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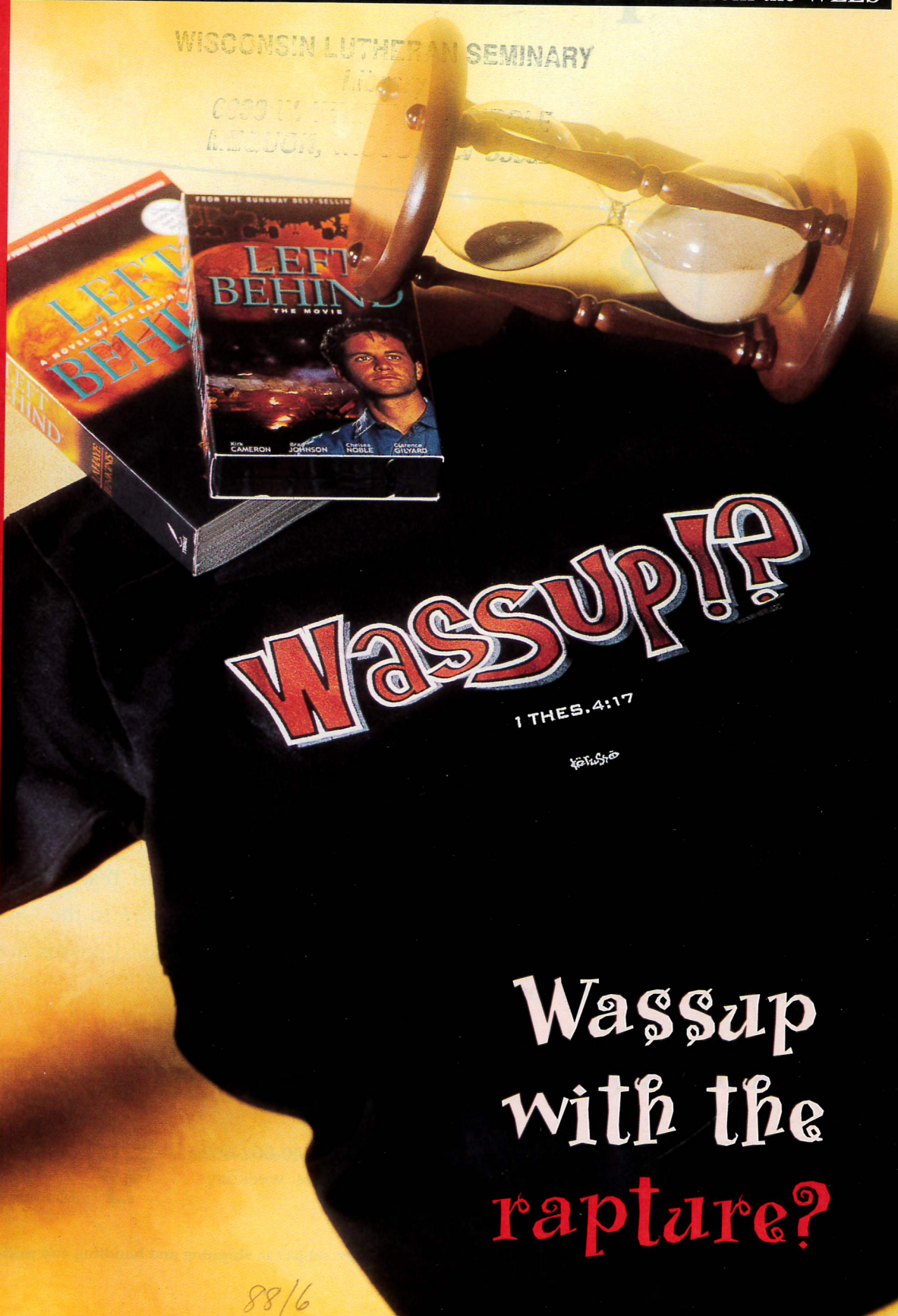
June 2001

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

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with the
rapture?

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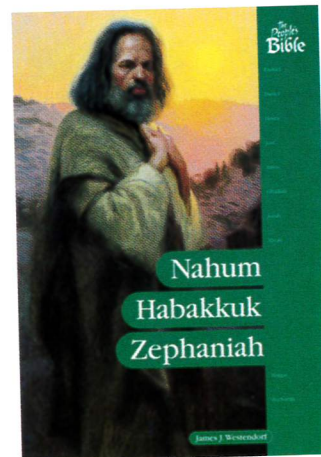
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The love of the Father

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1*

Thomas A. Westra

A pastor gave a preschool class the assignment of drawing a picture of God. They all got busy with their crayons, and one little girl, who happened to be his daughter, drew a man in a suit and tie. When he asked her about it, she said, "I don't know what God looks like, so I drew a picture of my daddy instead."

An awesome responsibility

Someone has said that children are not likely to see God as their Father unless they see something of God in their father. What a responsibility!

