

JA 30 '01

FORWARD IN CHRIST

February 2001

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

Volunteering
in Africa

Training
Christian men

WELS Survey
2000



WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY
6575 W. WARTBURG CIRCLE
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53702

01 000595100 00001 2102 0803
WISCONSIN LUTH SEMINARY LIBR
6575 W WARTBURG CIR
MADISON WI 53702

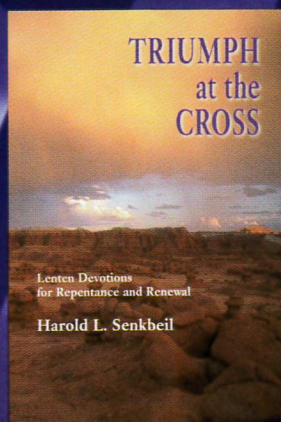
A WAY WE DID NOT CHOOSE

88/2

NPH confirmation
catalog inside

Are you tempted to dwell on feelings of guilt and expressions of self-denial during the season of Lent?

Fix your eyes on JESUS.



Triumph at the Cross
Lenten Devotions for Repentance and Renewal
Papercover. 170 pages.
LU06N0713... \$10.99
receive 25% off 3 or more

***Triumph at the Cross* reminds Christians, by way of the gospel, that Lent is instead a time of joyous renewal.** The author, Harold L. Senkbeil, directs you to the reassurance of Scripture, showing you that Jesus is here among us and that his gifts remain forever sure!

This popular collection of 40 daily devotions begins with Ash Wednesday and is interspersed by six Sunday passion narratives and a closing Easter Sunday meditation—all presented in comfortable, easy-to-read print.

And this Lent, comfort a friend or loved one by sharing these devotions. Now through April 16, 2001, when you order three or more copies, you'll **receive 25% off!**

Order today! Lent starts February 28.

Order online at www.wels.net/nph, or call 1-800-662-6022
(Milwaukee area 414-475-6600) 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. weekdays.



**Northwestern
Publishing House**
1250 North 113th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284

Discount available through April 16, 2001. This discount may not be used in combination with any other offers. Discover, MasterCard, and Visa accepted. All orders are subject to shipping and handling costs and sales tax where applicable.

Seeing God

*She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her:
 “You are the God who sees me,” for she said,
 “I have now seen the One who sees me.” Genesis 16:13*

Eric S. Hartzell

Hagar, Sarah’s slave, was running away. Many miles of howling desert lay between her and her former home in Egypt. She had been wounded by Sarah’s mistreatment. She was pregnant by Abraham. She was alone in the world. Life was as bad as it gets.

But the One saw. The One! And Hagar saw that One too. Her seeing made a difference with life’s mess swirling around her. In her trouble she named him. “You are the God who sees me,” she said. And she comforted herself with the realization, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

God sees his people

God does see his people. He sees the slaves, the foreigners, and the mistreated among them. He sees how sin affects them and plagues them and drives them into the deserts and lonely places of this world. And seeing these things, he finds his people. Always. “The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert.”

A blind god cannot be the Savior God. Hagar the Egyptian knew of the likes of Osiris and Isis and Ra and some 2,000 other gods. She knew they were pasted and painted all over the grave crypts in her native land. There they stared wide-eyed and unseeing in the dark around the corpses of their charges. They were like Isaiah said: “Their



Hagar in the desert

eyes are plastered over so they cannot see” (Isaiah 44:18).

But this God who found her by the spring was different. This was not only the God who saw her. This was the God who allowed her to see him.

God’s people see him

We want to see Jesus. We are like the Greeks who came to Philip one day and said, “Sir, . . . we would like to see Jesus” (John 12:21). We are like Job longing for the day “I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me” (Job 19:27). “Does he who formed the eye not see?” we hope with the psalmist

(Psalm 94:9). The God who made us see must also see us.

Life changes when we know that God sees us. It isn’t that life’s troubles end with this realization. They didn’t for Hagar. Her son would never enjoy the status of Isaac.

Instead of making people laugh for joy as Isaac’s very name said he did, her son would be “a wild donkey of a man.” Her son’s hand would be against everyone, and everyone’s hand would be against him. Still, this God who saw Hagar would continue to see her and watch her life intently. She derived comfort for her hard life from the fact that God saw her. The basis for that comfort wouldn’t change.

Every time we go to the Lord’s Supper we come away with the same conviction that Hagar had. We sing in departing, “Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace according to your Word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people.” We take our cue from Simeon. He too saw the God who saw him.

We want to see Jesus. We see him now with our eyes of faith. We look forward to the very experience Hagar had when Jesus shall come in the clouds and “every eye will see him” (Revelation 1:7).



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

FORWARD IN CHRIST Northwestern Lutheran

Official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

February 2001 / Vol. 88, No. 2
www.wels.net

Editorial office

Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran,
WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

FAX, 414/256-3899
<fic@sab.wels.net>

Editor

Rev. Gary P. Baumler, 414/256-3230
<garyb@sab.wels.net>

Senior Communications Assistant

Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231
<juliet@sab.wels.net>

Communications Assistant

Nicole R. Moline, 414/256-3232
<nicolem@sab.wels.net>

Seminary Consultant

R. D. Balge

Contributing Editors

J. A. Aderman, W. F. Beckmann, J. D. Buchholz,
K. A. Cherney, R. L. Gurgel, E. S. Hartzell,
R. K. Hunter, P. M. Janke, M. J. Lenz,
A. J. Panning, T. A. Westra, P. E. Zell

Art Director

Paul Burmeister

Graphic Designer

Carianne Neu

Photographs and Illustrations

Len Ebert, p. 3; Jim Wilt, p. 8; Tom Nachreiner,
p. 16; Dorothea Sarandos & Lifetouch Church
Directories, p.19; Robert Pasbrig & Daniel Thiel,
p. 5 & 20; Corbis, p. 36

Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran

Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran (ISSN 1526-
2529) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing
House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.
Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Rates: USA—\$10; single copy—\$1.50; large print—\$24.
Canada—\$10.70; single copy—\$1.61. All other countries—
air mail \$34; surface mail \$26. Postage included, payable
in advance to NPH. Write for multi-year, blanket, and
bundle rates. For single issues, Wisconsin add 5% sales
tax; Milwaukee County add 5.6% tax. Also available on
audiocassette from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559
Humboldt Ave, St. Paul MN 55107.

Subscription Services

1-800-662-6093. Milwaukee area 414/475-6600.
Or write NPH, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran, c/o NPH,
1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

©2001 by Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran.
Printed in the USA.



Cover art by Tom Nachreiner.

God uses our
misdirection for
our surprise
and delight.

16

bits & pieces



Ever get lost? I think we all have at one time or another. But sometimes there's a reason for this disorientation—whether it be on the actual highway or on the road of life. Learn more in our special three-page feature, "Finding our way" (p. 16).



Sometimes teens get "lost" along their way to adulthood.

- Jerry Kastens explores what parents can do if a child rejects Christian values and family ties (p. 12).

- One important finding in the WELS Survey 2000 is that WELS members want to do more for and with our youth. Read about this and other survey findings on p. 14.

- Two editorials focus on youth. Walter Beckmann emphasizes how important a parent's role is in the nurture and admonition of children (p. 7), while Gary Baumler emphasizes the role of the church (p. 34).



An important part of the job of WELS Synodical Council is working with the synod's Mission Objectives and Vision Statement. Learn more about the new direction the council is taking as well as what WELS' challenging opportunities are (p. 22). Then, in a special photo spread, see how a lay family seized one of those opportunities to serve (p. 8).



You may notice a special feature in the magazine this month. "Confirmation 2001 A Step in Faith," a catalog for the synod's official publisher, Northwestern Publishing House, offers suggestions and discounts for gifts you can give a child at an important event in his life.



Thanks to Northwestern Publishing House for providing full color for this issue.

—JKT

features

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

8 It starts by saying yes

A lay family discovers the joy of serving the Lord when they travel to Zambia to help WELS missionaries.

Jim Wilt

LOOKING BACK

10 The world is too much with us

In the 1990s, WELS acknowledged that its members were not exempt from the hurts and problems suffered by the world.

Mark E. Braun

RAISING TEENS: MISSION POSSIBLE

12 When teens stray

What can parents do when a child rejects Christian values and family ties?

Gerald F. Kastens

WELS SURVEY 2000

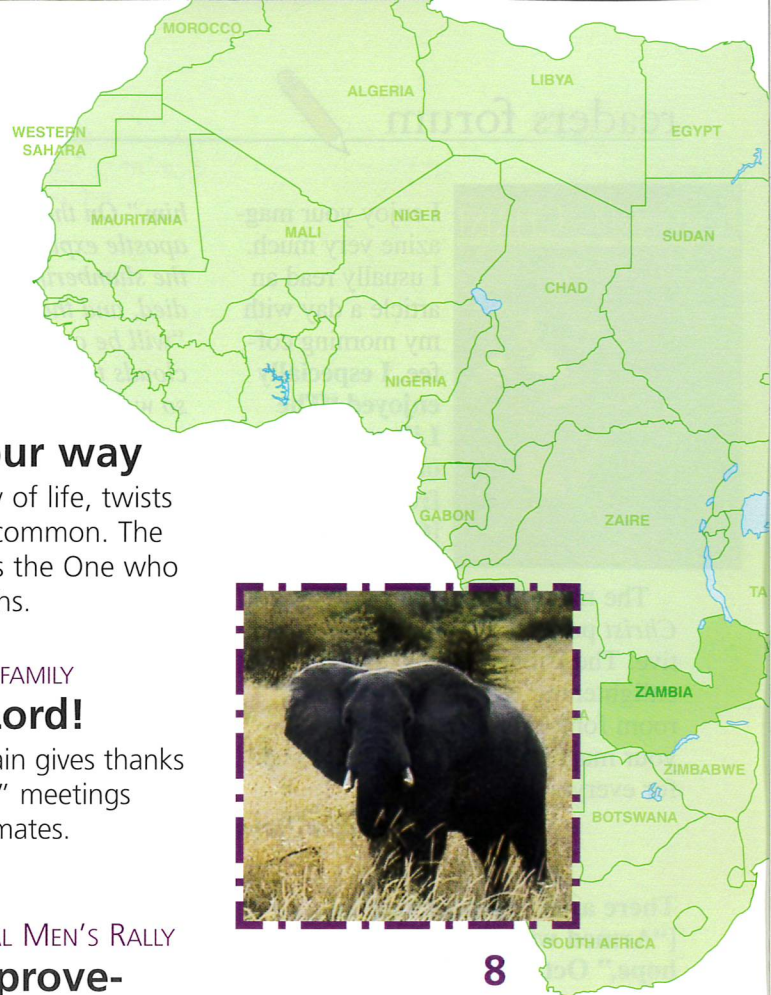
14 I am WELS

A recent synod survey shows how well WELS members understand WELS' mission, objectives, and vision.

Gary P. Baumler



20



INSIGHTS

16 Finding our way

On the journey of life, twists and turns are common. The one constant is the One who directs our paths.

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

19 Thanks, Lord!

A prison chaplain gives thanks for "accidental" meetings with former inmates.

Kenneth F. Lenz

WELS NATIONAL MEN'S RALLY

20 Home improvement—WELS style

Christian men gather to learn how to live, love, and lead so they can be men of God, fit for life.

Nicole R. Moline

PERSON TO PERSON

31 Send God a valentine

Our daily prayers, more than any valentine, are positive ways of showing God our grateful affection.

Karl R. Gurgel

INSIGHTS

36 Calling in the day of trouble

A visit from the volunteer fire department is a powerful reminder that help is just around the corner.

Terry L. Laabs



8

departments

3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY
Seeing God

6 READERS FORUM

7 EDITORIAL COMMENT
Let's learn from the elephants

22 WELS NEWS

28 WORLD NEWS

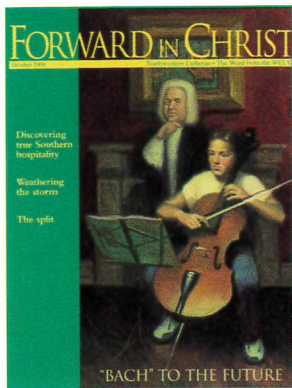
29 BULLETIN BOARD

30 BIBLE STUDY
The LORD, our strength

32 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY


33 POTLUCK

34 EDITOR'S PEN
Beyond Bo-Peep



I enjoy your magazine very much. I usually read an article a day with my morning coffee. **I especially enjoyed "The Life and Legacy of a Lutheran from Leipzig" [Oct. 2000] by James Tiefel.**

The many articles on *Forward in Christ* projects have been informative. The Bible study is always enlightening, and there is always room for humor. In other words, your magazine is well-rounded and for everyone. Bravo.

 Duane Timm

There are some sentences in ["Armed with faith, love, and hope," Oct. 2000] that are misleading. I quote: "No longer is death an endless, heart-rending separation. It is a type of sleep. Those who die in our Lord are blissfully unaware of what is going on around them."

The Seventh Day Adventists are making great inroads in our area—stealing sheep from other churches and denominations. The Sabbath is their great "hobby horse" that they ride, and another facet of their religion is "soul sleeping." We do not believe that (2 Corinthians 5:8). But in reading your article you are implying, too, that departed souls are sleeping.

Frieda Miller
Benton Harbor, Michigan

Author Paul Zell responds: "Death is a type of sleep," I wrote. I believe that is an acceptable statement that Scripture does not contradict. Yet perhaps it would have been clearer if I had appended three words to it: "... for the body."

St. Paul is comforting the Thessalonians with the good news that, just as Jesus rose from the dead, so also "we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in

him." On the day of his return, the apostle explains, Christ will awaken the slumbering bodies of all who have died, and those who are still alive "will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

Elsewhere in Scripture we find the promise that, even as the unconscious body of the believer is laid in the grave, his living soul is already with the Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:7, Luke 23:43).

For comment on why we rightly avoid using such expressions as "soul sleep," read the "Questions and Answers" section on the WELS Web site, <www.wels.net>. Look under the subheading "The Beginning and the End."

The article "Going the extra mile" [Nov. 2000] about mission work in the South Central District included

the statement "We (District Mission Board) had to close in Tyler, Wichita Falls, Abilene, Midland—which are located in more remote areas." Instead of "close" a mission I should have said discontinue subsidy for the work in these cities. I am happy and proud to announce that the group at Good Shepherd, Midland, Tex., has kept the mission alive with local funds and is served by Pastor Guy Bergenthal from Lubbock. If anyone is looking for a WELS church in Midland or Odessa, Tex., just look up Good Shepherd, Midland.

