the interior of Africa looking for an explorer who was thought to be lost. On the shores of Lake Tanganyika he found him. As he shook hands, he said the now famous words, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" Livingstone was his name . . . David Livingstone to be exact.

Living stone is your name, fellow Christian. You have the privilege of making the same presumption that Stanley did when you come upon another believer in Jesus. "A living stone, I presume?" What a great way to see another believer in Jesus, the living Stone. What a positive presumption to make!

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



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What should  
you look for  
in your search  
for an ideal  
spouse?

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Cover photo by Expressly Portraits

## bits & pieces



Marriage is a big step. The vows say, "As long as you both shall live," not "as long as you both feel like it." Mark Paustian, using some of his own personal experiences, shares things to look for when choosing a wife (p. 8). This article has something for everyone—from those thinking about marriage to those already married to those who want their children to know what to look for. Next month, we'll cover the opposite side of the coin—selecting a husband.



We start two other series this month.

- Did you know that across WELS, only 46 percent of our members come to church in any given week? Our members are straying, and we need to do something about it. In a series called "Seeking the straying," Wayne Mueller explores the proper motivation and what congregations can do when reaching out to delinquent members. Read his first article "Real church renewal" (p. 12).

- Did you ever stop and think about the history and meaning behind some of our beautiful hymns? Prof. Theodore Hartwig has, and he shares his insights in this new series, "Cherishing our heritage of hymns." His first article focuses on the Agnus Dei (p. 20).



Three informative and inspiring series end this month. We thank Forrest Bivens and John Schuetze for their series on alleged Bible contradictions, Jon Buchholz for his Bible study on the book of Job, and Wayne Laitinen for his articles on The Use of the Keys. Check out their final articles in this month's issue.



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*Mark A. Paustian*

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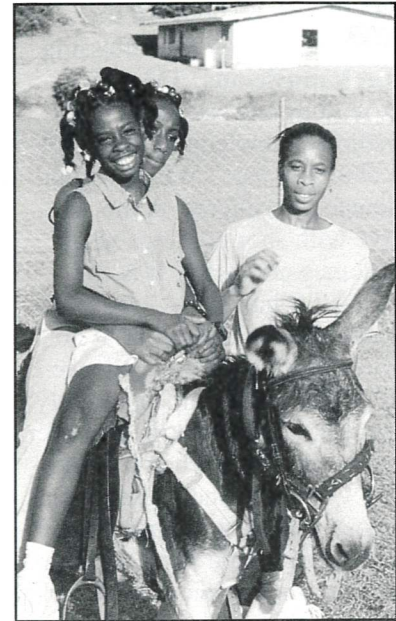
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**I would like to respond to the article “The tremendous blessing of church musicians” [March].**

Where does one see the WELS leadership acknowledging their failure in church music? WELS should first demand excellence in the arts, then live with shortcomings when that becomes necessary. It is as though WELS has for so long created its own shortcomings that it no longer recognizes what excellence is.

The WELS leadership apparently does not put much stock in a worker being due his wages when it comes to those who spend their time, talents, and money pursuing the training necessary to glorify God publicly with their music. Such musicians are called to serve, but their calls are not acknowledged.

When it comes to providing tools for excellence in sporting endeavors, WELS leadership has the ability and interest to provide funds. Yet organists are hamstrung for the essential tool of their trade like a high-quality pipe organ.

For church music to flourish in WELS, a complete change of heart has to occur with the pastors and the teachers who exercise authority over church music—a change from that which says, “I have always acknowledged that the organists in our congregation are a blessing from the Lord” to one which first asks what good they [the leaders] have failed to do before looking to others for a solution. Your shortage of talent is due to the fact that you are reaping in direct proportion to what you have sowed as leaders.

*Peter Press  
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania*

*Bryan Gerlach, Commission on Worship administrator, replies:*

*I agree with the concerns expressed—and with some of the assigned blame. Along with recognizing failures, I urge a positive approach.*

*First the failures.*

• *National and institutional WELS leadership hasn’t done enough. The Commission on Worship is looking to the Conference of Presidents for assistance and guidance.*

• *Local leadership at the parish level can do much to help. The articles in Forward/NL [March, April] encourage local progress.*

*Positive steps.*

• *Parishes will make progress by better implementing the connection between worship with the mission of the church. For assistance, see “Two Dimensional” at <www.wels.net/sab/frm-cow.html>. This includes information on compensation, the musician shortage, and the blessings through improved music/worship. A parish that sets realistic goals will, under God, see improvement.*

• *A positive approach moves from guilt or finger-pointing to rejoicing in God’s gifts, including musicians and musical instruments. How will we show that we rejoice in and value these gifts?*

*I urge leaders and musicians to work together for improvement and excellence at varying skill levels—all to the glory of our Lord.*

**After reading the article by Randall Ott [March] regarding the importance of the organist in our worship services I wanted to express a big “thank you” to him.**


Like the need for pastors and teachers, organists are also in great need.

I don’t think people realize what it takes to become an organist for the church. When we see our pastors and teachers for the first time, most have finished, (or are at least close to completing) their schooling and training. But what about the beginning organist? How do organists get started? What can we do to encourage more people to take on these positions? Have you ever thought about how many hymns or songs an organist plays in one service?

The role of the organist, like a pastor, is one of dedication and ser-

vice to the Lord, and we, too, need encouragement from fellow members to keep going. It is important for the experienced organists to start the beginning musicians slowly as to not discourage them. Pastors can also help by getting hymns to the organists well in advance to give them a chance to prepare. Members can help by being patient with the blunders that often accompany a beginning organist and by encouraging them to keep going when they feel like giving up.

*Joyce Koester*

 *Rising City, Nebraska*

**Picture this [March]**



There is no church there [now]. I lived real close to this church when I was young. I remember the tornado that took the church down. I also remember Rev. O. E. Hoffman when he was pastor there.


*Dorothy Bilse*

*Ridgeland, Wisconsin*

I believe there is an error on page 33, March 2000—“WELS in the ‘50s.” **Under 1951, either the name [Lutheran Boy Pioneers] is incorrect or perhaps the date is.**

I can vaguely remember someone calling this organization Lutheran Boy Pioneers in the ‘70s, but I believe he was “tarred and feathered” and driven from town.

*Bruce Thompson*

 *Waukesha, Wisconsin*

*The name is Lutheran Pioneers. Sorry for any confusion.—ed.*

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



# Hate crimes

Walter F. Beckmann

A new category of crime is receiving a lot of attention. It's called hate crime. A hate crime is physically or verbally abusing others because of who or what they are—because of their race or national origin or because of their religious beliefs or moral convictions. Hate crimes should be against the law and should be punished.

Hate crimes are against God's law. God's law says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." In his parable about the Good Samaritan, Jesus shows us that our neighbor is anyone who needs our help. In his explanation of the Fifth Commandment, Luther tells us that our fear and love of God should prevent us from hurting or harming our neighbor and move us to help and be a friend to him in every possible way. In Romans 13 the Lord tells us that he established civil government to protect those who try to be good neighbors and to punish those who do evil.

I get concerned, though, when I hear people suggesting that it's wrong for us to condemn sins, which God himself condemns, and that trying to call a sinner to repent of his sins is a hate crime. Is it a hate crime for a doctor to tell a patient that he has cancer and, if he doesn't have it treated immediately, he may soon die? Love and concern for the patient demands that he tell. Love and concern for our fellow sinners will move us to share with them that sin brings death and to call them to repent.

But not only is teaching God's law being called a hate crime. The same charge is being made against preaching the gospel. When we desire to share God's truth with unbelievers, we are often called arrogant for "attempting to impose our

beliefs on others." We may begin to wilt under such criticism and begin to rationalize that surely a loving God must have many ways of receiving people into heaven.

Listen instead to Jesus: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." Was Jesus guilty of a hate crime when he said, "He that believes not shall be damned"? Hardly! He spoke those words out of love for all sinners, whom he came to save from damnation by enduring damnation for them.

That loving, self-sacrificing Savior commanded us to go into all the world with his gospel and preach it to every creature. We're not just to proclaim some vague message about a Jesus who loves all people and wants them to be saved in one way or another. We are to teach exactly as he has commanded us to, as clearly as his apostles did, insisting that faith in his suffering, death, and resurrection is the only hope of salvation, that his is the only name under heaven by which we must be saved.

We are to proclaim this truth clearly and lovingly, not just to prove that we are right in our beliefs. That would be loveless and arrogant and might be viewed as a hate crime by God himself.

We are to proclaim his salvation with the same love and concern with which Christ won it. That's his great commission to us. If we were to shrink in fear that this message might not be politically correct, that would be a great omission of love. In fact, that might be the most serious hate crime of all.

*Walter Beckmann is the retirement pastor at Grace, Falls Church, Virginia.*

We are often called arrogant for "attempting to impose our beliefs on others."



# WANTED: A TRULY BEAUTI

## What to look for when choosing the woman you want to marry.

Mark A. Paustian

I married the most beautiful woman I ever met. She was charming and funny, lively and loved by all. Her greatest personal gifts were with children—an excellent sign. And her face I could look into for the rest of my life. Her heart (to say nothing of a second date) was not easily won. But when she gave it, she gave it completely.

Just a few months after the wedding, everything changed. She was diagnosed with a chronic disease I'd never heard of. Her hair fell out. She could barely walk without an arm to lean on. Many times I held her trembling body as she shrieked with pain. Children were out of the question. Tears were never far away. Heavy medications bloated her body and face. The final insult was being denied a purchase by an ignorant clerk because of her photo ID.

"I'm sorry, Ma'am, but this just isn't you."

And as much as I'd love to paint myself the hero in her story, I can't so easily forget the selfish young man, lifting my invalid bride's legs up over the side of the bed, thinking, "So this is how it's going to be."

Then everything changed again. It is now seven years of remission and two children later. Beauty and

brightness returned. And—how delightful to say it—the woman still cracks me up. Yet the experience of those first two years is not one either of us would exchange.

She found her soul's Hero there in the dark, in deeper ways than she had before.

And I found out how well I had chosen.

Now, in all humility, those painful days qualify me to speak to all the selfishly romantic men out there—I who was once your king—about the woman you will one day want to have married. "Charm is deceptive; beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30). I don't know what trials God has planned for your life or for the marriage you hope for. Here's what I do know: You will want to have married a woman of faith! You will want to be spending your days as I do, with a true Christian friend of character and depth. You will want to raise children, if God is willing, with a daughter of Christ and with a human being worthy of their imitation.

May I tell you about my wife, and paint a picture of the kind of woman who will bless you? Better yet, may I ask you a few important questions, not only about her, but also about you?

### Will you guard your heart?

Do you have any idea how much the quality and outcomes of your life will depend on the woman you choose to marry? Do you have a deep, healthy suspicion about your own judgment—how it is clouded by beauty and charm? Do you think you are immune to misery, should you decide to marry a body or mere personality? Will you withhold your commitment and guard both your heart and your conscience while "red flags"—especially unacknowledged flaws of her past or present character—are still flying?

### Are you attracted to spiritual beauty?

The apostle Peter wrote about that other kind of beauty, "that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4). Do you perceive that beauty? Will you appreciate it when it comes? Does kindness turn your head? Does goodness make your heart pound? Are you drawn to a woman's joy?

I am not saying that you look for perfection in any woman! But, do look for this: *does her sin sometimes break her heart?* Is she more easily bothered by things she sees wrong in herself than in others? Does repentance come to her, sudden and sincere?



# FUL WIFE



*And does she know what grace is?* Have you sat beside her in church and felt her spirit soften and her mind made quiet by the word of Christ? Does absolution ever make her cry? Can she speak openly and warmly of him who loved her first?

Does she forgive you freely and completely? Does she submit herself to the Word? Would she refuse to live a secular life: to ever be drawn into a life lived without the means of grace? Will she depend on you to be her happiness: a subtle idolatry that will surely become an ugly demand? Or does she already have a Savior?! Then the Spirit's fruit is already being formed in her.

## Will she help you be a godly man?

Is that what she wants you to be? Does she want you to be, before anything else, a faithful Christian man? Or does she perhaps want a pleasant coward that she can lead around . . . or a worldly man so that her worldliness stays unexamined? When you are faced with a moral dilemma affecting your advancement or the income you bring home, what will she want you to do? And will she, in turn, compromise her conscience for you . . . or won't she?

Does she long to be able to respect you? Does her influence tug in the direction of Christ's example? Does that influence come by means of a critical spirit or by the admiration

she wants to be able to show you?

"Follow me as I follow Christ"—is that just what she longs to hear from you? Is it easy to imagine her coming to you, her head, and putting the Word in your hand, whispering, "Read to me, sweetheart"?

## But will such a woman be attracted to you?

Ah, there's the rub. There's more to choosing a wife than just choosing a wife. Give your attention to becoming a man of such faith and character that a woman of faith and character would choose you. That means daily repentance that takes you back to the means of grace. That means worship and spiritual growth through the Word. That means living the new life as a single Christian man, as it springs up from the soil of forgiveness in Jesus. Then you prayerfully wait and watch for this woman. And you do this out of a new and holy desire to bless someone, to learn to love one person, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

## Unfading beauty

She made her way slowly, painfully across the chapel in front

Mark and Connie Paustian

of an aching congregation, to play her Lord Christ a song on the piano. That was eight years ago. Now she comes into my office fighting back tears. She happened to overhear our two-year-old, sitting alone outside, a hotdog in her lap, praying all by herself.

"And she folds her hands and starts to pray, 'Come, Lord, Jesus. . . .' Isn't it beautiful?" she barely manages.

"Yes, my bride . . . it is."

Beauty unfading.

Men of the church, choose well. And may you be so blessed.

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





# Small in size, large in faith

Though the smallest district geographically, the Northern Wisconsin District is large in blessings, challenges, and ministry opportunities.

Julie K. Tessmer

Sometimes big things do come from small packages. Although it's the smallest district geographically, the Northern Wisconsin District is large numerically, counting the most baptized souls of any district.

But the Northern Wisconsin District isn't just large in number. It's large in blessings, challenges, and ministry opportunities.

## Abundant blessings

Blessings abound for the Northern Wisconsin District and have since its establishment in 1917:

- Fifty-eight Lutheran elementary schools and three large area Lutheran high schools help lead the district's youth. All three high schools are

either planning or in the midst of building projects to provide space and a better quality education for more students.

- Concentrated areas of churches have allowed for a close-knit connection between congregations. "[Church members] can drive across town and say, 'Hey, I got a problem. How would you handle this?'" says Douglas Engelbrecht, Northern Wisconsin District president. "In the South Atlantic District, you may have to drive 300 miles to get to the nearest congregation."

- Historic churches are well-grounded and stable. The most prevalent type is the well-established country or small town church.

- Faithful pastors keep every congregation rooted in God's Word.

## Big challenges

But with the blessings come the challenges.

- An age-long, synod-wide problem is how to keep youth involved in

the church. This problem stands out in the Northern Wisconsin District because "some congregations are graying," said Engelbrecht. "What happens when the gray hairs are gone? Will there be people with hair to replace them?"

- Along with having schools comes supporting them financially. Funding the church, an elementary school, an area Lutheran high school, and the synod puts a strain on many congregations. "We need to keep encouraging them that all these things are important and that they can all be done with the Lord's help," says Engelbrecht.

- Sometimes the closeness in location of the churches leads congregations to take each other for granted.

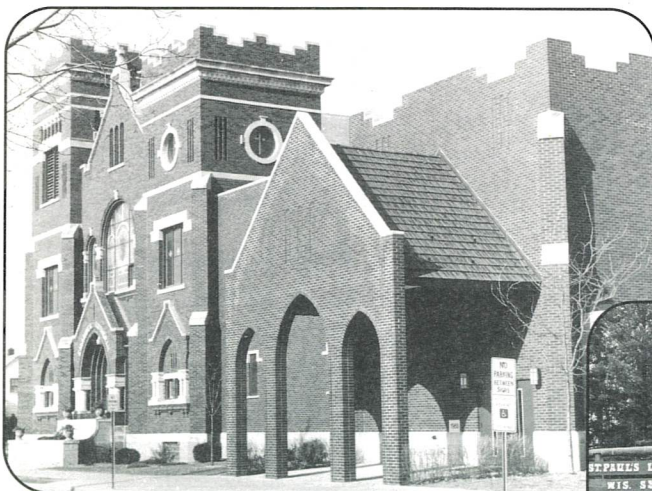
- Keeping a mission mindset in an old district with well-established churches can be difficult. Besides, many of the people around the Northern Wisconsin District churches are already "churched."

## Lots of ministry

But these challenges don't stop the congregations in the Northern Wisconsin District. As Engelbrecht says, "There's an awful lot of ministry going on."

Some ministries work at revitalizing the younger generation.

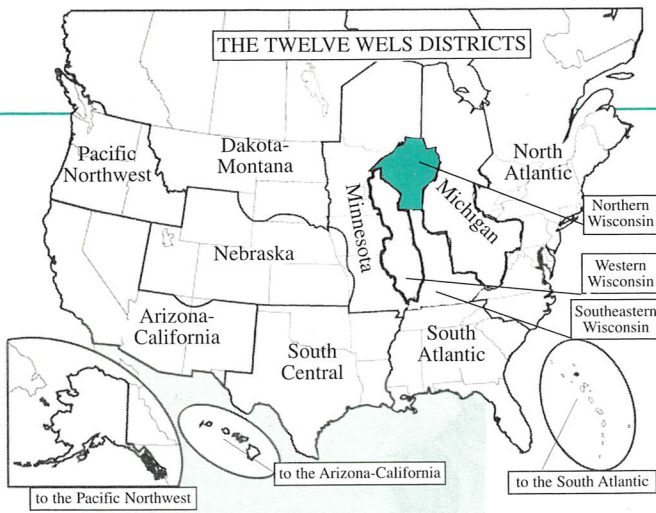
- St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., is reaching out to Generation X, people between the ages of 25



The Northern Wisconsin District contains both small and large churches. St. Paul, Tipler, Wis., (right) is an old-fashioned log cabin church with about 30 members. Emanuel, New London, Wis., (top) is a large church with over 3,400 members.







■ Northern Wisconsin District

**Stats at a glance**  
**Northern Wisconsin District**

Conferences: 5  
Circuits: 14  
Congregations: 153  
Mission churches: 3  
Exploratory churches: 2

Baptized members: 78,040  
Communicant members: 60,969  
Average attendance: 42.6%  
Pastors: 161

Adult baptisms: 76  
Adult confirmations: 494

Sunday school enrollment: 5,983  
Bible class attendance (teens): 481  
Bible class attendance (adults): 6,117

Early childhood education schools: 45  
Lutheran elementary schools: 58  
Area Lutheran high schools: 3

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

and 39, through worship.

“We take the biblical principles of worship and use them aptly in a contemporary society,” says John Parlow, pastor at St. Mark. This more relaxed style of service includes PowerPoint technology, a question and answer period after the sermon, and some contemporary music in a liturgical format.

Since many of the 85 to 100 weekly visitors are unfamiliar with the Bible and its teachings, St. Mark uses more of a teaching style in its services, in “an effort to help our

guests as well as our members better understand how his story applies to their personal story at the club Thursday night or in the office Monday morning.” Ten weekly Bible classes are also offered.

St. Mark has been growing rapidly, gaining over 500 new members—the majority under 35 years old—in the last five years.

- The University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh campus ministry has served WELS students for 65 years. But it doesn’t just preach to its own. “Outreach is the #1, #2, and #3 priority here,” says Robert Diener, campus pastor at the University Chapel. “We’re always looking for new ways to share the gospel on campus.”

Recently this ministry discovered a new way—reaching out to international students. This school year, the chapel began monthly activities for international students. Thirty to 40 have attended. Although few have attended chapel services, the groundwork is being laid. “We want to let them know that Christians are warm and loving people,” says Diener. International students also have begun asking religious questions, giving Diener and students chances to witness.

Working with international students helps WELS students gain valuable multi-cultural experience they can use throughout their lives.

Others are rekindling the mission spirit.

- Although Emanuel, New London, Wis., is still reaching out in its community, it is also setting its mission sites outside of the Northern Wisconsin District to Grenada, an island in the Caribbean. The congregation

has “adopted” part of the outreach to Grenada by funding needed supplies and by sending outreach crews to help minister to the people. This gives Emanuel’s members another outlet for their growing faith and an opportunity to do personal mission work in another culture and country.

Still others are reaching out to the different cultures in their midst.

- Since 1983, First German, Manitowoc, Wis., has been reaching out to the Hmong in their area. It all started with a simple invitation to vacation Bible school to a Hmong family. Now, 17 years later, 69 Hmong—30 of whom are confirmed—attend First German.

Nau Lee, a Hmong member, is serving as an evangelist intern at First German. When not taking courses toward becoming an evangelist, he leads weekly worship services and adult information class in Hmong. About 70 Hmong attend worship every week.

Fox Valley area (Appleton, Neenah, Menasha, Hortonville) congregations are also banding together to spread the gospel to the Hmong in their area.

These few examples of how the Northern Wisconsin District congregations are spreading the Word show that big things do come from small packages.

The small package—the Bible, God’s all-powerful Word.

The big thing—eternal life to all who believe it.



*Julie Tessmer is senior communications assistant for Forward/NL and WELS Communication Services.*



# REAL CHURCH RENEWAL

Do our efforts to reach out to sinners “out there” ring true if we do not reach out to the sinners “in here”?

Wayne D. Mueller



**A**t the back door of your church lies one of the most compelling opportunities for spiritual revitalization.

## The opportunity

Who, these days, doesn't want their congregation revitalized? Poor worship attendance is glaring. Across our synod, only 46% of our members come to their Father's house in any given week. And, less than half of those who come are every-Sunday worshippers.

The resultant weakness in our parishes is equally evident. Ask any church council officer how much meeting time is spent trying to carry

on full gospel ministry with less than full coffers. Willing service for our congregations is also lacking. Less than one of five of our adult members participates in any church activity apart from coming to worship. Although money is short, time is in even shorter supply with our busy schedules. So we go begging for competent Sunday school teachers, youth workers, visitors, and outreach volunteers.

Yet right at the back door of your church lies a God-given opportunity to address all these weaknesses at the source. Simple math suggests that 54% of our membership is in

immediate need of Word-based application to their sinful weakness.

## God's plea

From the pages of Scripture comes our Father's plea to reach out to the weak and straying sheep and lambs of our flocks. Jesus said that a good shepherd will leave 99 safe sheep and set out to find one that is lost. Immediately after that parable, Jesus appealed to every Christian heart to put its truth into practice: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matthew 18:12-15).



Our Savior's plea is repeated by the apostles. Paul writes, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Galatians 6:1). James echoes the invitation to seek the weak: "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from his error will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20). John records Jesus' plea to the lapsing congregation at Sardis: "You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die" (Revelation 3:1,2).

### **No silver bullet**

Some congregation leaders are looking for a silver bullet, a quick fix for the back door losses of straying members. They send out mass mailings to delinquent members that invite, threaten, or both. They pass resolutions that simply "terminate" members from whom they receive no response.

Other quick fixes involve changing external aspects of worship to make it more inviting. Parking space is added, more music and youth participation is woven into the worship services, and greeters offer the personal touch of a smile and handshake as members come to church.

But there is no silver bullet. Some quick fixes have value and in some places are long overdue. Perhaps the greatest value of external changes is that it keeps more of those who are already coming from lapsing.

But the real problem for hard core church-skippers is not parking or lack of friendliness. It is sin in the individual heart. Most delinquent members wouldn't come to church if you passed out \$20 bills. A vari-

ety of fears, deep seated guilt, anger, and personality conflicts needs to be personally and individually addressed.

### **Seed to the soil**

In early spring many gardeners bring their soil to the seed. That is, they scrape some frozen topsoil from their garden, bring it inside, and start their tomato sets with little pots in a sunlit window.

But as any good gardener or farmer knows, most of the work of growing plants involves bringing the seed to the soil. Throughout the planting season, the grower takes the seeds to the soil in his garden or field.

## **Not to confront our neighbor with his sin is politically correct but spiritually incorrect.**

This obvious truth has proved elusive to modern churches. The focus on media, a central worship place, and general administration has crowded out personal visitation ministry. Yet when the majority of our members are not being reached by these means, the Lord's cry to take the seed to the soil must echo in the ears of Christian leaders: "Leave the ninety and nine, and seek the straying."

The bad news is that our sinful flesh gravitates to what is safe, comfortable, and traditional. Not to confront our neighbor with his sin is politically correct but spiritually incorrect. This inertia leads our congregations to hold many meetings and gatherings for the safe sheep, but keeps us from reaching out to the majority who are no longer safe in the arms of the Good Shepherd.

But there is good news. First, personal visitation ministry costs little

or no money. Congregations whose budgets are already strapped need not worry that they cannot afford to visit their weak members. Visiting our members requires a lot of time, patience, and love, but little money.

Second, seeking the straying in our churches is ministry central to the heart of Christ. Jesus exemplifies, motivates, and commands concern for those who are weak in faith. "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out" (Matthew 12:20). "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). Our Savior's great commission urges us to go into all the world. But do our efforts to reach out to sinners "out there" ring true if we do not reach out to the sinners "in here"?

There is more good news. Reaching out to our own straying members is Word ministry. It brings the power of God's law and gospel to everyone involved in bringing back the lost. Those who visit on behalf of the church get into their Bibles and are strengthened in faith and knowledge for their work. Those we visit have the seed of the Word planted in the soil of their soul. The whole congregation is buoyed by members who return to worship. Attendance goes up. Offerings often increase. Through his Word, God renews his church.

More needs to be said about this pressing issue. Future articles in this series will discuss proper motive, loving procedure, and the value of church discipline.