Pastor Myrl Wagenknecht
 North Richland Hills, Texas

Beckmann's article [**"Freedom of religion," Nov. 2000**] was well-written and stated WELS' stance on public prayer clearly. The article ended, "But God never commanded us to pray before football games."

Even if we don't join in with the prayer of others who are praying a public prayer, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 commands us: "Pray without ceasing" (KJV). The words "without ceasing" mean that we *should* pray before

football games and at all times, but do not mean that we must pray the same prayer as those with whom we do not doctrinally agree.

We should *always* be talking with our dear heavenly Father, even while others are praying—or trying to stop us from praying (Daniel 6).

Carlene Hammonds
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma


I would like to respond to "A missing link" [Dec. 2000].

Pastor Victor Prange begins the article with an evangelical approach when he states: "Should Holy Communion be offered on festivals like Christmas and Easter? WELS congregations answer such a question in various ways. That is as it should be, since our Lord Jesus Christ has not given New Testament Christians any rules telling us when and how often we ought to celebrate this sacrament."

Later he states: "Yet many Christians belong to WELS congregations that FAIL to celebrate Holy Communion on these most significant festival days . . . Should we not be a church of Word and sacrament also on Christmas and Easter?" (emphasis mine)

To fail at something, in the least, insinuates breaking a rule or law or expectation. Are WELS congregations that do not offer Holy Communion on Christmas and Easter NOT churches of Word and sacrament?

We have no New Testament laws regarding worship or the reception of the Lord's Supper, other than to be glad to gather with fellow Christians for worship often and receive our Lord's body and blood often. We should be careful not to say more than our Lord does.

Pastor Dan Schoeffel
 St. Charles, Michigan

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <fic@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*.

Let's learn from the elephants

Walter F. Beckmann

I've always been fascinated by elephants. One of my most exciting childhood memories was watching 64 Ringling Brothers elephants being unloaded from their railroad cars and marched through our town to the circus lot. When I went to the movies I always knew that the elephants would come whenever Tarzan called them. I've often tried to picture the Battle of Raphia in 217 BC when the Egyptian army with 73 elephants fought and defeated the Syrian army with 104 elephants.

With such a lifelong predilection for pachyderms, it was only natural that my attention was captivated by a recent public television special about African elephants. In an attempt to thin out the local herd, the authorities killed off a number of the older males and moved a group of females and young bulls to another area. Before long, white rhinos in that area were being killed, not by poachers, but by the young bulls who were trying to prove their physical prowess. One elephant even organized a gang of fellow delinquents and began leading attacks against tourist buses.

The authorities shot some of the trouble-makers but then came up with a better solution. They released a few old males from another area into the troubled neighborhood. The older males immediately began to bring the young bulls into line. They took them on in tusking matches and bested them. They didn't shed any blood or harm them. They just deflated their pride and taught them that you don't have to kill rhinos to prove you're an elephant, just play the majestic role God has assigned to you. Peace soon returned to that part of the bush.

Do you get the same message I did? It's a father's responsibility to teach his sons

that their God-given role is not to prove their manliness by abusing other people but by restraining such macho inclinations and being strong promoters of peace. Crime and violence are the natural result in a society in which fathers abandon their responsibility to teach this to their sons.

God tells us that we can learn a lot from the world he created. His psalmist tells us, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). They tell us much about the wisdom of the one who made them. In Proverbs 6:6 the Lord tells us that we can learn the value of hard work and ambition from the ant. Jesus tells us that the sparrows and lilies can teach us how to deal with the cares and fears of life (Matthew 6:25-34). Could God be using the elephant to teach us a lesson about proper parenting?

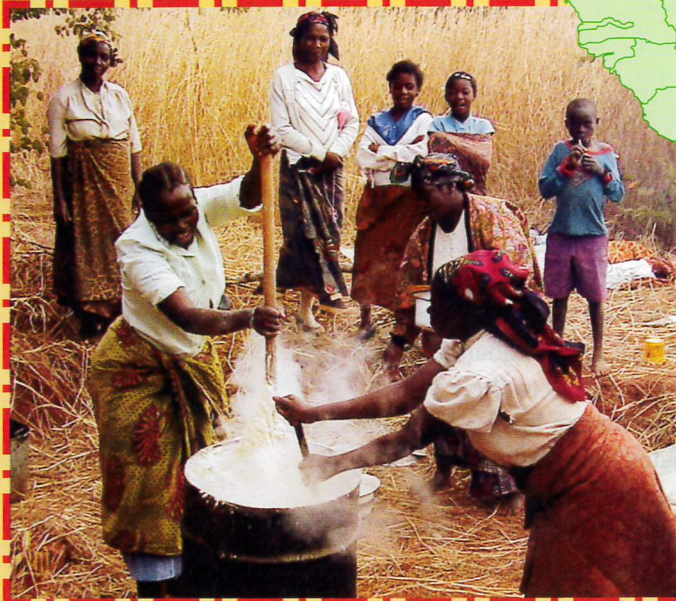
Of course our responsibility is far greater than that of the old bull elephants. It is our God-given duty to teach our sons, and daughters too, not only the paths of righteousness in which God would have us walk, but also to know Jesus our Savior, our only source of forgiveness and our only hope of blessed eternal life in heaven. This we can't learn from any creature of nature but only from God's own Word.

As we teach these truths to our children, they'll not only become wise to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, but will also have the proper motivation and strength to try to become the kind of loving people God would have us be. And our communities will become a little safer because of it.

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

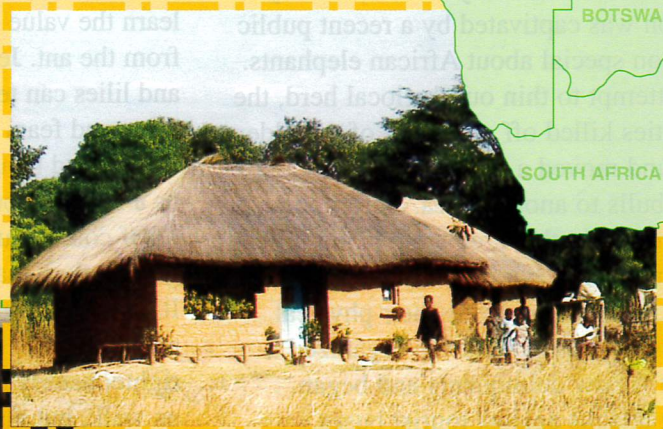
Could God be using the elephant to teach us a lesson about proper parenting?

IT STARTS BY



A Zambian "kitchen." The Zambians provide well for themselves and for their servants of the Lord at church camps. Meals consist of *nshima*—a cornbread food that looks like mashed potatoes with the consistency of play-dough. You can add *rape* (a vegetable mixture) and/or meat (beef, pork, goat, fish, or chicken). In the morning, you may have Zambian tea with goat's milk (and six teaspoons of sugar).

In the bush, homes are meticulously detailed and made of mud bricks with either a thatch or metal-sheet roof. Villages are composed of mostly family and have huts grouped around a common outdoor kitchen with meals shared among the family/village. The Zambians are conservative, clean people. Their behavior is quiet, polite, and highly respectful.



Getting around the bush can be frustrating, as transportation is a sought after resource in Zambia. Our missionaries continually receive requests for transportation to remote areas. They must show compassion to their congregations' needs while not confusing the fact that they are there to spread God's Word and not be a taxi service.



One of the most amazing things about the trip was the wildlife and landscapes. We never witnessed as clear a sky, beautiful a waterfall, or stars as bright.

SAYING YES

Jim Wilt

In January 1999, Missionary Dan Kroll in Ndola, Zambia, invited the Wilt family to teach a class on different religions at some of our WELS missions in Zambia. After a year and a half of planning and lesson preparation, the Wilts spent June 17 to July 29, 2000, traveling in Zambia—teaching, exploring, and learning. See more pictures and read more about the trip at <www.geocities.com/wiltjk>.

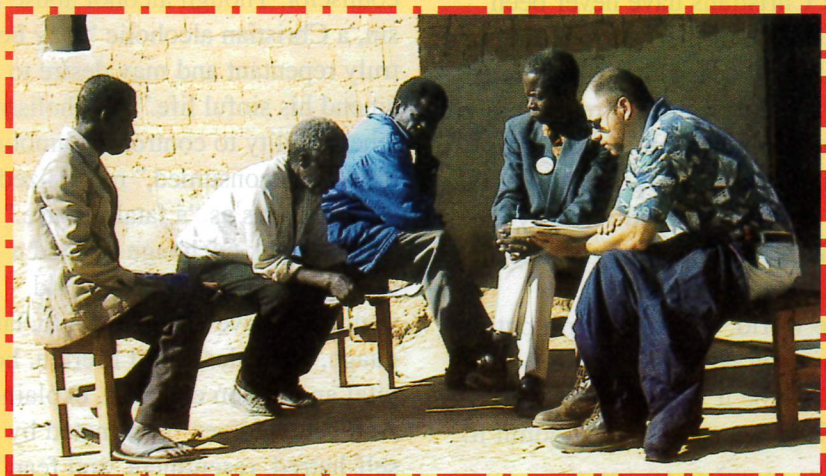
You, too, can become a missionary. Join a Forward in Christ mission team. Call 414/256-3201, or contact WELS Kingdom Workers at 800/466-9357.



Jim Wilt teaching at Malifeyo. Initial skepticism of the class and the lay teacher diminished after the first two lessons were completed. One reason Missionary Dan Kroll invited the Wilts to Zambia was to prove the value of laymen. "Because Jim is not a pastor, he was able to show that laymen cannot use the excuse 'I'm just a layman' to account for mediocrity or a lack of zeal for the gospel work," says Kroll. The class, taught in six different locations, was also important because many Zambians are exposed to the message of Christ, but are getting false doctrine interlaced with or replacing that message.



The Wilt family: Meg, Andy, Jim, and Katie. The Wilts are members at Christ our Savior, Rockford, Mich. Jim on volunteering: "I've learned to say yes when our Lord offers opportunities. It starts by saying yes to attending a Bible study, then saying yes to teaching Sunday School. It just keeps on building from there. What's best is that it doesn't end with Africa. It continues to get better. I praise and thank our Lord for all the opportunities we've had—and all those yet to come!"



Missionary Dan Kroll (right) and Zambian congregational lay leaders. Because our missionaries typically serve a dozen or more congregations, they cannot visit each church every week but rather visit monthly. During the weeks they aren't there, a congregational lay reader presents a prepared sermon. Our missionaries must spend time in study with the lay readers so they present the message with a full understanding.





The world is too much with us

In the 1990s, WELS acknowledged that its members were not exempt from the hurts and problems suffered by the world.

Mark E. Braun

The anonymous author of the second century *Letter to Diognetus* wrote: "The soul is in the body but is not of the body. Christians are in the world but not of the world."

Yet Christians have never been entirely free of their surroundings. WELS long ceased being separated from its American culture by foreign tongue or immigrant isolation. As the 20th century drew to a close, the hurts and problems suffered by the world seemed increasingly to afflict WELS members too.

The world, as Wordsworth put it, is too much with us.

Or maybe it was always so, but in the 1990s we could finally admit it.

Drug and alcohol addiction

In June 1990, *Northwestern Lutheran* (NL) writer Carleton

Toppe insisted that the Bible treats excessive use of alcohol as something one can control. "God does not consider the alcoholic a victim of disease." A spirited reply came from John Cook, recovering alcoholic and counselor. Though alcohol abuse is a sin, a Christian alcoholic "may be truly repentant and may desire to amend his sinful life." Alcoholism is "the inability to control the amount of alcohol consumed," recognized by many experts as "a fatal disease."

This frank exchange opened a floodgate. The addictive world seemed to have "its own logic, language, and rules," Phil Merten, hospital and prison chaplain, explained. Addicts live lives "dominated by self-hatred, resentment, and fear," powerless to quit because they have become "physically, emotionally, and spiritually bankrupt."

Hardest to accept was that the alcoholics and drug abusers Merten described were all members of WELS congregations. On any given Sunday, one-fourth of a pastor's audience "may not be able to function effectively in the body of Christ due to their own addiction or that of a loved one."

The church, one addict figured, was probably like the rest of the world, hoping to ignore the problem. "I think there are a lot of people like me in the church, and that's the first place they should go to get help; but they're afraid they'll be rejected."

Most painful were the confessions of a former pastor. Preparing for the ministry, he spent his college Friday nights trying to be a "real man" who could survive a pilgrimage to the local bars and down a beer at every stop. Finishing seminary and receiv-

ing a call, he resolved to quit drinking, but as duties and stress increased, his alcoholism returned. He lost his family and his ministry, yet God used other Christians to restore him. Today he drinks only communion wine. The cup that once enslaved him now sets him free.

"I'm finding out what power Jesus has to dismantle this trap," Merten wrote. One recovering alcoholic rejoiced that "the love and acceptance God has for me, the love of Jesus dying on the cross" broke through the pain and "emotionlessness" his addiction caused.

Other social problems

Soon others acknowledged that their troubles had also entered through the church door. An incest survivor recalled the confusion she felt because her father and mother took her to church, even while she was being abused by her father and an uncle. "I'd think I wasn't worthy." God "only watches over the important people," she thought, and she never felt important.

Evangelical and conservative Christians often fail to see that "a homosexual may not be a gay liber." She may be the housewife who heads the church altar guild or the teenage boy who ushers you to your pew. "Condemn the sin of homosexuality. But don't condemn the repentant sinner," advised one man who changed his way of life.

The October 1996 NL cover featured a young woman cowering in a corner of her kitchen. In the cover article, a county prosecuting attorney urged congregations to ensure the physical safety of domestic violence victims and pressed pastors to speak out about this sin. "When church-going dad beats church-going mom, and a congregation of

Christians looks the other way, it is understandable why many children abandon their faith and look elsewhere for comfort."

Church problems

The Program Review Committee of the synod's 1993 convention noted a "growing cynicism and loss of confidence" plaguing not only society and business but churches as well. NL editor James Schaefer

- David Valleskey, 1991, on the church growth movement: "When a congregation is concerned primarily about its growth rather than the growth of the Holy Christian Church, that will inevitably affect the way it carries out its work. It will start looking upon the unchurched with the eyes of a businessman, seeing them as an untapped market, as potential 'customers,' and will then strive to bring them in by giving them what they want even though it may not be what they need." Such an approach may add numbers to a congregation but will never grow the Church. "The message of Christianity will always be an offense to the unbeliever."