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





# CONGREGATIONAL USE OF THE KEYS



**Though all Christians can use the keys,  
pastors exercise the widest use of the keys in public.**

**Wayne A. Laitinen**

**U**nlike the Old Testament priesthood that God set apart by gender, tribe, and special qualifications, all the New Testament people of God are "... a royal priesthood . . ." (1 Peter 2:9).

### **The many individual priests**

Therefore, all Christians have the keys. Every Christian declares the praises of our Savior-God. The believer's words and actions will reveal two chief attributes of God: his intolerance of the sinner and his mercy toward the sinner. Before long the casual observer will discover that his Christian friend has found the resolution to this apparent contradiction at the cross of Christ. God's justice against the sinner is satisfied at the cross, and God's

mercy comes to the sinner from the cross. As members of the universal priesthood, we have the glorious ministry of revealing this mystery of God's grace to the people on Main Street.

As long as the Christian is dealing individually with his fellow Christian or with the unconverted world, the universal priesthood is enough. But when the Holy Spirit turns the Christian's heart to faith in Jesus, he also plants a yearning to gather with other like-minded Christians. The early New Testament Church faithfully met in the temple courts and in each other's homes.

When they met, "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the break-

ing of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). We do the same things in church today. We gather around the preaching of God's Word, the sacraments, and prayer.

Now, if all are priests, who preaches? Who administers the sacraments and leads the assembly in prayer? We have a snapshot of the confusion in the early church in Corinth, when everyone tried to speak in the assembly at once (1 Corinthians 14:26-32). Such scenes are not unheard of today, either. The apostle Paul called for order when he wrote, "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace," and "... everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:33,40).



### The called public ministers

For the sake of peace and order in the Christian congregation, God established the public ministry. Though that ministry takes many forms (e.g., teachers, church officers, music directors), the pastor exercises the widest use of the keys in public.

The congregation calls a man to be their pastor and to use the keys on their behalf. He is to be a man of moral integrity and emotional stability, able to teach, spiritually mature, and an example of godly parenting (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). Each call outlines specific local responsibilities, but every pastor is bound to proclaim the apostolic message on behalf of the congregation. As such, he is to be regarded as servant Christ's.

Some church visitors have asked how a pastor can stand before the congregation and say, "I forgive your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." To them it seems the pastor arrogantly gives himself the power to forgive sins, which belongs to God alone. But they should listen more closely to the pastor's words: "... as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive your sins. . . ."

Since the congregation's call is also Christ's call, the pastor has the privilege and responsibility to forgive the penitent congregation in public worship. It would be the height of arrogance not to pronounce forgiveness under such circumstances. The pastor's forgiveness is as binding in heaven as if Christ himself stood at the entrance of the chancel, forgiving us with his own voice.

With that same divine authority, the pastor proclaims God's word from the pulpit and opens the kingdom of heaven to the penitent in

baptism and in the sacrament of the altar. Also, when the pastor privately "binds" the sins of the impenitent and "looses" the sins of the penitent, he speaks with the voice of the Christian congregation and the voice of Christ. Paul says, "Men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

### The ministers' call to repentance

Perhaps the least understood act of Christian love is the congregation's excommunication of the plainly impenitent. The confusion may result from two things.

First, the world is outraged that God does not tolerate his creatures' idolatry. And sometimes Christians cower under the fear of being misunderstood. This deadly yeast infected the spiritual life of the Corinthian congregation, which turned a blind eye to a member engaged in sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5).

If, as a church, we no longer call each other to repentance, all the evangelism programs and Bible classes in the world will not produce godly growth. Even strong sermons against such sins are but Eli shaking a finger in the face of his wicked sons (1 Samuel 2). What we accept becomes our message. Then, the world has a right to ask how we are essentially any different than they. The world will always misunderstand our practices until they have died to sin and been raised to faith in Christ's righteousness.

The second reason for confusion about excommunication may stem from instances where the patient persistence of Jesus (Matthew 18:15-18) was ignored by the congregation, and the binding key was used before an individual's impenitence was obvious. But God is not bound by man's

abuses. Luther was wrongly excommunicated for the plea that his church would return to the teachings of Scripture. Likewise the first Christian martyr mentioned in Scripture was put to death as a heretic. Nevertheless, when Stephen died, God granted him a preview of his heavenly inheritance (Acts 7:56). The abuse of excommunication should not make the congregation timid about its proper use any more than medical malpractice should make good doctors scuttle internal medicine altogether. It is God's strong medicine for man's stubborn unbelief.

Our catechism points out the happy goal of using the binding key: "... by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent." The powerful call of the Christian community to repent is coupled with the constant prayer that the Holy Spirit would turn the hearts of the impenitent to sincere sorrow over their sins. Then we may declare their full forgiveness and receive them at our altar once again. With the angels of heaven, we rejoice to see that day.

The past 150 years of God's blessing have come to our beloved Wisconsin Synod through the keys our Savior gave his disciples 2,000 years ago. The hymn writer urges us on:

Preach you the Word and plant it home  
To those who like or like it not,  
The Word that shall endure and stand  
When flow'rs and mortals are forgot.

Preach you the Word and plant it home  
And never faint; the Harvest-Lord  
Who gave the sower seed to sow  
Will watch and tend his planted Word.  
(*Christian Worship* 544)

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

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# God's Word remains truth

**Supposed contradictions in the Bible are less worrisome once the truth of God's Word is studied.**

Forrest L. Bivens and John D. Schuetze

**I**t was well into summer when David found enough courage to speak with his parents. Fear did not keep him silent, embarrassment did. Nine months earlier he told his parents he was sure the Bible contained contradictions. Now, after many conversations with them in person, on the phone, and via e-mail, David no longer felt that way. He knew he owed it to his parents to tell them the truth.

## A tested faith

"Mom, Dad, I want to thank you for not jumping all over me when I said that the Bible had errors and contradictions. You were kind enough to talk with me about those things, and you never lost your patience like I thought you might."

"David," Jim replied, "we should thank you. You led us to study the Bible more carefully than we normally do. We were forced to think about things we used to take for granted."

"That's true," added Joan. "At first we thought that the challenges to the Bible's integrity were simply stumbling blocks to our faith. In time we learned that they were more like steppingstones to a tested faith and expanded knowledge."

"Well, anyway, I feel differently

now," said David. "I'm not saying that everything in the Bible now makes perfect sense to me, but I'm not so quick to accuse it of contradicting itself. I also found that the college friends—and a professor or two—who were leading the attacks on the Bible soon lost interest when I offered to give possible explanations to their questions."

**Although we are unable to answer all hard questions to everyone's satisfaction, God is able to maintain trust in our Savior and his Scriptures.**

"We've all learned similar truths through this study of apparent Bible contradictions," Joan assured her son. "Your father and I have discussed this among ourselves, and we've decided that we learned a lot. Care to hear what?"

"Sure," David answered, wondering if his parents came to conclusions similar to his own.



## Four lessons of faith

Joan began. **"First, we learned something about people who are not interested in finding solutions to the so-called contradictions. They'd rather level accusations than search for the truth.** Probably many sincere people have honest questions, but many simply want to discredit the Bible because they already made up their minds to reject it. They do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because the Bible contradicts them."

**"Second, we learned a lot about ourselves," Jim added. "We learned that it is valuable to study troublesome passages prayerfully, and to do this in a spirit of humility.** God still likes to hide things from the wise and learned and reveal them to little children, as Jesus said (Matthew 11:25-26). We also learned that we don't have to be afraid when people challenge or





scoff at God's Word. We're all the more convinced that God's Word will last forever.

**“And while learning about ourselves we became more aware of a third thing,” Jim continued, “namely, our limitations. There really are ‘some things that are hard to understand’ in Scripture (2 Peter 3:16), and some of the difficulties seem to defy convenient answers. We learned that the greatest theologians and Bible scholars are not always able to harmonize all apparent discrepancies to the satisfaction of human reason. Christians cannot prove by science that all biblical scientific statements are true. We cannot always demonstrate objectively that biblical historians are correct and secular historians are wrong when there are apparent or real contradictions between them. It looks like we may have to wait until heaven to get some of the answers we seek.”**

After a brief pause, Joan proceeded to say, **“The fourth truth is by far the most important one. It deals with the main message of the Bible rather than any alleged contradiction.** The more we worked through the Bible and other material that assisted us in our research, the more we were drawn to the truth that although we are sinful, God provided a Savior in Jesus Christ. We know that it may sound a bit trite or corny, but the more we heard the truth of God's law and gospel, the more we loved the entire Bible and the less we worried about supposed contradictions. We still looked for honest answers to the questions. But we learned that although we are unable to answer all hard questions to everyone's satisfaction, God is able to maintain trust in our Savior and his Scriptures.”

### **The focus of faith**

“Maybe it's my time to sound corny—especially for a guy who is about to enter his last year of college,” answered David. “Anyway, I feel the same way. An honest look at those in my dorm and classroom who were criticizing the Bible told me that they weren't really helpful to others or happy in themselves.

And the whole idea about human sinfulness and any need for a Savior like Jesus totally freaked them out. They really got nasty about it. It got to the point where I felt like I had to choose between Jesus and that group of friends. I can't say that I'm totally at peace with things. Yet I don't want to turn my back on Christ and everything I learned about him from you and at church.”

Joan then said, “Your words remind me of something I read in one of your textbooks you left on the floor a couple months ago. In his autobiography, Ben Franklin referred to people who loved to dispute and argue things. He observed, ‘They get victory, sometimes, but they never get good will, which would be of more use to them.’ I hope we, as Christians, never forfeit people's good will by being abrasive. We're supposed to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), focus especially on Christ, and seek to serve others with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16). Our main goal is always to proclaim Christ, not to win arguments.”

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

## **guidelines**

Professors Bivens and Schuetze offer the following guidelines for personal research on alleged contradictions:

1. Be fully persuaded that an explanation or reconciliation exists.
2. Carefully study the context to ascertain the intent of the author.
3. Note parallel passages and their contexts as well.
4. Consult Bible commentaries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias.
5. Don't hesitate to ask a pastor or another respected Bible student for help or resources.
6. Remember that possible harmonizations are sufficient to meet alleged discrepancies. Our lack of certainty does not signal a biblical lack of accuracy.



# Sharing the Bread of

## Volunteers share God's Word with the spiritually hungry people of Grenada

Julie K. Tessmer

**A** toaster—a common appliance that many of us take for granted.

Not so in some Grenada communities. Some children don't even know what a toaster is. Reuel Schulz, pastor at Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis., introduced this appliance to some in Grenada and "captivated the kids with making toast."

But volunteers like Schulz are bringing more than toasters to Grenada. They're bringing the Bread of Life. Through volunteers and area lay leaders, the people of Grenada will continue receiving this staple for eternal life.

### History

WELS work in Grenada started with the Sylvester family, who lived



Gifts help our mission physically aid the people of Grenada. Many can't afford schoolbooks or uniforms. Here Reuel Schulz stands with three brothers who received books and uniforms from the mission.

in Grenada but moved to Antigua and were introduced to the clear gospel by our mission there.

When the Sylvesters moved back to Grenada, they "longed for what they had left behind—the faithfulness to Scripture in speaking of God's grace without the shackles placed on it by other churches," says David Kehl, former pastor at St. John's, Antigua, and Caribbean mission developer.

Antigua missionaries began visiting Grenada in 1988. The work stepped up in 1990 when the missionaries made weekly visits to St. Lucia, another Caribbean mission, and monthly visits to Grenada. Grenada visits were reduced when St. Lucia began to grow.

In 1999 the time was right in Grenada for a more aggressive approach—a unique approach that would benefit not only those being served, but also those who serve.

### Ministry

This approach involves using volunteer pastors, laypeople, and students to serve the people of Grenada for short periods of time instead of calling a full-time missionary.

This method is being used, Kehl says, due to high costs for full-time missionaries, our pastor shortage, the desire to develop lay leadership, and the opportunity to give volunteers a taste of cross-cultural work.

"The idea we are working on is to make the group of growing Christians the focus, rather than a pastor," says Kehl.

So far, five pastors (including Kehl) have served in Grenada for up to three months at a time. Their tasks include training local leaders to help with Bible classes, worship, and outreach; offering worship; reaching out to children through Sunday school, vacation Bible school, singing, and after-school help; teaching Bible information class; and visiting members and prospects. Kehl also spent one week a month doing outreach and orienting new volunteers.

The small group used to meet in the same apartment where the volunteers live. Recently they began worshipping in a room at a conference center, which can be reached by more people because it sits next to a main road. Bible classes are still held in the apartment. About 25 people worship every Sunday, and 10 children meet for Kid's Club three times a week.

But volunteer pastors aren't the only people helping. Laymembers also share time, talents, and treasures.

- Students from Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, helped teach 146 children about Jesus last July in a weeklong vacation Bible school. The students came through Project Timothy, a program of those schools that sends students to the Caribbean to help with outreach. Four young people from St. John's, Antigua, also participated, helping keep the local focus.

- School children from St. John's, Antigua, raised money to help with special projects.



# f Life

da.

- Emanuel, New London, Wis., “adopted” outreach projects in Grenada to help the church and give Emanuel’s members personal cross-cultural experience. Eight members hope to travel to Grenada in June to familiarize themselves with the country and its opportunities.

- Two couples from Antigua spent a week in Grenada last December to identify the needs of the people and to help the people better understand what it means to be Lutheran in the Caribbean.

## Benefits

Though not their motivation for serving, many volunteers realize they are gaining almost more than they are giving.

Jim Radloff, southeastern regional mission counselor and the first of Grenada’s volunteer pastors, spent June and July 1999 there. He works closely with missions all the time, but this experience was still rejuvenating. “It was a shot in the arm as far as really getting back in touch with people,” he says. “I do a lot of door-to-door canvass work with our men here, but this was more personal.”

Harris Lewis, one of the Antiguan who spent a week in Grenada, resigned from the Antigua Volleyball Association. Kehl writes, “He said the request to have him go to Grenada made him reassess his priorities and see how much that time with volleyball needs to be



Children in Grenada enjoyed crafts, skits, songs, and Bible stories at vacation Bible school last July. Almost 150 children attended VBS, under the theme “Jungle Journey.”

focused on church and family.” After going to Grenada, Lewis said, “I have enjoyed this trip so much more than all the volleyball tournaments throughout the Caribbean, even when we are winning.”

And these winning volunteer experiences won’t stop. So far the Board for Home Missions has funded most of this work. But beginning in July, the Forward in Christ offering will allow more volunteers to experience Grenada.

Sandy beaches. Warm breezes. Sparkling ocean waves. Toast. The Bread of Life.

The people of Grenada now have it all.

*Julie Tessmer is senior communications assistant for Forward/NL and WELS Communication Services.*

Did you know you can get fit and share God’s Word at the same time? Just follow the MBWA method—ministry by walking around.

This worked in Grenada for Jim Radloff. Every day, he would take two one and a half hour walks—one in the morning, one in the evening. But he wouldn’t just walk. He’d stop to talk and listen to the people he happened across.

Meet some prospects whom Radloff encountered:

- “Christopher was carrying a door on his head, balancing it with one hand, and carrying a bag of materials in the other hand,” said Radloff. “I offered to help and carried the bag for him until we reached his home. Along the way I learned about him and his life, and I shared Jesus with him.

“He later stopped by the apartment to see me and to find out when he could begin a study of God’s Word. He waited for an hour and a half until I got back.” Christopher now is enrolled in Bible class.

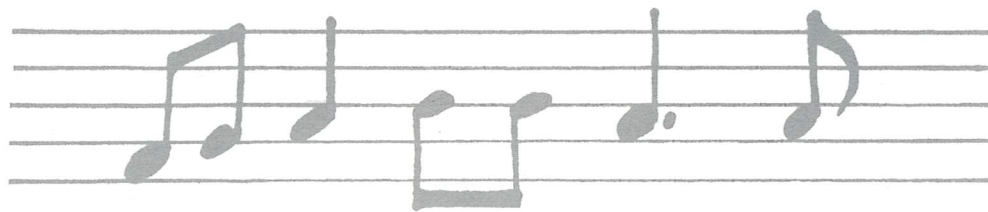
- John ran after Radloff one day to ask him what he was doing on the island. “When I told him I was a Lutheran pastor, he immediately knew I was talking about Martin Luther of Germany,” said Radloff. “He would regularly sit on the steps with me in the evening to talk about God’s Word. . . .

“When we left at the end of July [1999], I gave him a copy of the catechism. When I came back in September, I visited John’s home, and he was sitting on the front porch teaching two children from the catechism. He thought the catechism was the neatest thing since sliced bread.”

- Others heard that Radloff was a pastor and approached him. “Cheryl invited me to her home—two sheets of plywood wide by three long—and, using her Bible, we talked about Jesus, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life,” said Radloff. “On her way home from work she often stopped at the apartment to visit and to hear more.”







# Agnus Dei

**The Agnus Dei is brief, simple, childlike: elements of a first-rate hymn.**

Theodore J. Hartwig

Next to the Bible, our hymnbook ranks among our choicest possessions. Song is not only a precious, divine gift, but poetry joined to music is remembered more easily. Hymns serve as excellent teachers. They also furnish a treasury of prayer for all conditions of life. As an inheritance comes to us over many centuries of church life, the hymnal offers another bonus. It lets us share our devotions with the saints of all ages. It invites us to join the whole Christian church on earth and in heaven to worship our Lord.

One of the hymnal's oldest and finest gems is the well-known Agnus Dei: "O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us." The hymn is superbly biblical, both in its fidelity to Scripture and its Christocentricity. It is wrapped around Christ, the focus of all Scripture. His name is the Old Testament's reason for existence, the New Testament's song of fulfillment.

Even so, the name of the lamb reverberates throughout Scripture, from the Bible's first book to the last.

• In Genesis, Abel became the first artist and poet when he offered a choice lamb in expression of his faith.

• Abel's worship took on

enhanced meaning at the first Passover in Egypt: God's people delivered from slavery by the blood of a lamb.

• Isaiah exalted the lamb's message to a higher musical octave in his description of God's chosen servant as a lamb led to the slaughter for the salvation of all.

• Then Scripture's last Advent man, John the Baptist, gave us the text of the Agnus Dei when he pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

• The story comes to a fitting conclusion in Revelation. There Jesus, ascended into heaven as Lord over all, did not consider it beneath his dignity to reveal himself in the likeness of a lowly lamb as it had been slain.

With the image of the lamb, we are reminded how pictures aid learning. They help clarify an idea, enrich a truth, and fill a void where words fail us.

Having addressed the object of its prayer, the Agnus Dei continues with its message: "You take away the sin of the world." What an admirable summary of all Scripture, of sin and grace! The sin of the world: that is history's catastrophe. But you, Christ, removed the guilt:

that is history's good news. God's response to rebel mankind is the only solution to life's aching illness.

The Agnus Dei sings its story in about a dozen words. It is brief, simple, childlike: elements of a first-rate hymn. Without the closing prayer, however, it is incomplete. When we say "Have mercy," we confess our faith. All that preceded is information, biblical and precious to be sure, yet information only. Satan knows it too. He knows he's been licked—and rages all the more fiercely. But Satan cannot pray "Have mercy." This prayer breathes both repentance and trust. With it we cast all our cares on Jesus. With it, we bring the Agnus Dei to its God-intended purpose. "O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us."

*Theodore Hartwig is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.*



This article is the first of a series. Watch in upcoming months for more articles that will enlighten you about the history and meaning of other gems of Christian hymnody.



# Praying dangerously

**A man asked God to put him where he would be forced to share his faith with someone, and God granted his request.**

Nicole R. Moline

**H**ave you ever prayed a dangerous prayer? John Wiederhold, administrator of the Christian Volunteer Corps of WELS Kingdom Workers, helps present a seminar, The Church in Action, in which attendees are encouraged to pray dangerously.

Praying dangerously means asking God to put you where you'll be forced to share your faith with someone else. The seminar also teaches people to be prepared to give a simple message of faith.

Wiederhold's own dangerous prayer was answered on Dec. 13, 1999, and, following his own advice, he was prepared.

Wiederhold recalls the event:

"I was driving through thick fog and came upon an accident. A cargo van had hit the rear of a parked semi. The driver of the van looked like he was trying to get out. The door was partially open, and his head was visible.

"As I was getting out to help him, I saw the semi driver walking around the back of his rig to see what hit him, and then he waved his arms and started to walk away from the van. He told me that the van driver must be dead. As he said this, I saw the van driver's head move.

"I went to him and found that he was trapped. The collision was so great that the dashboard was pressed against him, and his body was being

thrown out the side of the van. Something told me that my dangerous prayer to witness was being answered by God.

"I approached the man. He was trapped, had one eye opened, and was attempting to speak. I knew that I could not get him out of the van and that he likely would die. I put my hand on his shoulder and said, 'I do not know what God has in mind for you, but I can tell you that the situation is serious. Friend, I do not know if you believe in God, but I want to tell you that Jesus died for our sins. He tells us that if we believe in him and are sorry for our sins, we will go to heaven with him. If you do believe that Jesus is your Savior, this might be a good time to tell him that you are sorry for all your sins.'

"During my time with him, he remained calm and still. When I told him that it might be a good time to confess his sins, he started to move his lips. I told him not to confess any sins to me but to confess them directly to God. I then said a quick prayer with him.

"As I completed the prayer, a state trooper drove up. The semi driver and I immediately went to him and told him to call for an ambulance. In the 45 seconds we were turned away, the man died. . . .



John Wiederhold (center standing) and Christian Volunteer Corps workers gather with youth in Thailand at the Chiang Mai City Christian Community Center. Wiederhold helps place volunteers like these in world mission settings where they can spread God's Word. For help in spreading God's Word, Wiederhold suggests praying dangerously.

"I did a little investigating. The man was a 46-year old father of two who attended a Christian church. When I go to heaven, one of my first questions will be, 'Is he here?'

"I learned a lot from this event. First, you don't have to be worried about what words to say because God will give you the words. And, if you ask for an opportunity, watch out—he'll give it to you.

"By the way, I said another dangerous prayer. After this experience, I can hardly wait for the next one."

*Nicole Moline is communications assistant for Forward/NL and WELS Communication Services.*



## Strengthening the ties that bind

How many times do we view people with special needs or unique circumstances as not being able to contribute to our church's ministry?

Al Woldt, administrator of the Commission on Special Ministries, tells the story of how "a young man with Down syndrome in a WELS congregation faithfully serves as his congregation's best evangelist. He's always the most cheerful greeter at the entrance of the church on Sunday mornings. He also evangelizes freely to strangers in public without any apprehension. In fact, he's often able to later greet those same strangers when they come to church for the first time because of his efforts."

July 14-16 presents a wonderful opportunity for WELS members to overcome their biases so others like this young man are given opportunities to be fully included in worship. Strengthening the Ties that Bind, a once-only special ministries conference that will be held in Milwaukee, Wis., as a 150th anniversary event, will examine how all WELS members can better encourage, share, care, and develop the programs that fall under special ministries. Attendees will learn how to make sure that those with special needs are not cut-off from the ministry of the church.

Special ministries include care for the blind or sight-impaired, the deaf or hearing-impaired, Alzheimer's victims, those in prison and the military, and the handicapped or mentally ill. Woldt says, "There are currently over 3,000 volunteers assisting the various programs—a large number, but much more can be done. The conference is open to pastors, teachers, parents, volunteers, parish leaders, and any interested persons. The three-day session will include adaptive worship, training, and fellowship."

Do you know anyone in the military or serving time in jail? Do you have a friend or loved one who is blind, deaf, or maybe just hearing- or sight-impaired? Have you ever personally encountered an Alzheimer's victim? Maybe you know someone with another "special" need. If you do, or even if you don't but would like to learn more about opportunities, or missed ones, for these special Christians, strongly consider attending the special ministries conference.

*For more information on Strengthening the Ties that Bind or other special ministries programs, contact Al Woldt, 414/256-3240.*

*Jon Koeller*

## Accessibility 2000

Accessibility. What does that mean to you? To the Commission on Special Ministries, accessibility means inclusion.

Accessibility 2000 will be launched at the Special Ministries Conference 2000 on July 14-16. WELS congregations will be encouraged to evaluate themselves, making necessary changes to fully include members with disabilities/mental illnesses. This goes much further than ensuring that church doors allow wheelchair room or having signed services for the deaf. Rather, this will examine how these special-need members can be fully active in their congregations. Members with disabilities/mental illnesses have much to offer their churches, but they need opportunities to contribute.

*To request information on making your church accessible to those with special needs, contact the Commission on Special Ministries, 414/256-3241.*



**Lisa Ricke, founder of Project Northstar, helps Northside Lutheran Ministries by organizing donated food and clothing.**

amazing things can be done to help others and to help ourselves. The benefits go both ways. And, doing it together as a group from church allows us to get to know fellow church members."

Consider what project your church can adopt. After all, many hands make light work, and in this case, that work is furthering the Lord's kingdom.

## Many hands make light work

The struggle to find volunteers to staff a project is a familiar one. That is why Lisa Ricke decided to create her own system for staffing Northside Lutheran Ministries, a WELS ministry to the poor in Milwaukee, Wis.

Ricke was asked to volunteer at Northside Ministries. She knew, though, that she did not have as much time to donate as the ministry actually needed. So Ricke decided that if she could recruit a group of people from her home church, Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis., each person could donate a small amount of time but make a big difference.

That is how Project Northstar began. Through word of mouth, Ricke communicated the need for Northside Ministries' volunteers. Now, 13 women devote time each month to serving the mission.

As Ricke notes, "There is strength in numbers. We can work as a team, rather than as individuals. We carpool and provide companionship for each other. And, being there is a thrill!"

Danielle Cast, another Project Northstar volunteer, concurs. She says, "It doesn't take that much time because so many of us help out. If everyone donates just a little time,



## JCM expands resource center

Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM), a WELS organization that offers support, Christian education, worship, fellowship, and evangelism programs for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, is expanding its services by expanding its resources.