- NL editor Gary Baumler wrote in 1994 that opinions regarding the 1993 decision to amalgamate Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College into one new school had run from "a wise, bold step forward" to "the most tragic decision ever made by WELS." Of primary importance was that the new college maintain its focus on ministerial education. "The strength of WELS' pastor education has been its in-depth study of God's Word, using the original languages of Scripture. No matter where we do that training or what tools we use, we dare not lose that emphasis."

agreed that "a deadly lack-of-trust virus" had spread from Washington politicians to WELS pews.

The catchword of the decade appeared to be *bashing*. "Are Lutherans hypercritical?" Paul Kelm asked in 1992. For us a "little error" in theology is "a contradiction in terms," yet "nit-picking perfectionism" and negative criticism debilitated both critic and target. Kelm warned how "labeling" had grown destructive in the church: "'Traditionalists' do 'maintenance ministry.' 'Visionaries' must be infected with 'church growth.'" Such labeling obscures truth and polarizes people.

Healing

Though the world seems too much with us, we turn where Christians have always turned for healing and hope. "I opened the door to my past," a survivor of childhood sexual abuse reported. Her Christian counselor reacted not with shock or dismay but with genuine understanding. "I learned there is no sin that God has not forgiven through Jesus, or any wound that cannot be healed by the Holy Spirit. I learned to lay claim to the truth that I am a child of God."

We're never going to get it right, Kelm wrote in 1993. But "Jesus got it right. He did everything God asked of us, perfectly. Then he suffered God's judgment on all our screw-ups. He got it right for us." And so "you and I don't have to be so defensive, so self-justifying and perfectionist. Now we don't have to make each other pay for screw-ups." We are free to enjoy the Savior's forgiveness and to pass it on to others. "We can be part of God's solution instead of mere critics of the world's problem. Life is looking up!"



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

WHEN TEEN STRAY

It is devastating when a child rejects Christian values and family ties. What can parents do for such a child?

Gerald F. Kastens

Sagging shoulders and downcast eyes betrayed weariness as the couple slid into the padded office chairs at church. “We’ve learned that our daughter is living with a man to whom she is not married,” the husband began.

His wife continued, “We did our best to raise her in a Christian home. She went with us to church and attended Sunday school—what she is doing is contradictory to the way that she was raised. It hurts us deeply. What can we do? We feel so guilty. What will others think of us?”

It is devastating when a child rejects Christian values and family ties. One sad scene in the Bible is when Absalom rebelled against his father, David (2 Samuel 18).

Sadly, many Christian parents have experienced the crushing blow when children stray from God’s Word. They feel disappointed with God. They pray for their children; but God doesn’t seem to act, or he doesn’t do what they ask him to do. They want God to fix things, but things just seem to get worse. What can parents do when they feel backed into a corner because of their child’s rebellious actions?

What not to do

- Don’t let anger cloud your judgment or rule your life. Anger is a product of rejection, the instinctive response to fear, pain, or frustration, which are all experienced by hurting parents. Do you sin in your anger?

A first step in dealing with sinful anger is admitting it by seeking God’s forgiveness. The next step is to ask God to replace it with something less natural—unconditional love. (See 1 Corinthians 13.)

- Don’t be fooled into thinking parents can become “saviors” of their children. God’s ability to work in the lives of children doesn’t depend on our resources. Although we must be responsible, only Jesus can be the Savior of our children. Teenagers who reject God’s salvation are ultimately responsible for their actions. Through prayer and the Word, trust our loving Father with the outcome of a teenager’s life.

- Don’t set unreasonable timetables. Time can be so discouraging.

The longer things go on, the more hopeless things seem. Remember that God is oblivious to time. His timetable is not the same as ours. He is also working all the time whether we see it or not. "All things are possible with God," and our Lord is the God of second chances.

- Don't let feelings of guilt paralyze. A common human response to guilt is self-pity, concern for what others will think and say. Self-pity becomes a vicious whirlpool that sucks us deeper into a black hole. Sometimes parents transfer their own feelings of guilt to their wayward child. Heaping retaliatory guilt on a straying child is dangerous business. Most straying children have enough guilt of their own. If more guilt is imposed, they may never return to the family unit.

- Don't give up on prayer. Sometimes prayer is the only real weapon that Christian parents have. Where is God when we hurt? Listening and healing.

Positive steps parents can take

- Recognize that a kind of cancer is alive in each of us—children and adults. Jeremiah diagnoses that cancer in the human heart as "wickedness." For parents to help their children, they first need God's help. The cross of Christ is where we can leave our guilt and find the peace that comes with the knowledge of sins forgiven. God the Father understands too well what parents are going through. He once created two perfect children and placed them in a perfect environment, and they rebelled against him. Unconditional love drove him to send his Son to save his wayward creatures.

- Work on the husband-wife relationship. Some people wonder, "What does our marriage have to do with our parent-teen relationship?"

Everything. Don't let a straying child destroy a home. If the two people leading the family aren't getting along, family renewal can hardly be expected. A straying child can cause a breach between husband and wife and between parents and other siblings, and totally disrupt peace and harmony. This unity and peace must be maintained, even if the child has to be expelled from the home.

- Seek an understanding person to talk to. Sometime parents feel that they are alone and no one can help them. That simply isn't true. The key to finding help is a willingness to let Christian friends, a pastor, or a Christian counselor know what is going on. Look to your congregation as a source of fellowship, strength, and support.

- Accept wayward children without approving of their behavior. Disapproval of a child's rebellious behavior often leads to rejection—by either ignoring or attacking the child. Rejection is usually a desperate attempt to shock or deter someone from acts of rebellion. But rejection can easily backfire. Threats and angry outbursts are inappropriate uses of the law. Remember, the law doesn't change hearts. Only the gospel can do that. The main goal in a relationship with a wayward child is reconciliation—to God and parents.

- Offer a straying child unconditional love. Jesus' parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32) demonstrates unconditional love in action. The waiting father didn't have a carefully crafted agenda of "My son first must recognize his wrongdoing. He must apologize to me and his brother. Of course, he will have to work to pay back his share of the inheritance." Every day, he watched, waiting with arms ready to embrace and forgive. The father didn't condone his son's actions, but freely offered

forgiveness. The result? He was reconciled to his son.

It would be so much better if life could be simpler.

I wish that my snow blower always started and that weeds never grew and that rain never fell on afternoons set aside for fishing. I sincerely wish that all Christian parenting efforts would be guaranteed to turn out well.

But we live in a fallen world. The last trace of the perfect family was removed when Adam and Eve were led from the Garden of Eden in disgrace. Their disobedience shattered their family-like relationships with their heavenly Father and with one another. Sin made the perfect family an impossible dream this side of the grave. Trouble promises to continue until our Savior's reappearance.

When Christian parents seek reconciliation with a wayward child, much is unknown. But remember that we are not a people who are "future shocked"—unhappy with the present because of a longed-for past. Rather, we are people who are "advent shocked"—impatient with the present because of a longed-for future. We know the One who holds the future. " 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' " (Jeremiah 29:11). We have been born anew to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus. We are a celebrating people. In Jesus' resurrection, we have hope. In spite of personal pain and loss and deterioration within our families, God's love and our place in God's kingdom remain unchanged. Thank God!

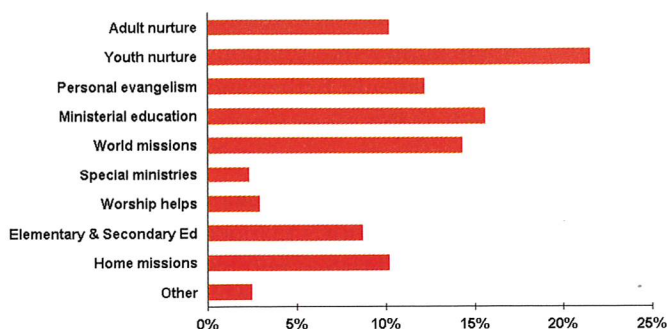
Gerald Kastens is minister of discipleship at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

I am WELS

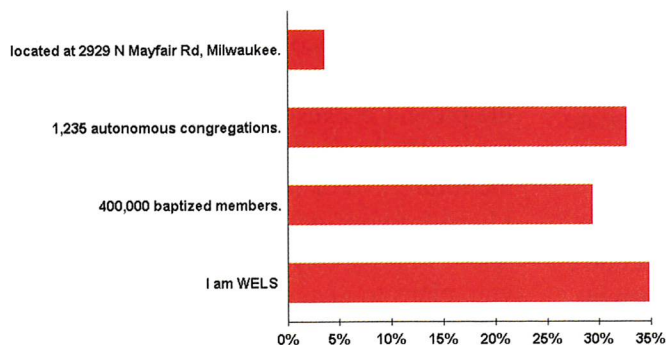
A recent synod survey shows how well WELS members understand WELS' mission, objectives, and vision.

Gary P. Baumler

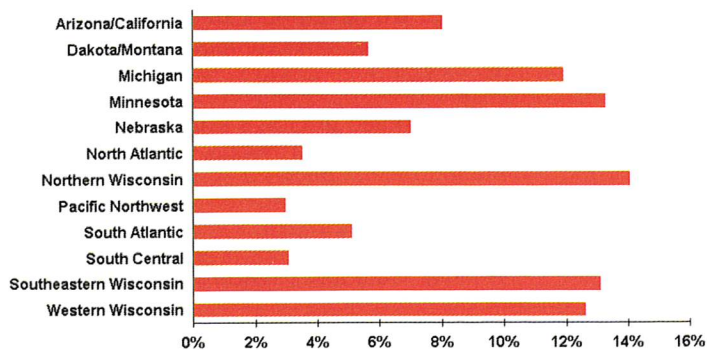
WELS' most pressing needs are



What phrases below most closely approximate your understanding of WELS? (What do you think of when you think of WELS?) WELS is ...



District



If synod means “walking together,” who is doing the walking? How much of a disconnect exists between the synod’s organization and the people? Between the synod’s churches and its members? Who is responsible for the synod’s ministry? Where does our ministry need the most attention? The WELS Survey 2000 helps answer those kinds of questions.

Who is WELS?

In nearly equal numbers, for example, WELS members think of WELS as the 1,235 autonomous congregations (33%) or as the 400,000 plus baptized members (29%) or as themselves (“I am WELS,” 35%). Only 3% think first of the WELS organization located in Milwaukee.

We need to think of the synod in more personal terms. Only when I can say, “I am WELS,” will I see my responsibility for the ministry in WELS.

How firm is our confession?

We in WELS see our synod as highly confessional. Eighty-six percent of us strongly agree that “WELS public ministers faithfully and energetically proclaim the Word of God in accord with the Lutheran Confessions.” (On a scale of 1 to 7, 6 and 7 were counted as strongly agreeing, 1 and 2 as strongly disagreeing.) Ninety-four percent strongly agree that “WELS upholds the truth of God as revealed in the inspired, inerrant, infallible Holy Scriptures.” And, in WELS churches, we “help each other grow and mature in faith through public worship and a life-long study of the Word of God” (75%). Praise God!

However, in a major section of the survey, the respondents were asked also to rate their own (“I help make it happen. I promote it. I support it.”) and their congregation’s involvement. The level of agreement always drops off significantly. For example, only 67% strongly agree that they help WELS uphold the truth of God. Although it’s still a high percentage, the lower number (compared to the 94% above) reveals some disconnect between the measure for the synod and the measure of self-responsibility. Still, the synod can only be as confessional as the people who comprise it.

How much do we share Jesus?

If we are confessional, how are we at sharing our confession with others? Only half (51%) of our people strongly agree that “WELS fosters a sense of urgency for the lost.” Just one-third of them have the same level of confidence in their own involvement (33%, their congregations’ involvement 38%). Less than half (44%) strongly agree that “WELS seizes every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls.” About one-fifth (22%) feel that they play a personal part in seizing the opportunities to evangelize.

The WELS mission statement, echoing Christ’s Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), says that we exist “to make disciples throughout the world . . . to win the lost for Christ. . . .” Are those merely words to many of us? Clearly, we need to be about doing what Christ has commissioned us to do. Half of us, in fact, want WELS to “increase service” in evangelism (49%) and one-third in home missions (34%), world missions (33%), and mass media outreach (33%). It starts with you.

How are we involving our youth?

The mission statement also stresses our need “to nurture believers for lives of Christian service. . . .” How are we doing? When it comes to our youth, WELS members express deep concern. Over half of them call for WELS to increase service in “youth nurture” (52%). Over a third want the same in “youth service” (36%). Youth needs also received significant attention in the later unprompted responses to what one thing you would change in the synod if you could.

The future of our church under God belongs to the young. In the face of rapidly changing times and mores, we need to pay more atten-

tion than ever to youth matters as a top priority. Do you sense the urgency? Are you prepared to act?

Speaking of youth, half of WELS members (50%) want to see us increase our recruitment for ministers. Fewer strongly agree that “WELS does a good job of recruiting candidates qualified for public ministry” (45%). Only 23% can say as strongly, “I help make it happen.” Some of the most meaningful recruiting, however, happens one-on-one between acquaintances and especially among family members.

What else should we attend to?

In two open-ended questions without any prompts, a number of issues surfaced. Although none is of overwhelming concern, all can use attention. For example, questions are raised about the position of women in the church: What about them voting? How can women who are heads-of-households be heard? How can women be more active in the church’s ministry? People are concerned with things from the number of pastors in administrative positions to the recruitment of pastors and teachers to WELS’ image and fellowship matters to apathy.

A clear voice (almost 10%) was heard for increasing use of technology in communications. Please do more with the Internet. Expand the use of e-mail as a means of spreading news and information. Keep a presence in mass media. Expand the use of video.

Any survey is only as good as the information gained from it and, more important, the use that is made of the information. In some ways, we may already have known much of what this survey told us. But can we use the survey now to do something about it? Let’s start by praying so.

A more complete evaluation of this survey was sent to each pastor and each synodical representative in our congregations. You can get a copy from them or contact WELS Communication Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210; <debbiek@sab.wels.net>.