JCM's Wisconsin Lutheran Special Needs Resource Center, located in Milwaukee, Wis., already offers materials on mental illness, mental retardation, other developmental disabilities, and problems of aging. JCM plans to expand into the following three areas of service:

• **Information and referral.**

Besides expanding its collection, JCM will offer a toll free number (1-877-505-3675) to request materials or to ask specific questions. A directory of materials will be available in print and on a Web site that is being developed. Congregations can also get displays upon request.

• **Materials development.**

In response to a need for religious special education materials, the Resource Center has established a publishing division called JCM Publishing. A religious and education curriculum is being developed that allows for different age and intellectual levels.

Other projects include revising materials already developed by the WELS Special Education Services Committee, and the production of prayer books, Christian story books that feature children with disabilities, and a teaching unit on disability awareness for WELS/ELS elementary schools.

• **Training.** The Resource Center will conduct workshops in areas throughout the 12 districts. Plans also call for an annual national conference in addition to regional workshops.

The Lutheran Cyber-Education Project will also use Jesus Cares Bible class instructor certification training as the first WELS on-line training program. The center will share its experience in developing an online training course through one of its area workshops. The certification training will also be available via video correspondence.

JCM, part of The Lutheran Home Association, based in Belle Plaine, Minn., is able to expand its resource center due to a grant from the Siebert Foundation of Milwaukee, Wis.

*For further information, call JCM at 414/259-0292 or toll free, 1-877-505-3675.*

## THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

### June 2000

1. Ezekiel 22	16. Ps. 84
2. Ezek. 23	17. Ps. 85
3. Ezek. 24	18. Ps. 86, 87
4. Ezek. 25, 26	19. Ps. 88
5. Ezek. 27, 28	20. Ps. 89:1-37
6. Ezek. 29, 30	21. Ps. 89:38-52
7. Ezek. 31, 32	22. Ezekiel 33
8. Psalm 73	23. Ezek. 34
9. Ps. 74	24. Ezek 35:1-36:15
10. Ps. 75, 76	25. Ezek. 36:16-38
11. Ps. 77	26. Ezek. 37
12. Ps. 78:1-39	27. Ezek. 38
13. Ps. 78:40-72	28. Ezek. 39
14. Ps. 79, 80	29. Ezek. 40:1-47
15. Ps. 81-83	30. Ezek. 40:48-41:26

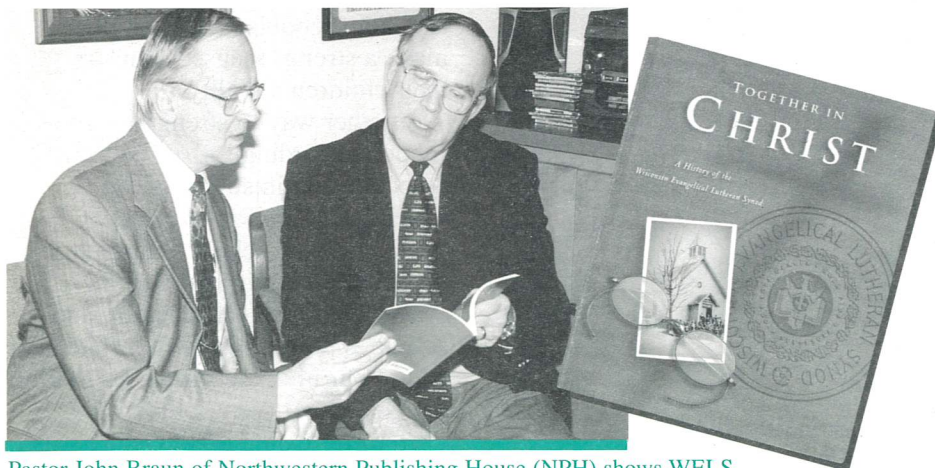
## WELS Tech 2001

**By all possible means—  
expanding ministries  
through technology**

Don't miss out on attending the first-ever WELS technology conference. WELS Tech 2001 will be held July 15-18, 2001, at Fox Valley Lutheran High School (FVL) in Appleton, Wis.

FVL will be in a new building next school year. The new facilities will make FVL one of the most technologically advanced WELS schools, and WELS Tech 2001 attendees will be able to enjoy using their equipment.

Whether you are a beginning or advanced technology user—a pastor, teacher, or layperson—workshops are being planned that will help you in your ministry. If you or someone you know would be interested in presenting or would like to receive conference information, contact Communication Services at 414/256-3210 or <garyb@sab.wels.net>.



Pastor John Braun of Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) shows WELS President Karl Gurgel (right) the new keepsake history book, *Together in Christ*. Braun, the vice president of NPH Publishing Services, is also the book's author. NPH published this 56-page, full-color history of WELS to celebrate WELS' 150th anniversary. Talk to your pastor about obtaining a copy, or call NPH Order Services, 1-800-662-6022.



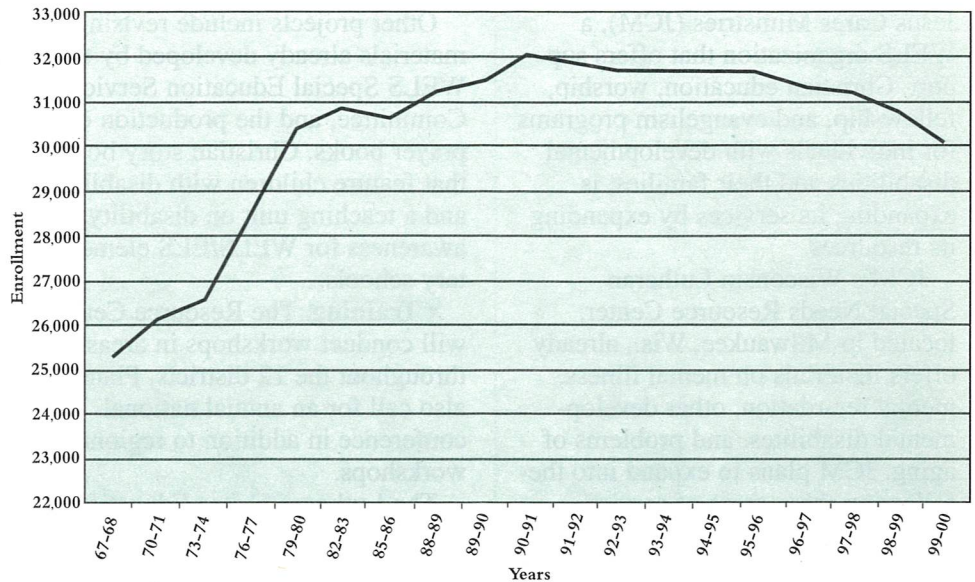
## WELS school enrollment down

Enrollment in WELS Lutheran elementary schools has crept downward every year since 1990, when a high of 31,983 students was enrolled. The 1999-2000 school year total is 30,028 students, about a six percent drop over 10 years.

Why are WELS schools losing students? WELS Parish Assistance consultants suggest the following as some possible reasons:

- Other private and parochial schools are starting to provide high impact, professional, family-friendly approaches, activities, programs, and services that compete with what our schools offer.
- Demographic trends reveal that families with children are choosing to live outside of the Midwest. Most WELS schools are located in the Midwest.
- Some WELS schools seem to have lost their focus. They need to find a balance between outreach and

WELS Lutheran elementary school enrollment - 1967-2000



nurture and discover how both must fit into the school's mission.

- Staffing is not provided in a manner that helps schools maximize their outreach and family ministry potential.

The Commission on Parish Schools has resources that can help promote

and strengthen WELS' schools.

- *Come Meet Our Family*, a seven-minute video, tells how a WELS school is really a Christian family that nurtures the whole child—mind, body, and soul. It also explains about the WELS national school system and its commitment to Christ and God's Word. A church can use this video to promote its school to families in the church and the community.

Self-study guidelines for Lutheran elementary schools and early childhood ministries help both to reexamine the ministry being done, noting both the strengths and the weaknesses. These guidelines can also help schools develop a plan to make a strong, focused ministry for their children a reality.

Another way to strengthen your school, according to Joel Nelson, associate administrator of the Commission on Parish Schools, is to examine the school's mission statement, making sure that all school programs, curriculum, and activities point back to that statement and to our ultimate mission—sharing the gospel with our children.

To order *Come Meet Our Family* or the self-study guidelines, contact the Commission on Parish Schools, 414/256-3222; <cps@sab.wels.net>.

## Did you know?

The WELS school system—366 Lutheran elementary schools and 22 area Lutheran high schools—is the fourth largest private national school system in the nation.

SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS
Catholic Association of Christian Schools International*	8,351
LCMS Seventh Day Adventist National Association of Independent Schools*	2,472
Montessori*	1,081
WELS	1,071
Christian Schools International*	893
Episcopal	732
	388
	355
	349

\* Not a national system

Statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics. Reprinted from *Growing Together*, a WELS Commission on Parish Schools quarterly newsletter.



## REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

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

### From our missionary to Thailand:

Just wanted to let you know that we had 32, yes count 'em, 32 baptisms at Baan Ruam Thai 9 Hmong village this morning [Jan 30]. Of the people baptized, some have had little or no contact with us before this week. Most we've known for a long time. All will need our prayers that they continue faithful to the Lord. Many know just the very basic rudiments of the Christian faith—more teaching is needed.

Our two newly ordained Hmong ministers will try to provide cassette and videotapes of Hmong worship and Bible lessons and clothing from time to time, all of which they'll send from the United States, where they live and do evangelism to the Hmong. I'll continue my monthly visits. Some of the men from the village will come to Chiangmai for a weekend of further Bible classes with me.

Some of those baptized today live in difficult circumstances with many children to care for or with family drug problems or other difficulties. We need to pray for and work for the care of all these people. We're happy that the men who have been baptized are able to form the beginnings of a small church council and seem willing to take on more tasks themselves. Their greatest need is still God's Word.

Please pray for the Word to reach them effectively. Some are learning parts of the liturgy in Hmong, especially the Apostles' Creed. Many women and teenage girls participated in Hmong literacy classes these past two weeks.

To God be the glory for opening up his Word in this humble area.

## An encouraging trip to Japan

WELS President Karl Gurgel, Board for World Mission (BWM) administrator Dan Koelpin, BWM Japan Europe Asia administrative committee members Ron Freier and Ken Westlund, and Multi-Language Publications Program Director Harold Essmann visited our churches and missionaries in Japan in February.

They spent time visiting some of our mission churches in Japan and getting acquainted with the ministry. They also were able to attend the semi-annual meeting of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (LECC), our sister church in Japan.

"The trip helped us understand the special challenges and needs for doing outreach work in the Japanese culture," said Koelpin.

Gurgel said, "It gave me the encouragement that I need, plus I could offer encouragement on behalf of all of us in WELS."

The LECC has grown to 350



President Karl Gurgel and representatives from the Board for World Missions visited Japan in February. Here they are at Tomoshi (Lamp) Lutheran Church, Chiba, also the home of Pastor Tadashi Yoshida. From left: Naomi Yoshida Ono (Pastor Yoshida's daughter), Ken Westlund, Jackie Hieb, Missionary Glen Hieb (standing), Harold Essmann, Hiroko Yoshida (standing), Ruth Essmann (seated), Tadashi Yoshida (standing), Sue Westlund, Gwen Freier, Ron Freier, Barb Gurgel, Karl Gurgel.

members since WELS first sent missionaries to Japan in 1955. Four national pastors, five missionaries, one teacher, and three layworkers serve the 10 churches.

## Forward in Christ video contest



Seventh and eighth grade students at Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis., won the *Kids Connection* video contest.

"Why are you skating backward? You should be skating forward. . . . Go forward like Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has been going forward for the past 150 years."

So begins the winning entry to the second annual Commission on Youth Discipleship's *Kids Connection* video contest. This year the entries focused on the WELS anniversary theme, "Forward in Christ."

The winning entry came from the seventh and eighth grade classes of Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis. After their introduction explaining

how we should all be going forward in Christ, they went on-site to the first three WELS churches—Salem and Grace in Milwaukee and St. John, Oak Creek, Wis.—so their audience could see each one.

Teenage hosts of the *Kids Connection* surprised the students at Good Shepherd with a pizza party.

Students at Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah, and the fifth and sixth grade classes at Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz., were runners-up in the contest, and they won ice cream parties.

*Kids Connection* is a monthly video magazine (nine every year), hosted by kids for kids, produced by the Commission on Youth Discipleship. To order, contact the youth discipleship office at 414/256-3274; <usr62@sab.wels.net>.

*How is your school celebrating the Forward in Christ celebration? Send information and photos to Forward/NL, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.*



## WELS news briefs

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

### Board for World Missions

414/256-3239

Paul Hartman and staff are working to finish **"The People's Bible"** series in Spanish by the end of 2002.

Tim Satorius is reaching out with the gospel to **Spanish-speaking people in Antigua**. In less than a year, 40 baptisms and 23 confirmations have been celebrated, while over 60 people regularly attend Spanish services.

**Bulgaria's Bible institute** graduated its first class. The three men are now enrolled in the seminary program and one woman is serving as a deaconess.

The earthquake in Taiwan provided openings for sharing the gospel. **Church attendance at Fountain of Grace, Taipei**, is up by 20 percent.

**In India, WELS serves 265 congregations** for a total of over 8,000 souls. WELS also serves more than 225 called workers, one seminary, one preseminary program, 26 orphanages, and eight schools. Recently WELS has been helping organize and train the national church in India.

Thirteen students are at the **seminary in Lusaka, Zambia**. Eight are Zambians and five are Malawians.

The **Central Africa Medical Mission** serves the needs of more than 55,000 people each year.

Eight men and three women are enrolled in the **Apache Christian Training School**, which offers six different ministry tracks. To meet the needs caused by growing social problems, a **Youth and Family Ministry Program** is conducted on both Apache reservations.

Dan Jensen is holding **Bible classes on the Navajo reservation** with up to 28 children attending.

Through the **Christian Informa-**

**tion Center in Mission, S.D.**, David Neumann and members of WELS congregations in Mission and Valentine, Neb., are distributing Bibles and other materials to the Lakota nation.

In order to make their materials available to a broader audience, the **Multi-Language Publication Program put most of their foreign language materials on amazon.com**. This Internet service sells books, magazines, music, and more on-line.



In April 1999, Pastor Tse Tat Chiu, president of South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM), gave back \$30,000 to Pastor David Dolan, chairman of the Board for World Missions South East Asian committee (left), and Pastor Daniel Koelpin, BWM administrator. WELS had given SALEM this money to repair and redecorate a three-story building in Hong Kong that serves as the headquarters for SALEM, as Grace Lutheran Church, and as the South Asian Lutheran Seminary. SALEM hasn't received subsidy from WELS since June 1999.

WELS has done mission work in Hong Kong since the early 1960s and has worked with SALEM since 1977. WELS still supports two missionaries there.

### Board for Home Missions

414/256-3284

The Board for Home Missions decided the following in their February meeting:

Mission status was granted to **Shepherd of the Valley, Surprise, Ariz.**, and **Abiding Savior, Killeen, Tex.**

**Grace, Charlotte, N.C.**, was authorized to proceed with development of an early childhood program and facility expansion.

Exploratory with manpower was granted to the **South Hill area of**

**greater Tacoma, Wash.** Eight other exploratories were continued.

Facility planning authority was granted to **Christ the Rock, Farmington, N.M.**; **Divine Peace, Rowlett, Tex.**; and **St. John, Vacaville, Calif.**

Early site purchase was authorized for **Corona, Calif.**

About **\$65,000 in outreach grants** were allocated to help beginning congregations proclaim Christ in their communities.

### Communication Services Commission

414/256-3210

**Forward/NL** is working on archiving back issues into a searchable index of articles to be located on-line on the WELS Web site <www.wels.net>. If authors or families of authors do not want their articles included on this index, contact Linda Buxa by June 30, at 907/486-5486; <lindabuxa@alaska.com>.

### Mass Media Ministry

**Mr. Whistle's Lamb—Jesus, God's Promise Kept**, one of the four Mr. Whistle videos produced by WELS Mass Media Ministry, won a bronze Telly Award in the religious communications category. The award was given for music, direction, editing, and performance. The Telly Awards, founded in 1980, showcase and give recognition to outstanding non-network and cable TV commercials, film and video productions, and non-network TV

programming. Over 11,000 entries were judged. Entries do not compete against each other, but against a high standard of excellence.





## District news

### Northern Wisconsin

Students from 12 WELS high schools met at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., for a **regional WELS Band Festival**. Rehearsals took place Mar. 17-18, with the band performing a concert on Mar. 19.

### Western Wisconsin

WELS **West Regional Band Festival** was hosted by Northland LHS, Mosinee, Wis. After the students rehearsed on Mar. 17-18, the band performed a concert on Mar. 19.

### Southeastern Wisconsin

On Apr. 16, members of **Zion, Hartland, Wis.**, held a dedication service for the addition to their school and early childhood development center.

**Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis.**, received a Lutheran Brotherhood grant to fund a project that will assist Milwaukee-area Lutheran elementary schools with strategic planning.

Representatives of the **Association of Lutheran High Schools** attended a conference in Milwaukee on Feb. 17-18, focusing on developing "A Christ-

Centered Student Ministry."

**Amanda Hudson**, student at Shoreland LHS, attended a National Youth Leadership Forum on Defense, Intelligence, and Diplomacy in Washington, D.C. Hudson's academic achievements and interest in a career related to national security led her to be one of the 350 students chosen from across the United States.

### Minnesota

The Minnesota District Commission on Adult Discipleship presented a Forward in Christ church councilmen's workshop at **Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.**, on Mar. 25.

Ross Deden donated a kidney to fellow St. John, Red Wing, Minn., member **Cindy Bakke**. Bakke's kidneys began failing as a result of polycystic kidney disease. Deden's blood type matched Bakke's, so Deden decided he could help. "Ross is just a remarkable human being," said Bakke. "He is the answer to my prayers."

### Happy Anniversary!

**CA—Members of Living Word, Mission Viejo, Calif.**, celebrated multiple

church milestones on Mar. 19.

**SEW—**On Feb. 27, Northwestern Publishing House celebrated the anniversaries of three editors: **Pastor Lyle Albrecht**, 40 years; **Pastor Robert Koester**, 25 years; **Teacher Carl Nolte**, 25 years.

Members of **St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.**, thanked **Michael George** and **Jane Kulow** for serving in the teaching ministry for 25 years by celebrating with a recognition service and a reception.

Members of **Zion, Crete, Ill.**, donned period clothing for their 90th anniversary service. The service followed many traditions of the past, including men and women sitting on opposite sides of the church.

**WW—**Members of **St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.**, celebrated their centennial year with special services throughout 1999. The final centennial service was held Jan. 9, 2000.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: CA—Hermann John; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NW—Joel Lillo; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

## SYMBOLS for your life



### Symbol: Messianic Rose

#### Background and meaning:

The "Rose" is probably a reference to a small crocus-like flower that blooms in winter months and grows wild in the fertile coastal area of Palestine called the Plain of Sharon (thus it is called the Rose of Sharon). Several hymns refer to this "rose blooming in winter." In regard

to this symbol, reference is often made to Isaiah's prophecy of a branch shooting out of the stump of Jesse. When combined with the candlestick, this symbol points to the fulfillment of prophecy—Christ, the light of the world, is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

#### Bible gems:

Song of Solomon 2:1, "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys."

Isaiah 4:2, "In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious . . ."

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

#### A symbol for your life:

Check out CW hymn #47. Why is it important that Jesus fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies? That Jesus Christ fulfilled all such prophecies is of great comfort to us today. Why (two ways)?

## Obituary

### Howard N. Henke

1922-2000

Howard Henke was born June 24, 1922, in Wauwatosa, Wis. He died Mar. 8, 2000, in Otsego, Mich.

A 1947 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Henke served in St. Paul Park, Minn.; Whitehall/Arcadia, Wis.; Niles, Ill.; and Kawkawlin, Mich.

He is survived by his wife, Jane; two sons, one daughter, nine grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.

### Correction

The South Atlantic District convention is being held at the Delta Resort, Orlando, Fla., not the Hilton, St. Petersburg, Fla., as was reported in April.





**eBay halts online auctioning of human souls**

—In February a teenager tried to sell his soul on the Internet.

According to *USA Today*, 14-year-old Adam Fox of Las Cruces, N.M., put his soul on the auction block. The winning bid? \$5. Fox told *USA Today* he got the idea after watching an episode of *The Simpsons*.

For Fox, it was all a joke. But for the people at eBay, the matter was more serious. According to press reports, the online auction giant eBay has put a stop to people trying to sell their eternal souls for a little extra cash because the existence of a soul is not something that can be documented, and therefore sold.

**Survey: Average church attendance slips in 1999**

—A survey of Protestant churches says attendance at worship during 1999 declined slightly.

The Barna Research Group survey found the median adult attendance for worship at more than 600 churches polled across the United States to be 90 people.

That figure was down five people from 1998 and 10 people from the 1997 average, according to Barna.

Average attendance figures were highest among suburban churches (120 people) and African-American churches (100). Rural churches reported the lowest average attendance (70).

The survey also found that donations to churches increased slightly during 1999, up five percent to an average of \$110,000. That figure is 59 percent above the 1987 average and 34 percent above the 1992 figure.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus four percent.



**Supreme Court to rule on cases addressing abortion, gay issues**

—The Supreme Court heard arguments in cases concerning two of the nation's controversial moral topics—abortion and homosexuality.

In the abortion case, justices will review a Nebraska law making it a crime for doctors to perform a surgical procedure known as dilation and extraction—a “partial birth” abortion. The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously struck down the Nebraska law, but other, almost identical, state laws were upheld by another federal appeals court.

In the Boy Scout case, the high court will decide whether the scouting organization can bar gays as troop leaders or members. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled last summer that the Boy Scouts' denying of membership to gays violated state anti-discrimination laws.

The cases were heard in April, and decisions are expected by July, the Associated Press reported.

**Religious beliefs important to teens**

—A 1999 Gallup Youth Survey discovered the following from 502 teenagers, ages 13 through 17.

**Q:** Do you rely more on yourself to solve the problems of life, or more on an outside power, such as God?

Self	61%
God	35%

**Q:** How important to you are your religious beliefs?

Very important	45%
Fairly important	39%

**Q:** Do you feel the need in your life to experience spiritual growth?

Yes	67%
No	31%

**Q:** When scientific and religious explanations conflict, which explanation are you more likely to accept?

Scientific explanations	37%
Religious explanations	57%

[*Emerging Trends*, June 1999]

**27 use Oregon's assisted suicide law**

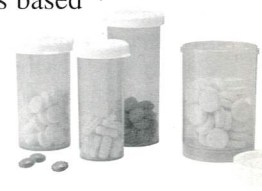
—Twenty-seven terminally ill people used Oregon's two-year-old assisted suicide law to end their lives in 1999, 11 more than the year before, according to a report by the state.

Nearly two-thirds—17—were cancer patients, according to the Oregon Health Division's report, while the others suffered from AIDS, chronic lung disease, or Lou Gehrig's disease.

The study said that those who chose physician-assisted suicide did so not because of “poverty, lack of education, or health insurance” or concerns about “poor care.”

“The families also volunteered that these were patients who were determined to have control over their lives and the way they died,” Katrina Hedberg, co-author of the report and a physician who leads the Oregon Health Division, told *USA Today*.

The report was based on information from family members of the deceased and doctors involved in the cases.



**The Vatican to choose 20th century martyrs**

—Martin Luther King Jr. is among 10,000 people around the world nominated for recognition as 20th century martyrs by Pope John Paul II, according to the *Boston Globe*.

Those chosen will be honored in Rome in a May 7 ceremony, part of the Jubilee 2000 celebration marking Christianity's 2,000th anniversary. This recognition is part of the pope's wish for an inclusive celebration of Christianity.

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

**Cortright, Charles L.**, to St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.  
**Dobberstein, Donn G.**, to Our Savior, Daytona Beach, Fla.  
**Foley, Michael L.**, to California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.  
**Hennig, Brian K.**, to Emanuel, New London, Wis.  
**Iles, Charles L. Sr.**, to WLM, Inc., Milwaukee  
**Johannes, Robert D.**, to St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.  
**Lawrenz, John C.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.  
**Neitzel, Mark A.**, to West LHS, Plymouth, Minn.  
**Pless, Joel L.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee  
**Plocher, James D.**, to St. Luke, Vassar, Mich.  
**Ristow, Stephen K.**, to Zion, Hartland, Wis.  
**Schumann, James R.**, to exploratory, Myrtle Beach, S.C.  
**Sellnow, David D.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Taves, Kristian L.**, to St. Paul, Sheboygan Falls, Wis.  
**Tetzlaff, David A.**, to retirement  
**Wagenknecht, Steven W.**, to Puerto Rico  
**Walters, Mark R.**, to Good Shepherd, Girard, Ohio  
**Werth, William W.**, to Faith, Tacoma, Wash.