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

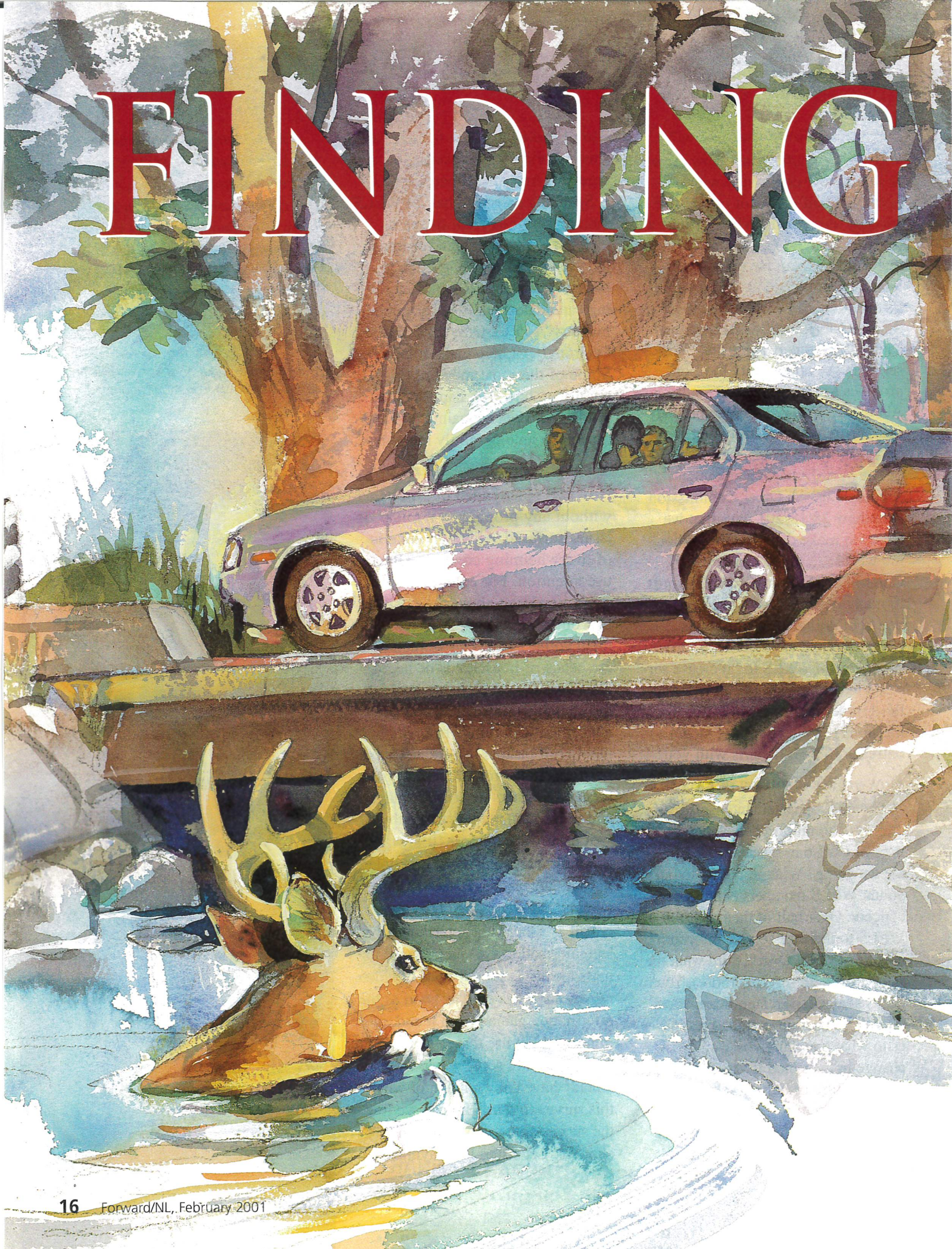
Background information

Early in 2000, every WELS congregation was given the opportunity to have up to 10 persons respond to a survey to help determine how well they related to our synod’s mission statement and resulting ministry. Almost 5,000 people responded: pastors 11%, teachers 12%, laity 72%, ministerial students 5%—men 59% and women 41%. It is assumed that virtually all participants were active members. The survey has a 99% confidence level with a plus or minus 1.7% standard error.

How are we using the results?

All WELS boards and commissions have been asked to look at the results of this survey and determine how, if at all, the survey affects their ministry. WELS Communication Services, for example, will be exploring with Youth Discipleship how we might use video to improve communications with the synod’s teens. Also, the results prompt us to call for more two-way communication. Don’t wait for a survey. Let us hear from you about how we all can serve the Lord better. Contact WELS Communication Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210; <fic@sab.wels.net>.

FINDING





OUR WAY

**On the journey of life, twists and turns are common.
The one constant is the One who directs our paths.**

One day on the way home I took a short cut down a rustic road and got turned around. Not lost, “turned around.”

I am always turned around. I have no sense of direction. If it’s north we are supposed to go, I go south. If it’s right, I turn left.

On our first date my wife was highly suspicious of where I was taking her. Now after 30 years she only laughs and tells me the right way. But she still thinks I can learn it if I only work at it. I tell her you can’t teach a colorblind person to see red. It’s a genetic flaw, this disorientation. To prove it to her I cite my father and my brother, who are equally as bad as I am. When we three are together and driving alone, plan for an hour later. We do not just guess badly; we are always wrong.

Such consistency has convinced me that it really is a genetic problem. Some people have especially keen eyesight; others need glasses from kindergarten on. Some are Mozarts, prodigy musicians; others can’t carry a tune. Some have nearly perfect orientation, like my brother-in-law who gives directions and verbal maps to no avail to my brother, my dad, and me.

Recent research into the mysteries of bird migration gives me hope, not of finding my way, but of validating that I have a handicap. Geese migrate without flaw, at night, in fog. No one knows how. Recently, dissection of the brains of geese has revealed some part to be, get this, sensitive to magnetism. The birds have an internal compass.

Nothing has been said yet about human brains. Nothing has to be said to my brother, my dad, and me. We know. The reason we get lost all the time—not lost, remember, disoriented—is not that we have no magnets, but rather that they are wrong. We are not just wrong; we are always 180

degrees wrong, exactly opposite. My dad, my brother, and I have our magnets in backwards.

I used to be frustrated and embarrassed, but I have adjusted. I plan on being late. I enjoy the outings and the surprises. In fact, I look for them.

When we got lost that day on the rustic road, I told my complaining son that it was all for the good, that we would see things we would never see if we hadn’t come this way, that God used these kinds of things for our surprise and delight, that we would see things exquisite and unknown, that—he wasn’t buying any of it. He wanted to get home early.

Making yet another U-turn, I crossed a bridge. There in the water was a full rack of antlers. It was moving, attached to a deer’s head; he was swimming across the river just reaching the shore. “Lookit!” I exclaimed. But my wife and our other children were looking elsewhere or dozing. In the two seconds it took to cross the bridge it was over. The only one who saw it was my son.

I believe what I told him, that God uses my poor direction and bad timing for good purposes. I firmly believe that. When I first noticed it, it had to do with meeting someone. I was beyond upset over myself for being lost and late. I despised myself. I called myself bad names out loud. When I finally arrived, it turned out that if I had been there earlier, it would have been the wrong time. I came at an exquisite moment, and it made all the difference. I went home puzzled and agape. I repented my car language. I apologized to God. I thanked him for a masterstroke. I stood in awe.

It happens to me a lot. Now I expect it. I still get frustrated and angry. But then, it happens again. Sometimes it isn’t getting lost. It may be missing a traffic light. It may be road

continued on p. 18

Finding . . . continued from p. 17

construction. It may be the pickup truck with the 26 bales of hay. And then I turn the wrong way on Losey Boulevard. I finally get to the hospital for the sick call. I actually came to see one of the family as much as the patient, but now I wonder how I can speak to him privately, knowing that I will never be able to meet him except in this hospital today—and now I am desperately late. Again.

God will orchestrate our confusion. He will direct our misdirection.

I grit my teeth. I bite my lip. I clench my knuckles waiting for the elevator. The door finally opens. There he is! The guy I want to see. If I had been 20 seconds earlier I would have missed him to another elevator. If I had been a minute later I would have missed him to the parking ramps.

“Oh, hi Pastor.” We go to the coffee shop.

I repent again. I can’t tell you how many times this has happened to me. I have come to trust that God will, in fact, use all things, even my getting lost, for good. Like my son’s deer, things exquisite and unknown get found only because I come a way I have not chosen.

My dad and my brother are now in the midst of a disorientation of another kind, a going a way they have not chosen, and never would. The week before Christmas 1999 my dad was diagnosed as having colon cancer. During the same week, to the shock and dismay of our family, my brother was diagnosed as having bladder cancer. Surgeries were postponed till the

new millennium. It came.

My dad, who is 82, endured a beastly surgery. It was hard standing by unable to do anything. After five days he crawled out of bed in his gown and I.V. hook-ups to meet the gurney in the hall that was taking his son to surgery. It was a hard scene.

My brother’s surgery was more difficult. Even more serious. His recovery was marred by two more hospitalizations. Then one more for my dad. My brother is burned from radiation. It might as well be fire. Right now they both suffer the weaknesses, the malaise, the gloom, the fear, the despondency, the indignities, the disorientation of chemotherapy.

It is a direction they did not choose. It is a turn-around of life. It is a great wasting, a using up, of precious time. It is a bad road, unwanted and hard, terribly hard, with a great deal of wonder about ever arriving.

It says in Romans 8 that we don’t know how to pray as we ought. We don’t. We are highchair kids who want to tell Mom and Dad how to run the household. We are five-year-olds in the car on the way to Disney World for the first time, crying silently with disappointment because Dad drove right past that little park with the big slide, and we thought that was it.

In our disappointments, in our fears, in our anger and pain, God will groan with us, will groan out our prayers, translated into not only things meaningful but things consistent with his will. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). Don’t forget the last part. My purpose is to get there on time. Sometimes God

will, instead, take me where there are things exquisite and unknown.

But I miscue. I am too solipsistic. They are things exquisite for someone else. It is for some purpose greater than mine. It is someone else’s finding the way because of my presence at a place where I never would have gone. And, like most of my family that day, we may not see the deer. It is told to us. It is told that someone saw because of our inconvenience. Someone came, because we came later. Someone found, because we lost. Someone lived, because I hurt. Someone found Christ in my pain.

God will orchestrate our confusion. He will direct our misdirection. He will align our missed timings. He will take our bad turns, our unchosen path, our unwanted place, our frustration over it all, our worry, our fear, our pain, our loss of dignity and fit it all to a sublime outcome.

He considers some strong enough, some brave enough, some faithful enough, some trusting enough to go without a compass, knowing only that they are going with him.

“I’ll be with you!” It’s the last thing Jesus said on this earth.

Here’s how it goes:
“All power is mine! Go—teach! I’ll be with you!”

We didn’t think it would be this, this teaching by example, on this road.

But I can tell you, my brother and my dad have never had a clearer sense of orientation and surety in how to get home. With him. We can all see it. And we can follow. For certain.

Because of the personal nature of this article, the author wishes to remain anonymous.

Thanks, Lord!

A prison chaplain gives thanks for “accidental” meetings with former inmates.

Kenneth F. Lenz

I was a guest preacher for a Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries (WLIM) Sunday. As I walked in, the usher greeted me. We looked at each other, and there was immediate recognition. I had never seen him in a suit and tie. For seven years I knew him as one wearing prison garb—an inmate. Our conversation was cordial and brief. I doubt if anyone knew that he had been in prison for seven years. We did have a long, enjoyable visit later after everyone else had left. Thanks, Lord.

As I was walking out of a nursing home, a man was delivering oxygen bottles. He smiled. I stopped. We chatted. He was another man who had done time in prison. Yes, he had a job, reunited with his wife and family, and was going to church. After a warm handshake we departed. I felt pleased. Thanks, Lord.

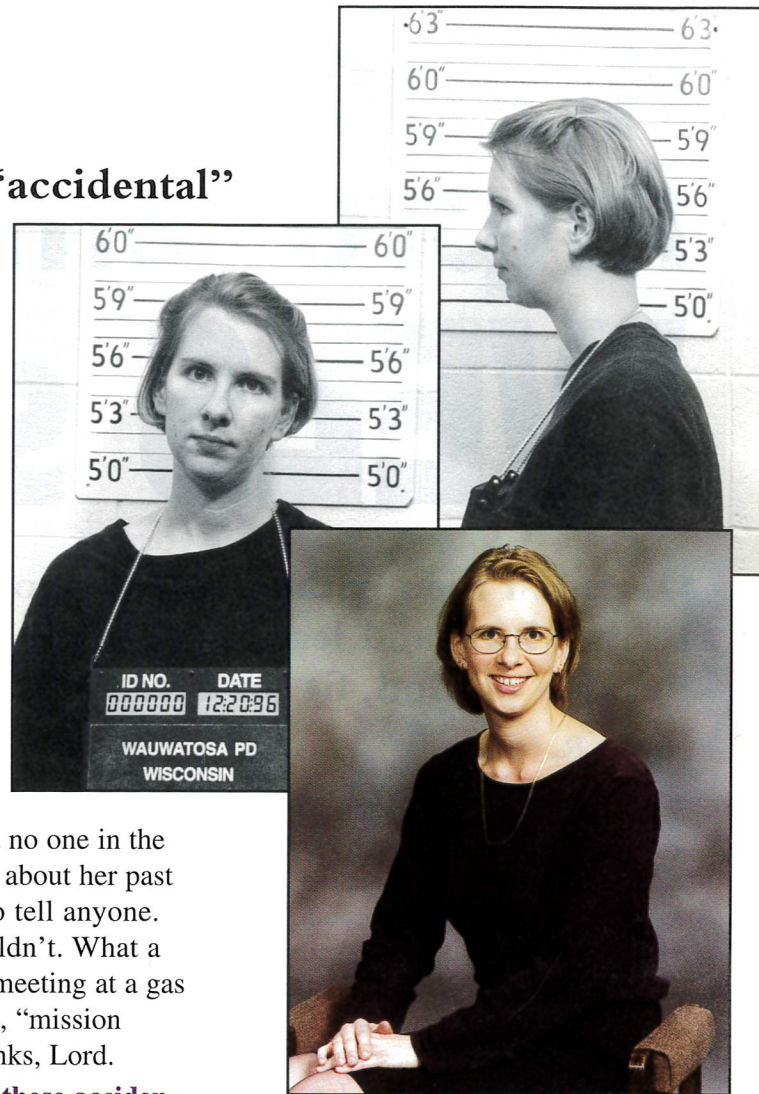
The lady that served me coffee at McDonald's was someone that I knew during the time she was in jail. We just greeted each other at the counter, but she came over to my booth later to visit. She said she was holding down two jobs trying to get her life back together. She, her daughter, and her granddaughter were back in church. The visit only lasted about 10 minutes, but I thoroughly enjoyed those few minutes. Thanks, Lord.