### Teachers

**Aguilar, Andrew S.**, to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.  
**Anthony, Scott L.**, to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.  
**Ash, Edith M.**, to Zion, Sanborn, Minn.  
**Bartkowiak, Roselyn K.**, to Jordan, West Allis, Wis.  
**Bode, Bethel K.**, to St. John, Milwaukee  
**Brown, Eric R.**, to Northdale, Tampa, Fla.  
**Buboltz, James A. Jr.**, to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Burow, Sharon R.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee  
**Clark, Laura J.**, to East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.  
**Curtis, Jean M.**, to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.  
**Dobberstein, Suzanne M.**, to St. John, Saginaw, Mich.  
**Dolan, Sarah E.**, to St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.  
**Eggers, Kris A.**, to Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis.  
**Flanagan, Marjorie K.**, to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee  
**Giefer, Renee**, to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.  
**Gottschalk, Brian**, to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee  
**Hagedorn, Connie E.**, to retirement  
**Hahnke, Shirleen K.**, to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Hannewald, Penny L.**, to retirement  
**Henderson, John A.**, to St. John, Saginaw, Mich.  
**Hoffman, Sarah E.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Hoida, Judith C.**, to retirement  
**Hozak, Judith R.**, to retirement  
**Johnson, Jennifer L.**, to Atonement, Milwaukee  
**Johnson, Wendy A.**, to St. Peter-St. Paul, Hopkins, Mich.  
**Karnopp, Albert I.**, to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.  
**Karnopp, Sandy M.**, to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.  
**Korthals, Jean L.**, to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.  
**Kramp, Roger W.**, to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee  
**Krueger, Karen A.**, to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.

**Kutz, Mark P.**, to St. John, Sturgis, Mich.  
**Leyrer, Philip M.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Miller, Amy L.**, to St. Luke, Vassar, Mich.  
**Miller, Barbara H.**, to Living Word, Mission Viejo, Calif.  
**Nauman, Rhonda**, to Our Hope Preschool, Chippewa Falls, Wis.  
**Neujahr, Jane E.**, to California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.  
**Plath, Lauris O.**, to retirement  
**Pontel, Michelle L.**, to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.  
**Putnam, Bonnie L.**, to Abiding Love Preschool, Cape Coral, Fla.  
**Retzlaff, Andrew W.**, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.  
**Ristow, Timothy A.**, to Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.  
**Rupnow, Kenneth C.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Scharrer, GloryAnn F.**, to Grace, Durand, Mich.  
**Schleef, David E.**, to St. Matthew, Milwaukee  
**Schmidt, Constance S.**, to Peace, Hartford, Wis.  
**Schultz, Joel T.**, to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.  
**Schwab, Dana**, to Good Shepherd, Midland, Mich.  
**Stein, Danielle D.**, to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Towne, Steven R.**, to Trinity, Bay City, Mich.  
**Traska, Stephanie M.**, to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee  
**Warner, Juliene G.**, to Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev.  
**Weimer, Pamela J.**, to Our Savior, Longmont, Colo.  
**Wollenzien, Sharon L.**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
**Zanto, Mary E.**, to Grace, Eau Claire, Mich.

## COLLOQUY NOTICE

John Nieminen, formerly a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Canada, after having successfully completed the steps of our colloquy program, including study at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, was declared eligible for call into the ministerium of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Richard E. Lauersdorf, First Vice President  
 Walter Beckmann, District President  
 Prof. John Brug

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Las Vegas, Nev.**—Mt. Olive (25). May 7. Service, 4 PM. Dinner to follow.  
**Morenci, Mich.**—Trinity (50). May 7. Service, 10 AM. Refreshments to follow. May 14. Service, 10 AM. Catered meal to follow. May 21. Service, 10 AM. Cake and ice cream social.  
**Stambaugh, Mich.**—St. Mark (40). May 14. Service, 9 AM. Potluck to follow.  
**Milwaukee, Wis.**—St. Peter (140). May 21. Service, 10 AM. Reception at Wisconsin Lutheran College, noon. 414/645-7326.  
**Westland, Mich.**—Huron Valley LHS (25). May 21. Service, 4 PM. 734/525-0160.  
**Beaver Dam, Wis.**—Good Shepherd (50). June 25. Service, 10 AM. Potluck to follow. <leon@centuryinter.net>.  
**Johnson, Minn.**—Trinity Lutheran School (75). July 2. Service, 10 AM outdoors at the school, weather permitting. Otherwise, at the church. Coffee hour, 8:30 AM. Noon meal, followed by games and entertainment. 320/748-7774.  
**Mobridge, S.D.**—Zion Lutheran School (50). July 2. Service, 10 AM. Dinner and program at noon. Reservations, 605/845-3904.  
**Graceville, Minn.**—Mt. Olive (75). Aug. 6.

Service, 3 PM. Dinner, 5 PM. <kbilitz@info-link.net>.

**Chaseburg, Wis.**—St. Peter (125). Sept. 24. Service, 10:15 AM. Dinner to follow. Paul Schwartz, 608/483-2318.

## COMING EVENTS

**Lutheran Chorale concerts**—May 7. St. Marcus, Milwaukee, 3 PM. St. Lucas, Milwaukee, 7 PM. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

**Church picnic**—St. Matthew, Freeland, Mich. July 23. Former members and pastors invited. 517/695-9758.

## AVAILABLE

**Oak pulpit**—light finish, good condition. Timothy, St. Louis Park, Minn. Philip Mischke, 612/929-8317.

**School desks**—adjustable, suitable for grades 3-6. Available after June 15. St. Paul, Ixonia, Wis., 920/261-5589.

**Communion ware**—Three individual cup trays with cover and bread plate in fair condition. Free for the cost of shipping. Matthew Martin, 517/644-8178.

**Movie projectors**—Three, 16mm projectors in good working condition. James Strand, Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz. 480/807-2401; <dedorojo@primenet.com>.

## SERVICE TIMES

**Milwaukee, Wis.**—Redemption. Sunday service, 9 AM. Bible class following. Monday service, 7 PM.

## NAMES WANTED

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

**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.

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

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

**Director of Marketing and Public Relations**—Bethany Lutheran College. Send resume by May 15 to Rev. Edward L. Bryant, Director of Development, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001-6163.

**Admission counselor**—Bethany Lutheran College. Send resume by May 15 to Don Westphal, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001-6163.

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



# Lessons of love

God will do what it takes to teach us the lessons of his love.

Jon D. Buchholz

*Then Job replied to the Lord:  
“... My ears had heard of you  
but now my eyes have seen you.  
Therefore I despise myself and  
repent in dust and ashes.” . . .*

*The Lord blessed the latter part  
of Job’s life more than the first. . . .  
After this, Job lived a hundred and  
forty years; he saw his children and  
their children to the fourth genera-  
tion. And so he died, old and full  
of years. (Job 42:1,5,6,12,16,17)*

**G**od’s relationship with his people is such a beautiful thing!

Sometimes God has to tear us down. His law crushes us, shreds our pride into tiny pieces, and drives us to our knees in repentance.

But it’s always so he can build us up. God showers us with his love, cleanses us with his forgiveness, and deluges our lives with countless blessings. He tells us that we are redeemed, restored, and in a right relationship with him for Jesus’ sake. God gives us happiness and prosperity, and—to cap it all off—he promises us immortality itself, eternity spent with him in his own glorious presence. Amazing!

## From ashes to absolution

Job bore on his body the marks of God’s loving discipline. That discipline crushed the rebellious spirit of Job’s sinful nature and led him to repent in deepest humility. With a broken and sorrowing heart he confessed, “I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

God’s love led Job to the ash heap, but God didn’t abandon him there. The God before whom Job humbled himself does not treat us as our sins deserve. He is the God who loves sinners with an everlasting love. He is the God who engraves his people on the palm of his hand, who calls us by name and says, “You are mine!”

With rich mercy beyond our understanding, God lifted Job out of the dust, out of his misery, out of despair. His offenses were forgiven and forgotten—blotted out forever from the mind of God. But the Lord didn’t stop there. God showered on Job even more blessings than before: twice the material possessions he had previously owned, a new family. Job enjoyed a new life.

## From testing to deeper trust

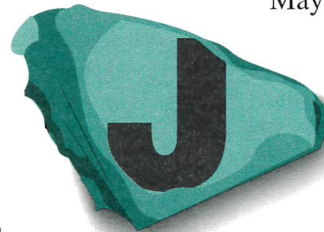
Most important, God blessed Job with a stronger faith. His faith had been tested, and it came through the test more mature, more confident in God’s loving plan for his life.

Think about it. Job never knew why he experienced such trouble. As readers of the book, we watch the drama played out between the Lord and Satan. We can see Satan’s malicious intent and God’s plan to turn it to

good. But Job saw things from a different angle; he was on the receiving end. Only through misery and suffering did Job learn the lesson that God wanted to teach him.

A stronger faith, a deeper trust, a more mature understanding—the Lord has these goals for you and me as well. And he will do what it takes to teach us the lessons of his love. Through his Word and the sacraments, he communicates his love to us. In the crucible of testing, he confirms us in his love. All this he does so we can cherish and celebrate God’s beautiful relationship with us in Christ, a love relationship that began in the heart of God before the dawn of time and that will last forever.

May we learn God’s lesson well.



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

*For further study:  
Read Job 42*

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# Inter-Act

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

## Introduction

Over the years, you've noticed changes in your Christian friend—deeper kinds of changes. You like what you see.

You see growth. Peter encourages us: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." More than just acting the right way, growing in grace and knowledge shows up in an intimate knowledge of Scripture, revised priorities, and deep love.

Such changes don't occur overnight. God caused your friend to grow "on the way." He wants to do the same for you. Take a few moments to let the growth you've noticed in others encourage you. Elisha did. Here's how.

## I. Text

Read 2 Kings 2:1-6, 9-12a.

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. . . . <sup>2</sup>Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

<sup>3</sup>The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it."

<sup>4</sup>Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

<sup>5</sup>The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it."

<sup>6</sup>Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on. . . .

<sup>9</sup>When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

<sup>10</sup>"You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not."

<sup>11</sup>As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. <sup>12</sup>Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more.

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

## II. Questions

1. Elijah was about to leave this world. In these verses, how did the Lord prepare him?
2. Elijah and Elisha probably spent about 10 years together. As Elijah's end drew near, his young understudy wouldn't leave him. Why not?
3. "The company of prophets" may have been a kind of school. Why might the Lord have directed Elijah to visit them before leaving this world?
4. Elisha's request for a "double portion" doesn't make him an egomaniac. Under Israelite law, the eldest son received a double portion of the inheritance and became the new patriarch. By asking for a double portion, Elisha was asking to carry on Elijah's ministry. Why would he want that?
5. Elisha called Elijah "father" and saw the fiery army of the Lord. When Elisha died, an eyewitness called him "father" and saw the same fiery army (13:14). What does that tell you about Elisha's request to carry on Elijah's ministry?

## III. Applications

1. Think of someone you knew who was given special preparation time before death. How did she or he use it?
2. Our gracious God gives us fellow believers to walk with us "on the way" through life. What makes it hard to let go of them?
3. We have a limited time to influence people while we're "on the way" to eternity. Who is it you most want to influence, and how are you going about that now?
4. Of all the things he could have asked for, Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. What do you ask for?
5. Elisha asked to carry on Elijah's work. Whose work would you like to carry on?

## IV. Prayer

God of the prophets, bless the prophets' sons; Elijah's mantle o'er Elisha cast.  
Each age its solemn task may claim but once;  
Make each one better, nobler than the last.



# What's coming—how we get there

John F. Brug

*Is there any biblical support for the idea that departed Christians become angels who can look down from heaven and observe our daily activities?*



In heaven we will be similar to the angels in two respects: we will not die, and we will not marry and reproduce (Luke 20:35,36). But we will not be angels. After the resurrection we will have bodies and souls. The angels are and will remain pure spirits.

## We are to look to God as the one who watches over us, not to departed saints.

Nothing in Scripture suggests that the saints in heaven have any knowledge of specific events taking place on earth. Isaiah 63:16 suggests that they do not: "But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us. You, O Lord, are our Father." We are to look to God as the one who watches over us, not to departed saints.

Passages that seem to imply knowledge in heaven about events on earth speak only of a general knowledge of the way life is on earth, not a knowledge of specific events that occurred on earth after the saints' departure from earthly life (Luke 16:27,28; Revelation 6:10).

The saints in heaven do not need to watch over our life on earth since the Lord sends his angels to watch over us and he himself knows every hair on our heads. Would we want our loved ones in heaven to be burdened with the affairs and concerns of life on earth?

*What does our synod have to say regarding purgatory? Is there such a place?*

We do not believe in the existence of purgatory because there is no evidence for it in Scripture. The Bible speaks only of two destinations for those who die—heaven and hell. Jesus promised the thief on the cross, who certainly had not led an exemplary life, that he would be with him in Paradise immediately.

Furthermore, there is no need for purgatory. A person who has faith in Christ has complete forgiveness of sins. There is no more debt to be paid. A person who does not have faith in Christ has no forgiveness of sins. No amount of time in purgatory could ever pay for his or her sins.

We must reject purgatory as a dangerous error. By rejecting the completeness of Christ's payment for sins, this doctrine robs Christians of the comfort they should have at the time of their own death or the death of a Christian loved one.

*Can you state the dispensationalist view and refute it biblically?*

Dispensationalism in its strict form has different ways of salvation for different peoples in different times. But from the time when God

gave the first promise of the Savior in the Garden of Eden until the time of Christ's Second Coming, there is only one way of salvation: faith in the Savior (see Romans 4).

Throughout the time of the Old Testament, people received more detailed knowledge about the coming of the Savior, but there was no difference in the way of salvation.