A car stopped at the opposite side of the gas pump I was using. A lady exited her car to start pumping gas. She looked at me and almost screamed, “Rev. Lenz!” I had visited her regularly during her

years in prison. After she got out of prison there was no contact. At times I wondered how she was doing. All smiles, she said she was doing just great. She said she was happily married to a WELS man and a member of a WELS congregation. She said that no one in the congregation knows about her past and asked me not to tell anyone. I assured her I wouldn't. What a pleasant accidental meeting at a gas station. I left feeling, “mission accomplished.” Thanks, Lord.

I am mentioning these accidental (or were they?) meetings for several reasons. I believe, firstly, that we may think that all prisoners are repeaters and sooner or later go back to prison. Some do, but not all. Most of those who don't go back make every effort to quietly blend into the community. They wish to put their criminal activities and prison time behind them. I respect that and never discuss their past in front of others.

Secondly, these cases are a reminder of the power of the gospel. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In fact, it never ceases to amaze me how the Holy Spirit can so completely change a life through a message found in a book—



God's book, the Bible.

Finally, I mention these people so you will continue to remember WLIM in your prayers. The jail-prison ministry is a tremendous mission field. If I just accidentally meet a few, I wonder how many more are walking with Jesus, quietly serving him, family, and community crime free?

Heaven will be a wonderful reunion time not just with family and friends, but with many cross-saved criminals to whom Jesus has said, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).



Ken Lenz retired in 2000 from full-time ministry for Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc., but serves WLIM part time.

Home improvement WELS style

Christian men gather to learn how to live, love, and lead so they can be men of God, fit for life.

Nicole R. Moline

It could have been a moment right out of *Tool Time* on *Home Improvement*. Three hundred forty men, gathered in one room. All eyes focused on the speaker.

These men were not gathered to learn how to put up drywall or build a bookshelf, though. These men wanted to learn how to live, love, and lead as men of God. The home improvement skills that they were honing had nothing to do with power, but everything to do with humility. Attendees' goals included becoming better husbands, better fathers, and better Christian leaders.

Nuts and bolts

This was the setting at the WELS National Men's Rally on Nov. 3-5, 2000. The rally, titled "Men of God, Fit for Life," was held at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Milwaukee.

Men and their families gathered for both an opening and closing worship service and fellowship. Men were encouraged to bring their wives and children because, as Dave Timm, national director of WELS

Kingdom Workers, says, "It gave credibility to the message we were trying to send. To tell men that we want them to be better husbands and fathers but to leave their family to do it seemed to send a mixed message." One hundred forty women attended the special workshops and tours that were planned for them. Childcare was also provided.

The entire assembly of men had the opportunity to listen to five speakers who discussed topics instructing them how to live, love, and lead as Christian men. Then, each man attended two of six break-out sessions.

Nailing down the breakout sessions

Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services staff minister Rick Loewen spoke about the love of a father. Loewen's breakout session seemed to deeply affect many attendees. His experiences as a police officer, a father of three, and a family life education staff minister have



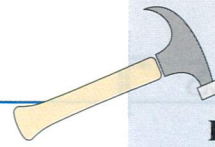
Time was built into the rally for fellowship among attendees, some of whom traveled from as far as Connecticut to learn how to live, love, and lead as Christian men.

given him a rich supply of stories and experiences to draw upon to inspire and instruct other fathers.

As "Curly" Wentland, a member at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., says, "To make a bunch of guys cry . . . well, you can imagine how good he is. He has stories that put the hairs on your arms on end. They are gripping."

And Wentland should know. He is a veteran of WELS men's rallies, attending each one that he can. Wentland explains his need to attend these events by saying, "I'm always looking to deepen my faith."

Loewen's presentation helped him do that by emphasizing how important it is to grow in your relationship with your heavenly Father by spending time in God's Word. The wisdom and discernment you gain from the Word can then be applied to your



Hammering out the details

WELSMEN has sponsored regional men's rallies in Milwaukee since 1996. WELSMEN was formed in 1975 as a layman's organization dedicated to fellowship and Christian benevolence.

For the 2000 rally, WELSMEN teamed up with WELS Kingdom Workers to coordinate a national rally as part of the Forward in Christ celebration.

Comments to file

Hear what these three men had to say when asked, "What part of the seminar was most beneficial to you?"
— "The reinforcement of what God states our male role and responsibilities are and how to accomplish this in real terms."

— "Nuts and bolts specific suggestions, problems, recommendations. I especially liked attacking issues head on."

— "Reminder of how important God's gift of my wife is."

relationships with family members.

Since the rally, Wentland reports that he has "been trying super-hard to listen to my wife—even during sports." According to Wentland, "This is no small accomplishment by any man."

Rolfe Westendorf, pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee, supported the men's rally by bringing six of his members because he is "always looking for ways to strengthen manhood." As a pastor in a multi-cultural neighborhood, Westendorf is no stranger to the problems men encounter as they struggle to assume their God-given role as head of the family.

"The essence of manhood is in self-control," says Westendorf, and rallies like these show men how to display that self-control. Pastor Richard Raabe's presentation, "Live biblical manhood," provided a good guide for Christian men of all cultures.

Although you don't need to wear a tool belt to be a real man, Prof. Mark Braun gave examples of why it's important for men to "live equipped with the armor of God."

Other topics presented in the breakout sessions were: "Live among the cultures" by Prof. Glenn and Beth Thompson, "Love as a husband" by Prof. Richard Gurgel, and "Niagara to Viagra" by Dr. John Johnson.

The biggest complaint about the conference was that, as one man wrote on his evaluation form, he wasn't "able to hear more breakout presentations." Many other attendees noted the same frustration, providing strong evidence that this rally contained high quality presentations made on important topics.

As another man said, "There wasn't one thing I didn't need to hear."

Building on a strong foundation

So, what's the next step? Next year there will be regional men's

rallies across the United States and Canada so that the momentum from this rally is not lost. Rally coordinators also would like to host a national rally every other year.

"Men are interested in what we're talking about," says Dave Timm. "Men are interested in what God says."

To build on that interest, Wentland suggests that "each person bring one or two others" to the next rally. He also encourages pastors, wives, and children to "push [men] out the door."

Wentland adds, "I hope more men take advantage of these rallies, because they're so valuable. Once you're there, you wonder how you could weigh anything against this. It's that important."



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



Meals provided time for discussion of the topics presented at the rally. Here Curly Wentland (right) also takes time to catch up on the score of the University of Wisconsin Badgers/University of Minnesota Gophers football game.

Synodical Council sets direction for WELS

In August the WELS Synodical Council, the synod's governing body, finalized a revised WELS Mission Objectives and Vision (MOV) Statement that places a renewed emphasis on outreach.

The Synodical Council's strategic planning committee has been working on the MOV since its organization in 1997.

Richard Lauersdorf, first vice president of the synod, says, "The strategic planning committee recognized early on that unless we know where we are and where we want to be, we wouldn't be in any position to know how to get there."

"The difference at the August meeting," says Warren Widmann, Pacific Northwest District President and chairman of the strategic planning committee, "was that we set a new direction driven by the challenging opportunities, which have a new emphasis on outreach."

These three challenging opportunities and other changes to the MOV were passed at the Synodical Council's November meeting. The opportunities are:

- Lead people to a passion for ALL the lost and equip them to reach these people.
- Focus ministerial education on outreach.
- Individualize spiritual growth and personal witnessing.

Focusing on the three challenging opportunities can focus the synod and its members on the portions of the mission that are of utmost importance in today's environment, both within and outside the church. These opportunities follow from the mission statement, which emphasizes that it is the responsibility of each WELS member to spread God's Word throughout the world and to nurture other believers (including themselves) through that Word.

Lauersdorf explains, "The mission statement gives a brief statement of why we exist as an organization. The objectives are broad statements we want to carry out. And then underneath the objectives is the vision, which tells us how we are going to carry out those objectives in order to accomplish our mission."

Synodical Council lay member

WELS mission

As men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the Word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel in Word and sacrament to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.

Arvid Schwartz explains that "whatever we do as a synod, we should ask ourselves, 'Does that further the mission?'" The mission should be driving our actions.

Schwartz adds, "The MOV is a big road map . . . a guiding light that sets the general direction of what the synod is going to do." For example, each administrative area of ministry must explain how each program in its budget is furthering WELS' mission.

In the same way, each WELS member should ask, "What am I doing to help WELS accomplish its mission?" Because WELS' mission is based on the Great Commission, it should also be each Christian's mission. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

The new direction set by the Synodical Council reflects these words and points both WELS and its members in the right direction on the road to carrying out the Great Commission.

Synodical Council district lay members

A brochure with the entire WELS MOV will be available in February. Every called worker will receive a copy. To receive additional copies, contact your Synodical Council district layperson. Also contact him with any questions or comments you have about WELS.

Arizona-California: Keith Moore, 520/522-8511, <rkmoore13@email.msn.com>

Dakota-Montana: Seth Hansen, 605/697-6231, <hansens@itctel.com>

Michigan: David Toepel, 517/642-2439, <dtoepel@aol.com>

Minnesota: Arvid Schwartz, 507/326-3621, <mrstix@prairie.lakes.com>

Nebraska: Harley Bergmeyer, 402/683-2875, <hbergmey@aba.com>

North Atlantic: Donald Richards, 703/323-6523, <DRRichardz@aol.com>

Northern Wisconsin: Ron Rathke, 715/385-0088, <rathnw@newnorth.net>

Pacific Northwest: Peter Dorn, 503/775-1775, <dornlaw@aol.com>

South Atlantic: Dale Anderson, 865/966-9378, <dalewanderson@msn.com>

South Central: Marc Frey, 210/492-4618, <moefrey@aol.com>

Southeastern Wisconsin: John Oswald, 262/787-0253, <joswald@aol.com>

Western Wisconsin: David Steinert, 608/372-6901, <steinert@mwt.net>

On June 20, 2000, the ladies' group at Hope, Scarborough, Canada held its 2nd annual Madhatters Tea Party. The congregation was invited and asked to make an original hat. The winner, Arthur Soman (above), carved the WELS' Forward in Christ logo out of styrofoam.



Living bold

Want to read more about relationships, sports, health, the media, spiritual issues? How about learning about these things from a teenager's perspective?

LivingBold, a new on-line magazine sponsored by the Commission on Youth Discipleship, will cover these issues and more as it strives to bring Christian teenagers closer to Jesus by providing scripturally-based articles, information, and advice.

"This is an upbeat, positive view of life and Christianity," says Jim Aderman, editor of *LivingBold* and pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee. "We want teens to face life with courage and fun and a smile. Not just life here, but life forever."

Authors for this e-zine will include adults and teenagers. Another section of the site will include photos, music, articles, and artwork that teenagers want to share with others.

"We want teens to tell us what they want. We want them to own the magazine," says Aderman.

Right now, *LivingBold* is still evolving. The site is available on-line, but will not be fully operational until summer 2001. By then, Aderman hopes to have eight new articles on the site every month. Right now a weekly on-line newsletter called "What's cool on the Web" is sent to *LivingBold* subscribers.

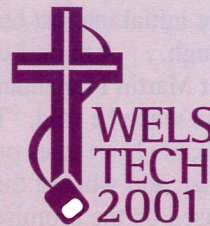
"With so many United States teenagers having access to the Internet, there's no other vehicle that will allow us as much access to teens," says Aderman.

Check out and sign up for *LivingBold* at <www.livingbold.net>.

Expanding your ministry

Ever wonder . . .

- what all those confusing technology terms mean?
- how to create an interactive Web site for your church or school?
- how to better use the computer programs you have?
- how to integrate the Internet into your school's curriculum?
- where to start when creating a computer network?



These questions and more will be answered at WELS Tech 2001, a comprehensive conference that will equip you with the tools and information you need to better use technology in your ministry, whether you are a pastor, teacher, or layperson.

Sessions will be available for beginning, intermediate, and advanced users. No matter what category you fall into, this conference has been designed with you in mind.

WELS Tech 2001 is being held July 15-18 at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., where attendees can take advantage of Fox Valley's new facility, which offers the latest in technology.

If you want to discover how you can expand your ministry using technology, plan on attending WELS Tech 2001.

WELS Tech 2001

By all possible means—expanding ministries through technology

Date: July 15-18, 2001

Place: Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

Cost: \$210, if registration is received on or before May 1; \$260, if registration is received after May 1 but on or before June 22; \$290, if registration is received after June 22 or on-site. Special student rate of \$100.

Rebates: Travel and hotel rebates are available. More details are included in the registration form.

For more information or to be added to the mailing list: Visit the WELS Tech 2001 Web site, <www.wels.net/welstech2001> or contact Debbie at 414/256-3210, <welstech2001@sab.wels.net>. Registration forms will be sent in February.

Meet the editorial staff—uncut

Ever ask yourself, “Who are these people who write for Forward/NL?” Through this series you can find out. Read on:

A rich man

Pastor Eric Stephen Hartzell is one of three authors of *Forward/NL*’s “Thought for today” devotion. He also writes freelance articles for the magazine. His answers to these random questions are as eloquent as the articles he writes.

Q: What inspires you to write?

A: The Scripture is my inspiration. It is such a deep and wonderful source of ideas and thoughts. Who can study it and not be inspired by what God is and does and how that applies to us? Many times as I study for my sermon some special idea or point becomes obvious to me, and then I try to expand on that later.

Kind folks from time to time mention that they have read something and appreciated it. They become the inspiration to write further. When I write I have some of them in my mind and think about

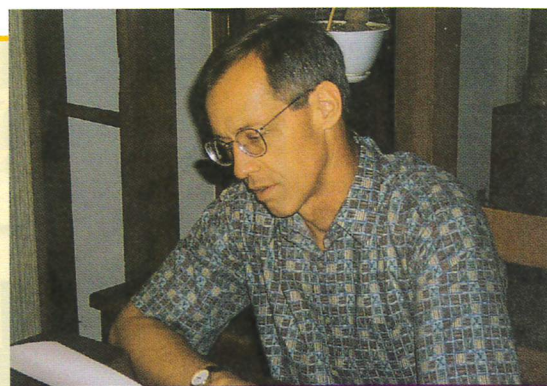
them being my readers and how what I am writing will be able to touch them. It’s hard to write and not know if anyone is ever reading what you write. That would be like trying to carry on a one-sided conversation.

Q: What has been your greatest challenge in the past year?

A: I believe the greatest challenge in my work here is to hold to the promise connected to the Lord’s own Word that work for him is not in vain. It isn’t that the work is without some apparent success. There are, however, so many people who hear the invitation and show some initial interest but never follow through. . . . I think I understand what Martin Franzmann wrote in his hymn when he said, “The sower sows; his heart cries out, ‘Oh, what of that, and what of that?’ ” To stay focused on the promise is the greatest challenge I think.