Today there is considerable disagreement among dispensationalists. Some have gone so far as to say that classic dispensationalism like that of the Scofield Bible is dying out. Classic dispensationalism makes a sharp distinction between God's dealings with Israel and the church, whereas Scripture teaches that Christ has made the two one (Ephesians 2:11-18). Classic dispensationalism, also, is millennial. It sees prophecy as being fulfilled during the millennium rather than in the church. Such passages as Acts 15:14-18 make it clear that prophecy is being fulfilled in the present time.

"Progressive" or "revised" dispensationalism is lessening the distinction made by the classic view between Israel and the church, but it still retains millennialism.

*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>**



“Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.” Proverbs 26:20

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17

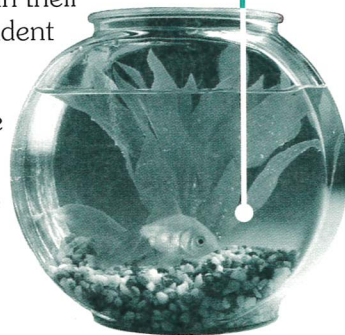
“As water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man.” Proverbs 27:19

## More than fish

“You fill a big aquarium with water, dump in some fish, put fish food on top, and watch them eat. Most fish owners sort of sit back and watch the critters move around, and that’s the way most folks raise kids.” Phil Downer, quoted in *Christian Businessman Online*, September/October 1999, cited in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, January 2000.

“Being there for the children means spending time with the family. . . . It is impossible for invisible parents to instill values in their children.” Former Vice President Dan Quayle

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6



## Picture this



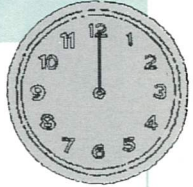
When Lois and George Guhr’s great-granddaughter stopped by after Sunday school one day, they took this picture. Casey Jo was happy and excited about all the things she had learned that morning and to show them her papers and the cap she made there. “What a joy for us to experience the love for Jesus in this little tot,” say the Guhrs.

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.

## NOT SO FUNNY REALLY

Funny how people want to get a front seat at any game or concert, but scramble to get a back seat at church services.

Funny how long a couple of hours spent at church seem, but how short it seems when watching a movie.



Funny how we can’t think of anything to say when we pray, but don’t have difficulty thinking of things to talk about to a friend.

Funny how a \$10 bill looks so big when you take it to church, but so small when you take it to the market.



## LUTHER ON SAVING FAITH

“In Torgau a wretched little woman once came to me and said, ‘Ah, dear Doctor, I have the idea that I’m lost and can’t be saved because I can’t believe.’

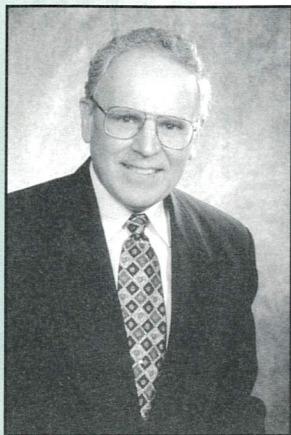
“Then I replied, ‘Do you believe, dear lady, that what you pray in the Creed is true?’

“She answered with clasped hands, ‘Oh yes, I believe it; it’s most certainly true!’

“I replied, ‘Then go in God’s name, dear lady. You believe more and better than I do.’

“It’s the devil who puts such ideas into people’s heads and says, ‘Ah, you must believe better. You must believe more. Your faith is not very strong and is insufficient.’ In this way he drives them to despair. We are so constructed by nature that we desire to have a conscious faith. We’d like to grasp it with our hands and shove it into our bosom, but this doesn’t happen in this life. We can’t comprehend it, but we ought to apprehend it. We should hold to the Word and let ourselves drag along in this way.”





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

Is there really  
"nothing new  
under the  
sun"?

## Knowledge in search of wisdom

**P**onder this: Knowledge doubles every four to five years. "Based on the rate at which knowledge is growing, it can be speculated that by the time today's child reaches 50 years of age, 97 percent of everything known in the world at that time will have been learned since his birth" (Price Pritchett, *New Work Habits for the Next Millennium*).

Just what is all this knowledge we're collecting?

We can travel farther and faster, higher and deeper than ever before. We can collect and save more data in one computer than we can store on paper in any library. We can interrelate instantly all around the globe via computer networking. We study samples of soil from the moon and samples of DNA from beings living and dead.

Teacher of Ecclesiastes, where are you now? Is there really "nothing new under the sun" (1:9)?

Oh, don't dismiss him so easily. Whatever we think we know "was here already, long ago; it was here before our time" (1:10). We have learned only to see more of it more clearly, manipulate it in different ways, use more of its inherent properties.

But think of the progress.

Yes, think about it. We have so much more knowledge (translate: information, data, know-how), but have we progressed?

We can deliver a "smart bomb" down a chimney stack, but we can't keep troubled kids from shooting up our schools. We can send a rocket to Mars, but we can't keep our youth in school. We can clone just about anything living, but we can't keep the living from dying. We can replace all the plumbing to the heart, but we can't give heart to millions who are depressed. We can repair an infant's heart in the womb,

but we can't convince millions of mothers not to kill their infants in the womb. We can work miracles with technology, but we fail people again and again.

The Teacher of Ecclesiastes had a word for all of the wonderful knowledge we are uncovering. He called it "meaningless" (1:2).

"Meaningless?" you ask. "How can anyone who sees what computer technology has spawned call it meaningless?"

I know that I don't find it easy to call the present information glut meaningless. It has had a huge impact on our lives. And it has huge potential for meaningful use.

But here's the million-dollar question: "What is meaningful?" In a world where everyone must die, is it meaningful to improve "quality of life"? Or is it meaningful to give eternal life? In a world where everything evil begs for recognition, is it meaningful to give everything its day? Or is it meaningful to show the world God's way? In a world that wants to live life to the full, is it meaningful to look for new mountains to climb? Or is it meaningful to go to the mountain where we find the fullness of life in Christ?

Too many people come away from their latest high asking, "Is that all there is?" We can tell them, when they're feeling low, "No, there is infinitely more."

Knowledge, as the world counts it, multiplies. True wisdom, as God gives it, never changes because he never changes. So, learn what you can of our expanding knowledge, but check it always at the door of God's wisdom. That will give you 100 percent of what you need to know.

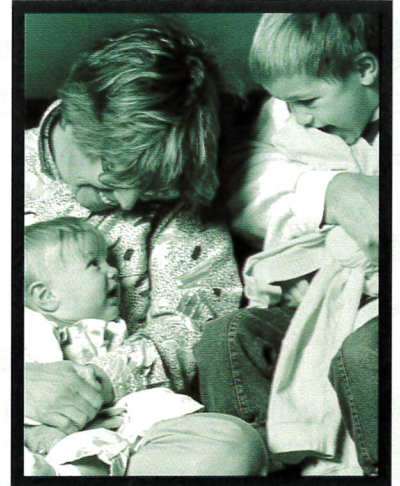
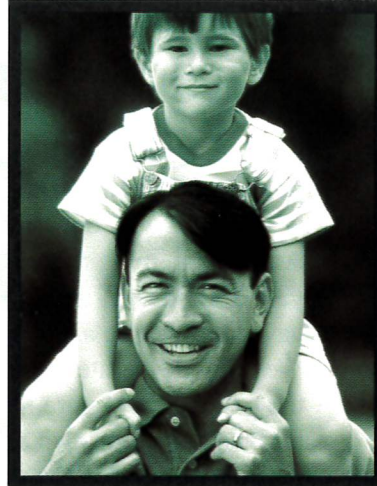
*Gary P. Baumler*



# Christian parenting

is a labor of love.

Did you ever consider using cradle roll as a ministry tool to promote and encourage parents and children in God's love? Now you can.



**STRONG  
Roots  
FOR tender  
Shoots**

**An in-home parenting  
curriculum for nurturing  
children from baptism  
through age four**

With *Strong Roots for Tender Shoots*, congregations can make a strong initial contact with parents of babies and young children—churched and unchurched—and maintain the contact through regularly scheduled visits.

By introducing a new teaching tool every six months, *Strong Roots* encourages parents to teach God's Word and the message of the Gospel to their children throughout these critical years of early childhood development. These resources nourish the faith the children receive through baptism.

So in addition to using *Strong Roots* as a way to help assist parents, consider using it as a great way to introduce unchurched families who have small children to God's grace in baptism and as a recruitment opportunity for Sunday School and Lutheran elementary school.

**The contents of this parenting curriculum include:**

Seven age-appropriate books for children up to age four.

Two magnets: biblical messages on a picture frame and a bandage.

Ten pamphlets that include:

- suggested parenting resources
- parenting tips
- encouragement
- songs
- poems and other activities

A Bible Study for Parents, *Spiritual Rebirth—How to Enjoy and Live the Blessings of Baptism*, is an integral part of *Roots and Shoots*. This Bible study includes the following lessons:

- What is Baptism?
- Baptism and Our Children
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# Creating more than Peanuts

A cartoonist gives us a subtle reminder about the Creator of our world.

Terry L. Laabs

The news was a bit sad, but somehow appropriate. The day of the last Sunday Peanuts cartoon strip, Peanuts' creator Charles M. Schulz died.

Schulz gave us Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, and Lucy. He invented their world, gave life to their quirks, and helped generations of people laugh at their foibles for nearly 50 years. More important, in creating the world of the Peanuts gang, he gave us a subtle reminder about the Creator of our world.

## Creating the medium

Clearly, if Schulz never picked up a pencil and started drawing cartoon characters, Charlie Brown and his friends would never have come to be. Yet some people believe our world came to be by accident, by random chance, without a creator. They claim that no superior intelligence, no higher power made the world we inhabit.

Perhaps they also believe that if you put a pencil and some paper into a box and shook it long enough, you would get 50 years worth of Peanuts comic strips.

But, believing there is a creator of our world makes us uncomfortable. It forces us to acknowledge a power and an intelligence vastly superior to even the best human minds. And it makes

us—creatures of such a power—answerable for what we do with our lives. Americans living in the year 2000 do not want to have to answer to anybody.

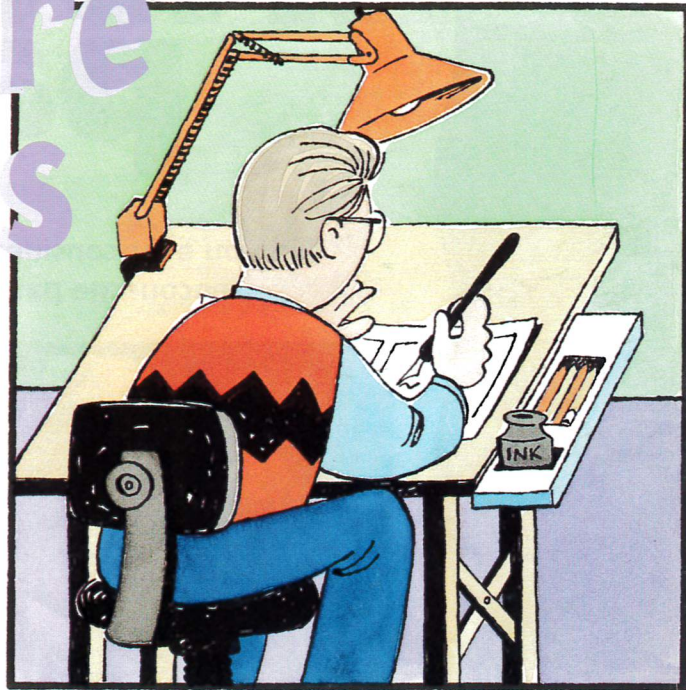
We cling desperately to the notion that we are independent, that we make our own decisions and set our own course. In that way we are like Snoopy, who generally refuses to acknowledge that anyone is his master, least of all poor old Charlie Brown.

In truth, we exist in a world filled with forces beyond our control. We live with constant reminders of the power and intelligence of the one who brought us and our world into being. And the daily headlines we read, telling us of the latest disaster or horrendous crime, remind us that one day soon we all will come face to face with that Creator—in death.

## Communicating the message

Many things in this world reinforce that we have a creator—even a little comic strip, with characters named Pigpen and the Little Red-Haired Girl.

It does us little good, however, to know that there is a creator, if we don't also know what he thinks about us. To communicate that, God left nothing to chance. He didn't merely send signs in nature. He didn't rely on



the voice of conscience within us. And he didn't write it into a comic strip.

He sent his own Son to give us the message in person. Jesus came into this world, put on our human flesh and blood, and lived in our skin. He did everything in life exactly the way the Creator intended—no mistakes. Then he traded places with us at the most crucial place of all, before the bar of the Creator's justice. He stepped in to serve the sentence we deserve, so we might have a second chance to experience what our Creator had in mind for us at creation. He did this all so he could give us this one simple message: "God loves you."

Schulz loved the Peanuts characters he created. He wrote at the end: "Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy . . . how can I ever forget them?" From the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we know that God our Creator loves us and will never forget us.

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