Q: Your greatest blessing?

A: My greatest blessings are my wife and family and parents and



Scripture inspires Eric Hartzell to write.

the Christian people of the congregation I now serve and the congregations I served in the past. Life without them would be very poor. Life with them is very rich. I am a rich man.

Just the facts

Wife’s name: Delora

Number of children: seven, ranging in age from 11 to 25

Currently serving: Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Tex.

In the news . . .

Bob and Jill Klug,

members at Our Savior, Grafton, Wis., were included in the Nov. 2000 issue of Milwaukee’s *Metropolitan*.

In the article “Age helps determine your parenting style,” the Klugs were used as an example of a couple who became parents in their 30s. The Klugs have two children under the age of four and noted that they are saving for their children’s education because they want to send them to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School in Jackson, Wis.

Nathan and Jessica Boehlke,

members at St. John, Newburg, Wis., were featured in the same *Metropolitan* article. The Boehlkes are examples of

Gen-X parents. They have two children under the age of three. “Being parents is the most important thing in our lives,” said Jessica. “We have been very blessed.”



The Nov./Dec. 2000 issue of *Correspondent* featured Pheng Moua and Jay Lo’s ministry to the Hmong.

WELS pastors Pheng Moua and Jay Lo

were featured in the Nov./Dec. 2000 article “Go and make disciples . . .” in Aid Association for Lutherans’ magazine, *Correspondent*. These Hmong pastors were used as examples of the cross-cultural ministry in which WELS is involved.

Leon Piepenbrink, WELS Hmong ministry coordinator, commented, “Both of them are gathering Hmong families into Hmong mission congregations. There are more than 60,000 Hmong people in the St. Paul-Minneapolis area. . . . We can’t ignore this mission field in our backyard.”

District news

California

On Dec. 1, 2000, the C-Hawks of California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, won the eight-man football large division state playoffs.

North Atlantic

“Jesus is Missing, But His Truth Isn’t Gone” proclaimed the sign standing next to an empty creche on the front lawn of **Messiah, South Windsor, Conn.** Sometime between late Dec. 3 and early Dec. 4, 2000, thieves stole the nativity pieces from Messiah’s creche. Messiah’s members viewed this problem as an opportunity to tell others about the beautiful and unchanging message of Jesus in a new way. The evening of Dec. 8, the stolen nativity set was anonymously returned.

Prince of Peace, Fairport, N.Y., held a rededication service on Dec. 17, 2000, in connection with the Forward in Christ celebration.

Abiding Word, Orleans, Ontario, Canada, hosted the annual WELS-Canada national convention in Nov. 2000. Delegates from all WELS churches in Canada attended. WELS-Canada is the incorporation of WELS churches in Canada, affiliated with WELS in the United States.

In August 2000, **King of Kings, Clifton Park, N.Y.**, invited the community to a Neighborhood Family Festival on the Saturday following vacation Bible school (VBS). The 100 plus attendees included almost equal numbers of church members, VBS guests, and neighbors of the church. Attendees enjoyed a cookout, games, face painting, and a treasure hunt.

Western Wisconsin

On Reformation Sunday 2000, **St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.**, dedicated a new addition to its church building.

Happy Anniversary!

CA—Members of **Gethsemane, Los Angeles, Calif.**, observed the congregation’s 50th anniversary on Dec. 3, 2000. Gethsemane was the first WELS congregation in California.

Paul Lemke, Abiding Hope, Ocala, Fla., was honored for his 25 years in the pastoral ministry on Nov. 19, 2000.

SEW—On Aug. 20, 2000, members of Bethlehem, Carmel, Ind., celebrated **George Ferch’s** 25th anniversary in the pastoral ministry.

WW—In 2001, **St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.**, is celebrating its 100th year in its present house of worship and 140 years since its organization.

South Atlantic



On Oct. 15, 2000, members of Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga., celebrated the dedication of their new worship and education facility. Member Greg Kuekes carved the Forward in Christ and WELS logos into watermelons as part of the festivities.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: CA—Hermann John; NA—Kevin Schultz; SA—Mark Haefner; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

Looking for a special Valentine’s gift?

Why not give the ones you love a gift subscription to *Forward/Northwestern Lutheran*? Each month they’ll learn more about the One that loves them the most. Know someone who has trouble reading fine print? Order a large print edition.

Call toll free 1-800-662-6093 ext. 8 (Milwaukee 475-6600 ext. 5), weekdays 8 AM to 4 PM. Charge it—Discover, MasterCard, or Visa—or bill it.

Symbols for your life



Monogram: IHS

Background and meaning: The IHS (or IHC) is a monogram for Jesus. The Greek word for Jesus is *IHSOUS*. There is no J in the Greek alphabet. The IHS monogram is often found on communion wafers and altar cloths.

Bible gems: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

“God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

A symbol for your life: What does “Jesus” mean? “Christ?” Why are these symbols fitting on altar or pulpit cloths? How must we use these names? Not use them?



A smile, a pamphlet, and a prayer

Pastor Kirby Spevacek, my co-worker in Bulgaria in 1995, invited me to visit Albania to become familiar with that nearby mission field. When I arrived, Spevacek gave me a stack of pamphlets and sent me into the market to pass them out.

All I had for experience was two months in Bulgaria, where I was just beginning to pound some Bulgarian words and phrases into my head. Suddenly I was in a totally different country, where I knew nothing of the language.

I had to completely trust in the printed word in my hand as I walked into the marketplace, a crowded, noisy, and muddy place. As soon as a person made eye contact with me, I smiled, handed him a pamphlet, and said a prayer in my heart that he would read it and that God would keep his promise that his Word would not return empty.

My white (hide-from-the-sun) complexion and mute smile quickly marked me as a foreigner. Some spoke to me, but they knew I didn't understand. So they did what was even better. They started directing others to me to get my pamphlets. Soon I was surrounded by outstretched hands. Everyone wanted a brochure. I found myself returning to Spevacek several times

to get more brochures. Yet, the pamphlets ran out before the demand.

I was helpless to give them anything more than a smile, a brief paper witness of God's love for them, and my heartfelt prayer. I couldn't even offer any further explanation of what they read.

Five years have past. I continue to visit Albania from time to time. My smile is still there, because I see that the Word of God has proven itself unconfined. The prayers of many have been answered. Now 70 to 100 people gather regularly in a church to worship God as their loving Savior. Though political and economic problems have plagued Albania, and they are again without a resident missionary to care for them, we have been able to continue sowing God's Word. God has proven his faithfulness and love and has built for himself a church.



The picture was taken after a worship service some time before Easter 2000 at the Christian Information Center in Durres. According to Missionary Eric Vertein, "There are 102 chairs in the worship hall. We used to count the people by counting the empty chairs. Now there are more people than chairs."

Within the setting of the church, I can speak that Word through an interpreter. Recently I helped one old Albanian lady wrestle with the more pressing problem of sin. She came to me asking for forgiveness. What a joy it was to be God's personal messenger, to tell her that God was announcing his forgiveness to her. Her soul could be at peace.

Pray that the Word—powerful in print, even from the hands of speechless missionaries—be spread throughout Albania so that God's name be praised.

Eric Vertein

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

I was conducting the Friday all-school devotion with the day school children. At the end of each devotion, we ask the children for prayer requests.

They offered the usual requests: grandpas and grandmas who were ill, family members who were traveling, etc. A usual request during the basketball season was "We should pray for our basketball game this weekend."

"OK," I said. "But what should we pray for about our basketball game?"

The immediate answer came from the back row of older students, "We

pray to win the game."

"Is this what we pray for, children? Do we pray to win the game?" I asked those questions because we had just recently had a devotion about doing our best.

My questions seem to hint that praying to win wasn't the answer I was looking for. What else could we pray for in connection with this weekend's game?

Coming to our rescue was a first-grader, who raised his hand and volunteered, "How about we just pray to tie?"

*Martin J. Lopahs
St. James, Minnesota*

DEFINING RELIGION

Original sin: The state or condition of sinfulness inherited by every person except Jesus since Adam's fall into sin (Romans 5:12, John 3:6, Psalm 51:5). Because of original sin, humans by nature lack the righteousness that God demands and have evil hearts out of which flow evil thoughts, words, and actions (Matthew 15:19).

Young writer wins awards

Eric Pamperin, a third-grader at St. Matthew Lutheran School, Iron Ridge, Wis., won two contests in 2000 by writing about people he admired.

One essay he wrote was about his teacher, Dawn Welke. This essay won first place at a contest called "Why my teacher is tops," sponsored by the West Bend radio station WBKV.

Pamperin also put together a booklet called "A career of a pastor," all about his pastor, Robert Noldan, at Emmanuel, Hartford, Wis. He submitted it to the Dodge County, Wis., Fair, and received first prize and the grand champion prize.

Pamperin not only praised his teacher and pastor in his writing, he also praised God and encouraged others to think about the blessings of being in the ministry. In his essay about Welke, Pamperin writes: "I just have to tell you this though. In all she does to teach us, the Bible is her guide. Did you know that in the Bible, Jesus is called 'teacher'? Good thing he's not in your contest, because he'd definitely be 'top teacher.' And since he's not, I think Mrs. Welke would be the next best choice."

Eric Pamperin holding his prize-winning booklet, "A career of a pastor." This 4-H project will be entered at the Wisconsin State Fair in 2001.



Obituaries

Dorothy R. Justman 1950-2000

Dorothy Justman was born Aug. 14, 1950, in Hartford, Wis. She died Nov. 19, 2000, in Wausau, Wis., in an automobile accident, which also claimed the life of her husband, Roger, and son, Japheth.

A 1990 graduate of Doctor Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., Justman taught at Trinity, West Bend, Wis., and St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.

She is survived by her parents, five brothers and sisters, one son, and two daughters.

Gerhard A. Horn 1921-2000

Gerhard Horn was born May 20, 1921, in Morgan, Minn. He died Nov. 26, 2000, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Horn served at Bethesda, Milwaukee; St. Peter, Chaseburg/Townhamburg, Wis.; Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; St. John, Red Wing, Minn.; and Calvary, Glenwood, Minn. He also served as Minnesota District President.

He is survived by his wife, Alice; three children; and 11 grandchildren.

Timotheus R. Adascheck 1910-2000

Timotheus Adascheck was born May 17, 1910, in Loraine, Wis. He died Dec. 3, 2000, in Yakima, Wash.

A 1939 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Adascheck served Grace, Yakima.

Adascheck was preceded in death by one daughter. He is survived by his wife, Althea; one daughter; and four grandchildren.

Harold A. Sauer 1918-2000

Harold Sauer was born July 9, 1918, in Watertown, S.D. He died Dec. 9, 2000, in Saginaw, Mich.

A 1943 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Sauer served at Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Mobridge, S.D.; St. Paul, Mound City, S.D.; St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.; Christ, North Saint Paul, Minn.; Grace, South Saint Paul, Minn.; Grace, Muskegon, Mich.; and St. Luke, Saginaw, Mich.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce; two daughters, two sons, 13 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, two sisters, and many nieces and nephews.

February 2001

1. Genesis 47	16. Ex. 28 • 2 John
• Psalm 105	• 3 John
2. Gen. 48-50	17. Ex. 29 • Ps. 51
• Ps. 121	18. Ex. 30-32:29
3. Exodus 1-4:17	19. Ex. 32:30-35:29
4. Ex. 4:18-7:13	20. Ex. 35:30-38:23
5. Ex. 7:14-9	21. Ex. 38:24-40
6. Ex. 10-12:42	22. Ps. 2 & 45 & 102
7. Ex. 12:43-15:21	• Hebrews 1 & 2
8. Ps. 78 & 93	23. Ps. 95 & 110
9. Ex. 15:22-18	• Heb. 3-6
10. Ex. 19-21	24. Heb. 7-10:31
11. Ps. 119:1-88	25. Heb. 10:32-12
12. Ps. 119:89-176	26. Leviticus 1-3
13. Ex. 22-24	• Heb. 13
14. Ex. 25 • Ps. 103	27. Lev. 4-6
15. Ex. 26 & 27 • Ps. 84	28. Lev. 7-9:22



Public confidence highest for the military

—An annual Gallup poll shows that for the 14th year in a row, the military tops the public confidence list of the United States' major institutions.

Sixty-four percent of Americans give the military high confidence marks. The military is followed by the church or organized religion (56%), the police (54%), the Supreme Court (47%), and banks (46%). Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) came in last (16%).

The results are based on telephone interviews of 1,021 adults, 18 years or older, conducted in June 2000. Margin of error is plus or minus three percentage at a 95% confidence level.

[*Emerging Trends*, September 2000]

Talks planned between Adventists and Evangelicals

—The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Evangelical Fellowship are planning to meet in September so they can better understand each other's views.

The World Evangelical Fellowship, an organization representing 160 million Christians in 111 countries (of which WELS is not a member), and the Seventh-day Adventists say they aren't trying to find agreement on issues of theology or doctrine. Rather they want to see where they disagree and agree in their understandings of the Christian faith.

Christmas curtailed in Bethlehem

—Most Christmas 2000 activities were canceled in Bethlehem due to violence in and around the city.

"This year, Bethlehem will not be able to celebrate Christmas as planned, and there will be no Christmas festival," said Christiane Dabdoub Nasser, head of church relations in the Bethlehem 2000 project. "The children will not have their gifts, the worshipers will be in mourning, and the pilgrims will be absent."

Some worship opportunities and the traditional Christmas Eve proces-

sion of religious figures will take place, but according to Nasser, "last year's buzz and excitement will be something of the past."



Mobile phone aeriels could use money for the church

—The Church of England may be able to raise an extra \$7 million a year by allowing mobile phone companies to use the towers and steeples of its churches to site aeriels for mobile phones.

Phone companies want to have coverage for a new generation of mobile phones in place by 2007 and need 11,000 new aerial sites to do this. Parishes are being approached with the offer to rent the use of the church tower or steeple for this purpose.

Some 50 to 70 churches are already allowing their steeples to be used for an annual rent of \$7,000 or more.

Survey: Many Americans believe Bible is still relevant today

—In a recent survey commissioned by Zondervan Publishing House, 86 percent of Americans stated that they believe the Bible is relevant today.

Eighty percent believe the Bible can address most or all of today's problems. Just over half, however, think the Bible is likely to be more accurate than a history book or a local newspaper.

The survey also shows that although respondents believe the Bible to be relevant, they have trouble understanding it. Eighty percent said the language of the Bible could be confusing. Accounts of creation and the dreams of Joseph were cited as examples of stories that were hard to understand.

The survey of 1,000 women and men ages 18 and older was conducted by Bruskin/Goldring Research. The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.



Church Web sites are important attracters

—A survey about church Web sites conducted by students at Hartford Seminary revealed that an up-to-date, interac-

tive, "slick" Web site does a better job of attracting new members than a poorly produced one.

Scott Thurma, a professor at the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, says, "Increasingly, your Web page may be the only glimpse people ever have of your congregation. At least spend as much time and money on your site as you would on your congregation's landscaping. Plant something on the World Wide Web that will attract, not detract, from your church's mission."

Of the 63 Web sites surveyed, 75.8 percent rely on members to create the site. Almost half of the Web sites were the idea of a lay member.

Forty-three percent said their sites were aimed at a non-church audience, while only seven percent said their sites were geared toward their congregations.

New CEO for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

—Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, has taken over as chief executive officer of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

"I'm not retiring, but I now want to turn over the administrative and management burden of running the organization to my son," Billy Graham said in a statement.

Eighty-two-year-old Billy Graham, who founded the association 50 years ago, will continue to serve as chairman of the board. He told the board he hopes to lead two or three crusades in 2001.

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**

Bauer, Thomas E., to Abiding Faith, Fort Worth, Tex.
Blaho, David J., to Emmanuel, Zephyrhills, Fla.
Goetsch, Peter W., to exploratory, South Calgary, Alberta, Canada
Gumm, Alan W., to Hope, West Chicago, Ill.
Krohn, Jud A., to Thailand
Maasch, John F., to Peace, Bradenton, Fla.
Schomberg, Carl A., to Trinity, Ridgecrest, Calif.
Schultz, Robert E., to Hope, Andover, Minn.
Spaude, Joel R., to St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo.
Uhlhorn, Wayne R., to Fount of Life, Colorado Springs, Colo.
Zindler, Ronald F., to St. John, Wrightstown, Wis.

Teachers

Bowe, Keith R., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
Braun, Jeanne M., to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Breitkreutz, Orville W., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Butzow, Michael L., to St. Peter, Plymouth, Mich.
Danner, Rachelle A., to Emanuel, West St. Paul, Minn.
Heyn, Matthew J., to St. Peter, Modesto, Calif.
Hohnstadt, Joan, to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Kneuppel, Kole, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Krenke, Jennifer S., to Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.
Zemple, Kim E., to Siloah, Milwaukee

Staff minister

Becker, Mark, to gift planning counselor

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 56th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 30-Aug. 3 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. Details will be announced later.

REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY

Lic Canot, Fairview, N.J., a pastor of an independent Lutheran church has requested a colloquy for the purpose of serving in WELS' pastoral ministry. Correspondence related to this request should be addressed to President Walter F. Beckmann, North Atlantic District, 7401 Masonville Dr, Annandale VA 22003-1656; <NADPWELS@aol.com>.

COMING EVENTS

Leadership development workshops—Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers. Feb. 24, Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. Lutheran Pioneers, 888/214-8225.
Councilmen's workshop—Belle Plaine, Minn. Mar. 10, 9 AM-3 PM.
LWMS 2001 Women of WELS (WOW) retreats—Mar. 2-3, Mishicot, Wis. Kathie Wendland, 920/682-5694.
 Apr. 20-22, Williamsburg, Va. Lynnette Hupman, 703/361-1419.
 May 4-6, Otter Crest, Ore. Char LaForest, 541/388-2405.
Women's retreat—Pathways to Christ Retreat, Mar. 16-18, Pioneer Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.
Christian Woman Today retreat—19th annual. Sponsored by Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis. Mar. 23-25, Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Kathie Mueller, 262/521-1159.

Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women—Mar. 30-Apr. 1. Radisson Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-3945.

Today's Christian Women's retreat—Mar. 30-Apr. 1. Radisson Hotel, Toledo, Ohio. Laurie, 248/391-1133.

Hymn festival—Apr. 1, 2:30 PM. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Forward in Christ celebration featuring songs sung throughout the ages.

Women's retreat—Apr. 6-7. Park Inn, Wausau, Wis. Donna, 715/842-5802.

Martin Luther College choir tour

Apr. 6—St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., 6:30 PM

Apr. 7—Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 6:30 PM

Apr. 8—Our Savior, Burlington, Iowa, 10 AM; St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis., 7:30 PM

Apr. 9—Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., 9 AM; Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., 2 PM; Grace, Oshkosh, Wis., 7 PM

Apr. 10—Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., 9:30 AM; Trinity, Osceola, Wis., 7 PM

Apr. 11—Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis., 1 PM; St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., 7 PM

Apr. 12—Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somer, Wis., 2 PM; St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., 7 PM

Apr. 13—Trinity, Crete, Ill., 2 PM; St. John, Libertyville, Ill., 7 PM

Apr. 15—Peace, Wilmot, Wis., 6:30 AM; St. John, Burlington, Wis., 10:30 AM; St. John, Jefferson, Wis., 7 PM

Apr. 22—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 7:30 PM

National Lutheran Pioneer convention—April 28. Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich. Lutheran Pioneers, 888/214-8225.

Holy Land tour—June 13-22. 10-day tour of Israel sponsored by Good Shepherd, St. Peters, Mo. Michael Dietz, 636/978-6791.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention—June 22-24. Holiday Inn O'Hare International, Chicago. Shirley Billings, 714/633-1130.

European choral/history study tour II—Sing the music of the Renaissance and Baroque masters in Italy, Austria, and Germany. June 17-July 6. Credit available for music or history through MLC. Cost, approximately \$2,975. Roger Hermanson or Mark Lenz, 800/686-4142.

Youth rally—July 11-14. Iowa State University, Ames. Registration deadline, Feb. 15. Kris Snyder, 414/527-6854.

WELS Tech 2001—technology conference for pastors, teachers, and laypeople. July 15-18, Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis. Registration forms will be mailed in February. <<http://www.wels.net/welstech2001>>. To get on a mailing list, contact Debbie, 414/256-3210; <welstech2001@sab.wels.net>.

ANNIVERSARIES

Fort Atkinson, Wis.—St. Paul (140). Special services, 8 & 10:30 AM. 920/563-2263.

Feb. 4—Lifting High the Cross in Lakeside Lutheran High School

Mar. 4—Lifting High the Cross in our called workers

May 6—Lifting High the Cross in our elementary school

June 10—Lifting High the Cross in music, Charles Bono organ concert

July 8—Lifting High the Cross in families

July 29—Lifting High the Cross in Scripture, opening of cornerstone

Aug. 5—Lifting High the Cross in outreach

Sept. 9—Lifting High the Cross in our confirmands

Oct. 7—Lifting High the Cross in missions

Nov. 4—Lifting High the Cross in German (German-English services)

Dec. 9—Lifting High the Cross in the next century

AVAILABLE

Metal frame chairs—33, rose-colored with wood arm tops. Free for cost of shipping. Dave Karow, Hope, Chino Valley, Ariz., 520/636-2796.

Pews—free for pick up or cost of shipping. Chad Wright, Good Shepherd, Beaverton, Mich., 517/435-7217.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Camp Phillip—Wautoma, Wis. May 29-Aug. 15. Counselors, Bible study leader, waterfront director, lifeguards, adventure coordinator, and junior staff director. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

Christian couples—to serve at the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi. Three-year commitment. Wife should be a registered nurse, and husband would serve as administrative coordinator. Irene Brug, 262/242-8139.

NEEDED

Volunteer RNs/EMTs—as health care directors for one week or half-week youth camp sessions at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

Musicians—especially a drummer and keyboardist to help gospel choir. John Paul Simons, St. Philip, Milwaukee, <johnpaul@execpc.com>.

Vocalist—for composer in Milwaukee area to record original Christian pop/rock. Larry, 414/529-3727.

NAMES WANTED

WELS musicians—with professional training, current college or graduate study, or performance degrees in vocal, instrumental, or conducting. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

Myrtle Beach, S.C.—Amazing Grace. James Schumann, 843/236-9134.

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

Sheridan, Wyo.—Pete Zietlow, 307/672-7599.

Southwest Ocala, Fla.—Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.

Laredo, Tex.—D. Scott Bertram, 956/727-3050.

SERVICE TIMES

Mobile, Ala.—Saving Grace. John Boggs, 334/342-4048.

Sheridan, Wyo.—Valley Ev. Lutheran Church. Meets at Sheridan Women's Club, 20 Tschirgi St. Sunday service, 2 PM; Sunday school and teen and adult Bible class, 3 PM. 307/672-7599.

Southwest Ocala, Fla.—Abiding Word. Saturday worship service, 7 PM. Friday Bible study, 6 PM. Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.

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

The LORD, our strength

The LORD's infinite strength was evident in the showdown between him and the false god, Baal.

James A. Aderman

Seen from the top of Mount Carmel during the first part of Elijah's ministry, the normally green Kishon and Jezreel valleys were drought brown. The sight reinforced the perception of Baal's toothless reign over the land's fertility and of the Lord's sovereignty, his infinite strength.

Baal's weakness

Mount Carmel is a long, high ridge that begins at the Mediterranean and sprawls for a dozen miles into Galilee to the south and east. The Lord sent Elijah to King Ahab to set up a showdown there between himself and Baal after he determined that the drought he sent to humble his spiritually apathetic people had accomplished its purpose. Every citizen of Israel was to witness the battle (1 Kings 18:1-46).

The ground rules: each side would prepare a sacrifice for their god. They would build an altar, supply it with firewood, and place a sacrificial animal on it. But the responsibility for consuming the sacrifice belonged to each god. Whichever deity burned up his sacrifice would become Israel's god. Winner take all.

The priests of Baal—450 strong—went first. To get Baal's attention they prayed aloud, then shouted until they were hoarse. They danced themselves silly. They cut themselves until blood stained the ground. Still, Baal did not take pity. Not even after a morning and after-

יְהוָה
OUR STRENGTH

noon of worship. Not a thunder rumble. Not a tremor. Not a spark.

The LORD's strength

How different with Elijah's God. The prophet ensured that no one could later accuse him of trickery. He rebuilt an ancient altar in plain sight. He placed the wood on it, then the sacrifice. Finally he flooded the altar with enough water to fill a surrounding trench. The prophet's prayer was only two sentences. At its heart was the petition, "Let it be known today that you are God in Israel" (v. 36).

In an instant the sacrifice disappeared—consumed in a fireball. And not just the sacrifice. The wood, the stones, the soil, and the water also disappeared.

Prostrate with fear the crowd exclaimed, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!" (v. 39).

Seizing the moment, Elijah commanded obedience to the law that a false teacher "must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the Lord" (Deuteronomy 13:5). Minutes later, at the base of Mount Carmel near the Kishon River, all 450 priests of Baal entered eternity.

But God was not done displaying his strength. Once again on the top of Carmel, Elijah petitioned the Lord to reverse the drought. Israel's confession of faith and their execution of Baal's priests testified to a new spiritual climate. The God strong enough to grant second chances graciously agreed. For the first time in over 40 months, storm clouds gathered above the Mediterranean. Welcomed moisture refreshed a parched land.

What reasonable doubt remained? The Lord is the God of gods; he is the master of heaven and earth. The psalmist was right: "O Lord God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you" (89:8).

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For further study

1. Read Deuteronomy 28:20-24. What message should Israel have received from the drought during Elijah's ministry? How does God send similar signals to us?
2. Elijah showed courage to stand against Baal's priests. Check Isaiah 35:1-4 for the source of that courage. How does that source of courage embolden you?

Send God a valentine

How many valentines do you think will be sent this Valentine's Day? Millions and millions? A billion? Remember, there are six billion people in the world!

Why clutter the mail, or e-mail, with all these valentines? Some send sincere notes of appreciation or affection. They truly want to honor a special someone with a valentine. Others, though, are seeking something in return. They want the one receiving the valentine to respond in some special way.

On Valentine's Day, even as all these cards are being sent, how many prayers will ascend to God? Do you think it's one to one, only half as many, twice as many? More important, why will people pray?

Like valentines, some prayers are sincere notes of appreciation, grateful for a prayer heard. Others are signs of affection, acknowledging that God always answers all our prayers in the best possible way. But aren't some prayers attempted bribery? "Look at what I'm doing for you, God. How can you turn me down?"

God can't be bribed. He's more than willing to listen and respond. It's not our note of appreciation or our affection that attracts his attention. The reverse is true. His unmerited affection for us gives rise to our appreciation for him.

That's why he taught us to say, "Our Father," when we pray. Through his Son, Jesus, God treats us all like dear children who have their father's full attention. There is nothing we can't ask him, nothing he's unable to give us. He's our Father in heaven, possessing also all power on earth.

But what shall we ask him? Take a clue from the prayer Jesus taught us. Start high, asking him for spiritual treasures. Ask him, first, that we might respect God's name as his Word is taught among us and honor

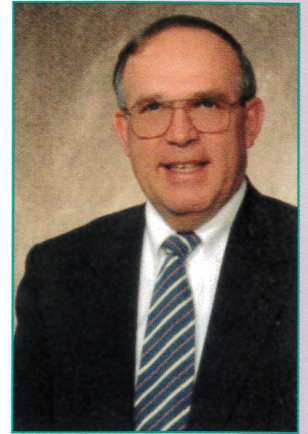
him by living in harmony with it. Pray that his kingdom might come to others even as God's saving rule of grace has entered our hearts by faith. Request that his will might be done among us on earth, as it always is in heaven, as he prevents Satan, the unbelieving world around us, and our own sinful flesh within us from setting aside God's holy will.

Those are great requests with which to begin. But we can go lower. He wants us to petition him for all we need for this life. Ask him for daily bread. And yet, remember that earthly concerns are not to predominate in our prayers. Actually, they ought to be at the bottom of our prayer lists.

Instead, our prayer requests, following the Savior's model, should aim high first. Because of our sinfulness, forgiveness is what we need, receive, and can extend to those around us. Grateful for God's pardon and wanting to avoid sin in the future, we ask him to help us overcome temptation. Finally, we pray deliver us from evil all our days and then forever, transferring us into God's perfect heavenly kingdom.

People love us. Because of their love for us, they are worthy of our appreciation and affection. A valentine may be one way to show it. God loves us most and best. Because of his love for us, both now and forever, he cares for us. Our daily prayers, more than any valentine, are positive ways of showing him our grateful affection.

Why not send God a valentine? Pray!



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

Our daily prayers, more than any valentine, are positive ways of showing [God] our grateful affection.



Did you shake when you learned 1 Corinthians 11:29 in confirmation class: “Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself”? You learned that the Lord’s Supper is serious business.

Yet Jesus showed his disciples how to do this during the warm fellowship of a festival meal. The Lord’s Supper demonstrates our closeness. Serious business and family warmth—more reasons to call it a “mystery.”

Another spiritual health factor worth checking is our reception of the Lord’s Supper. Thankfully, our spiritual health doesn’t depend on our ability to fully understand this gift, but only on our receiving it by faith.

Health factor—Receiving the Lord’s Supper

God’s Word

• The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

²⁷Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

1. Underline the words in v. 23-25 that describe what Jesus is doing each time we receive the Lord’s Supper.
2. Circle the words in v. 23-26 that describe what we do each time we receive the Lord’s Supper.
3. What does v. 27 tell you about the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper?
4. In v. 28, Paul encourages us to examine ourselves as preparation for the Lord’s Supper. According to v. 29, what should our examination include?

My soul for personal check-up

1. As I was growing up, did my impression of the Lord’s Supper lean more toward fear and trepidation or more toward warmth and fellowship? How about today?
2. Why might both impressions be accurate, even important, to me today?
3. How do I prepare myself to receive the blessings Jesus offers me in the Lord’s Supper?
4. What other practices might help me prepare to receive the Lord’s Supper?
5. What might help me extend throughout the week the benefits I gain in the Lord’s Supper?

My church for group check-up

1. How does our congregation communicate the biblical doctrine of the Lord’s Supper?
2. Discuss the history of changes in your congregation’s communion practices. For each change, answer the question, “Why did we change that?”
3. What changes can you see coming, perhaps, in the future?
4. How can we help one another prepare to receive the Lord’s Supper?
5. Discuss your most memorable celebration of the sacrament. What made it so?
6. How might v. 27-29 help you explain the teaching of close communion to a friend?

Web-med

Intriguing Web sites to help you continue your check-up.

Read Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Supper at <http://www.wels.net/sab/listen/luth-sm-cat.html>.

For a commentary on the real presence of Jesus’ body and blood, read the Q&A at <http://www.wels.net/sab/qa/commun-real-03.html>.

You’ll find a discussion of several communion practices at <http://www.wels.net/sab/qa/commun-who-01.html>.


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

Love your neighbor

Besides showing your affection to your loved ones this Valentine's Day, show love to your neighbors, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. Here are some suggestions:

- Visit a member in the hospital with smiles, treats, and friendly conversation.
- Leave a muffin or a note of thanks for your newspaper delivery person or postal carrier.
- Buy a candy bar or cup of coffee or soda for a co-worker.
- Buy extra groceries and give them to your church's food pantry.
- Pay a compliment once an hour to different people.
- Leave that parking space up front for someone else.

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

 potluck

Something's fishy here!

Near the end of Sunday school, two four-year-olds got into a rather heated debate about whether Jesus used five loaves of bread and two fish, or two loaves of bread and five fish. The teacher dismissed them and told them to ask me. Wanting to be absolutely sure, I checked John 6, and then announced that it was two fish and five loaves of bread. The loser in the debate said nothing, but looked skeptical.

I found out just how skeptical he was the next time I saw his grandma. She said that in the car on the way home he had said, "You know, I don't know who wrote that book that Pastor was looking in for the answer, but maybe whoever wrote it was wrong!"

*Pastor Paul Rutschow
Strongsville, Ohio*

Picture this



In May 2000, five women from the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) chapter in Bulgaria traveled with WELS humanitarian aid workers to share needlework crosses and encouragement from God's Word with nursing home residents. The crosses were made by the Bulgarian LWMS chapter as well as by members of St. John, Ann Arbor, Mich. Sandy Piepenbrink, a WELS Kingdom Worker volunteer who was in Bulgaria, says, "[The crosses] not only added color to the walls of the residents' rooms but also brought the message of joy and peace in Christ crucified."

Submitted by Sandy Piepenbrink

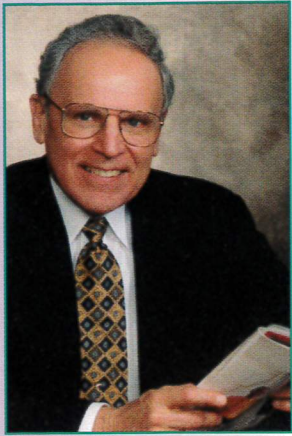
Send pictures to *Picture this*, Forward/NL, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

Love

*Love is patient,
love is kind.
It does not envy,
it does not boast,
it is not proud.
It is not rude,
it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil
but rejoices with the truth.*

*It always protects,
always trusts,
always hopes,
always perseveres.*

1 Corinthians 13:4-7



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

In increasing numbers, teens are telling us that they don't need the church and its message. Do you hear them?

Beyond Bo-Peep

“Do more for and with our youth.” That message rises front and center in the WELS Survey 2000 reported on page 14 in this issue of *Forward/NL*.

Of all the trends affecting our churches, the graying of the congregations is among the scariest. If we don't keep our youth, there won't be a church at some point.

The problem haunts us. As many as seven in 10 of our confirmands are said to no longer attend church by the time they're 19.

We should hardly be surprised, however, given the trends of society. A poll reported by the Princeton Religion Research Center in *Emerging Trends*, October 2000, indicates that few teens rate religion very highly for children and young people in their communities. Only 16 percent of teens rated “the chance for a good spiritual life, through worshiping in a church, studying the Bible, or through fellowship groups” as “very important.”

In contrast, 84 percent of teens rated “spending regular time with an adult who cares about them, such as a mentor, tutor, or coach” as very important. Also, 77 percent said that “an opportunity to serve the community through volunteer work or other charitable activities” was very important.

So, we know that we have a problem. We have a problem that seems to plague every generation in the church. But it has become more acute in our post-Christian society.

Still, many churches use the Little Bo-Peep means of dealing with their teens: “Let them alone, and they will come home”—eventually.

But will they? How can we let them alone when we see what's happening with them? How can we fail to turn up the heat and warm up our teen-retention efforts? We don't have time to waste. In increasing

numbers, teens are telling us that they don't need the church and its message. Do you hear them?

If you have followed this magazine closely, you know that we are on this subject. Staff minister Gerald Kastens of Watertown, Wis., has been addressing the matter of our teens. This month he talks to you parents. Next month he'll address the church. We need to listen and to act.

Maybe the poll from *Emerging Trends* gives us a hint or two of the way we can go. If most teens see value in “spending regular time with an adult who cares about them, such as a mentor, tutor, or coach,” where are those caring adults in our churches? Where are the mentors whose examples will model the value of worship and Bible study and Christian fellowship? We are getting into teaching English as a second language to reach people in other cultures. How about tutors and coaches to reach our teen culture?

Teens, we hear, want to get involved in “volunteer work or other charitable activities.” We teach them charity, don't we? Charity naturally flows from a living Christian faith. But what opportunities do we give our teens to do charity? If we are to equip our youth to do works of service (cf. Ephesians 4:11,12), we need to give them practice. Show them ways to flex their faith.

Our teens are too precious simply to “let them alone.” Yes, they need their space. We need to let them grow up. But we can also create some spaces where they feel good about growing—with Christ. That way we won't have to wonder if one day they will “come home; and bring their tails behind them.”

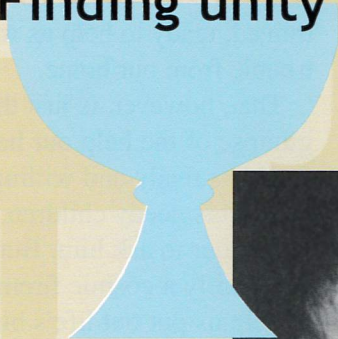
Gary P. Baumler



Sharing the Word!



Finding unity in Faith!



Renewal through Baptism!



Introducing . . .

The 2001 WELS
Stewardship
Emphasis

Profit
my Spirit
Lord!

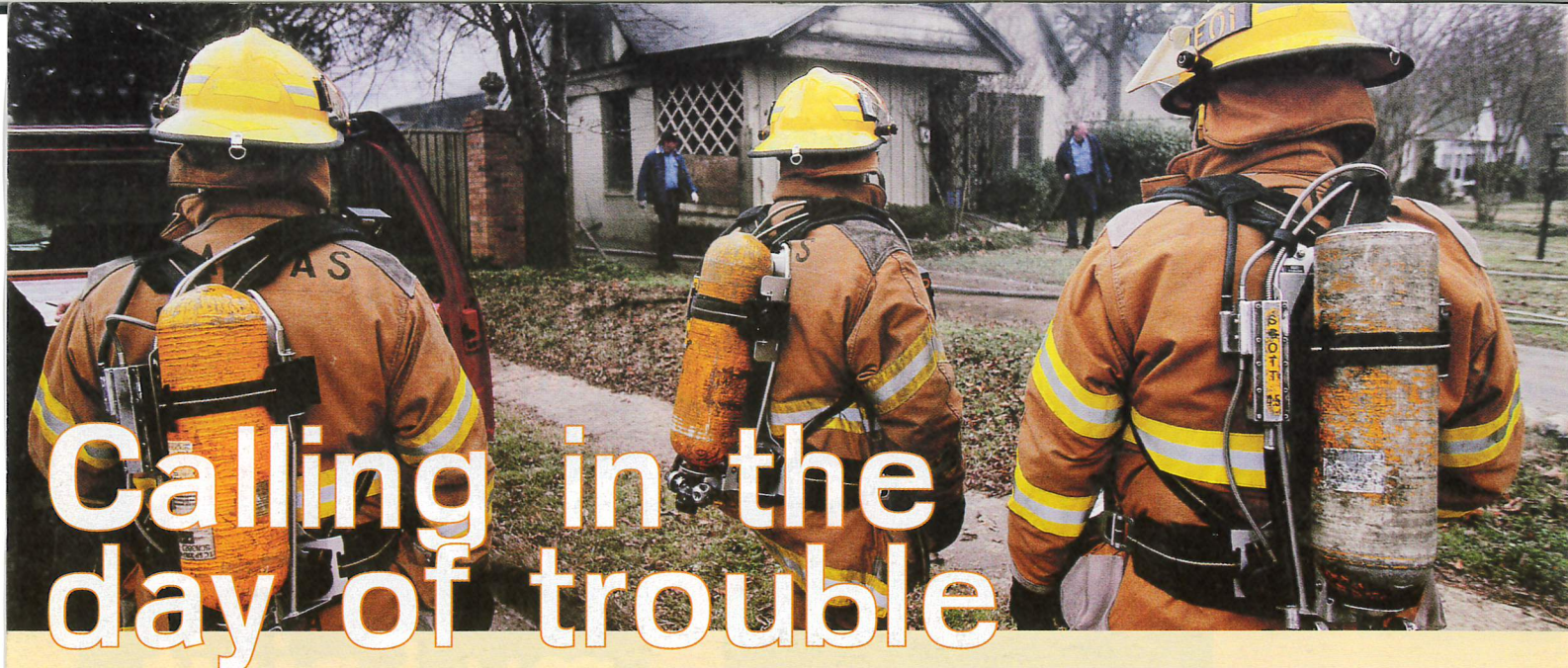


It's not too early to start planning the next stewardship emphasis for your congregation. This year we've developed an all-new stewardship program that focuses on the Word and sacraments. It includes many exciting resources and will adapt well to the multi-faceted needs of your congregation. Whether large or small, any congregation will spiritually and materially benefit from *Profit My Spirit, Lord!*

To order by phone, please call the WELS Adult Discipleship office at 1-800-567-8669.

In the Milwaukee area call 414-256-3278.

WELS Adult Discipleship
2929 North Mayfair Road
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398
FAX: (414) 256-3899



Calling in the day of trouble

A visit from the volunteer fire department is a powerful reminder that help is just around the corner.

Terry L. Laabs

Recently our home was visited by some friends we hope not to invite back for a long time—three firetrucks from the Rochester Volunteer Fire Department. That visit gave me a new appreciation for two things—for the safety net that exists in our community institutions and, most important, for the powerful source of help that our Creator God puts at our disposal, if only we use it.

The adventure

The adventure began as my wife, Denise, was in the kitchen, talking on the phone with me. She heard a crackly burning sort of sound, and said, “That’s weird.” I told her that if it were a problem with the electricity one of the circuit breakers should have popped. So she went down to the basement to investigate. Nothing.

As she came back upstairs, I heard her say, “Oh, no, there’s smoke in the living room!” Assuming that what she had heard was some kind of electrical short that was now igniting something else, I shouted to her to go back downstairs and turn off the main breaker. She did, abruptly cutting the phone as well.

I ran out of my office and headed for the car, wondering what I would find when I got home. She, mean-

while, ran to our neighbors and used their phone to dial 911. As I pulled into the driveway, I saw her coming out the front door. No flames could be seen, and no smoke was rolling out the windows. Whatever had been burning apparently had gone out.

Seconds later we heard the sirens wailing, and the first firetruck pulled in. The firemen began searching the house with their thermal camera to discover the source of the smoke. Two more trucks and more volunteer firefighters arrived, ready to do battle if needed.

But they weren’t needed, not this time. Nothing was burning.

That’s when Denise noticed a scattering of blackened crumbs on top of the piano. The mystery was solved. The brass music lamp that had stood there for a dozen years or more had shorted out. The insulation and wires burned, dropping hot ashes that left a ring of charred, black marks on the wood piano top.

The lesson

The lesson began to dawn on me gradually afterward. We had received a powerful, yet gentle, reminder that help is just around the corner. By dialing 911, we had in 10 minutes a score of willing neighbors, well

trained, ready to help us ward off trouble from our home.

That, however, is just the dimmest glimpse of the help our heavenly Father is ready and willing to pour out on his needy children, if only we remember to ask him. But God is not merely a cosmic fireman, ready to help us put out life’s blazes that we can’t handle on our own, fires that would make our lives miserable. No, he is our loving Father, who showed his great and boundless love by sending his own Son into harm’s way as our substitute to rescue us from our selfish sinfulness. That eternally loving Father is the one who invites all his children to “Call upon me in the day of trouble” and promises, “I will deliver you” (Psalm 50:15).

Whether we think about it or not, all of us count on our communities’ firefighters to make good on the help promised by the 911 system. How much more can we count on the rescue of the God who first created us, and then, at a horrible cost to himself, rescued us from the folly of our own sinfulness!

Terry Laabs is pastor at St. John, Burlington, Wisconsin.