Fathers, do you remember holding your newborn child for the first time? Remember the overwhelming sense of wonder and joy? Perhaps mixed in with that sense of awe was a sense of apprehension. Can I handle this? Can I provide all that this little one needs? Can I protect him from all that would threaten him? Can I teach her all that she needs to know?

Paul writes, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). God says through his prophet Moses, "Impress [my words] on your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

The task becomes more daunting when we realize that children learn more by watching than listening. What have my children learned from me? How often have they seen me react in frustration and anger? How often have they seen worldly things become too important to me? Sadly,



I must admit there have been times when they have seen more of the devil than of God in me.

An awesome love

When a father holds his newborn child for the first time, there is an incredible love. Let something threaten that child, and watch a father react!

If a human, sinful father so loves his child, how much must God love us! "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). Watch him react when something threatens to take us away from him.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking thing that could happen to a father is to stand by his son in a courtroom, knowing that his son is guilty of a horrendous crime. As of this writing,

I have heard that Timothy McVeigh's father was not going to be present at his son's execution. Can you blame him?

God the Father was not present for a time at his Son's execution either. But the reason was different. He turned his back on his Son because at that execution he had made his Son guilty of all that we have done wrong and all that we have failed to do. That was the extent to which he was willing to go, when our sins threatened to take us away from him.

Because Jesus took the guilt and punishment of our sins off us and onto himself, we are reconciled to God. We can be called children of God. That forgiveness became ours at our baptism, when he said of us, "This is my son/my daughter. Nothing will separate him/her from my love."

As we approach another Father's Day, I want to say "thank you" to God for my father, and my grandfathers—men who endeavored to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I also ask God for help in the most challenging task I face in life—teaching my children—asking him that if they can only learn one thing from me it would be this: that we have a Savior in Jesus Christ and eternal life through him.



Thomas Westra is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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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

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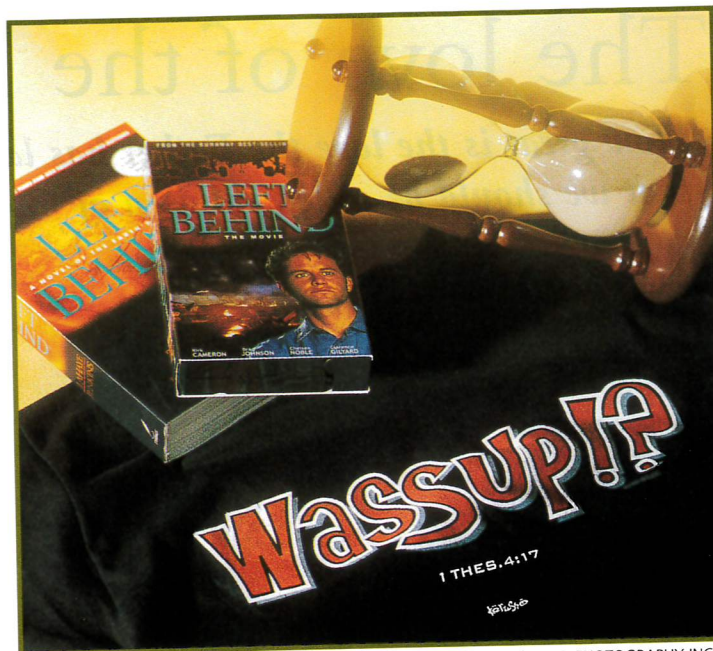
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The *Left Behind* series focuses on the rapture—a popular, but often misunderstood, topic. But the Book, God's Word, tells us a different story.

8

bits & pieces

-  The *Left Behind* series has captivated millions of people with its beliefs on the rapture. But what does the Bible say about this often misunderstood teaching? Don't be left behind. Find out in Pastor John Parlow's article "Wassup with the rapture?" (p. 8).
-  We're featuring a special two-part series on teens getting "a taste of the ministry" this month. Check out "Whatever" (pp. 16 & 17). And teens, keep sending in those articles!
-  Pastor Steven Degner ends his three-part series this month on new-world views/old-time truth. Make sure to read his last inspiring article on how the hope of the resurrection helps guide our lives (p. 14).
-  We bid a fond farewell to Bible study writer James Aderman this month. Pastor Aderman, a contributing editor since 1995, has enlightened us with articles on topics such as the fruit of the Spirit, the life of Samuel, and lessons from Psalm 91. His final article ends his series on Elijah (p. 30).
-  An in-depth look at the WELS budget, program cutbacks, and projected revenue shortfalls in upcoming years can be found on p. 22. Find out what's happening, why it's happening, and what we all can do to help.

—JKT

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**Comfort, O.K.
Comfortable, not.**



While reading through the Apr. Forward/NL, I was struck by an article about a situation parallel to my own. The article about Catrina and her dating dilemma [p. 20] hit home in many ways. I am in an almost two-year relationship with a Seventh-day Adventist. Contrary to “Caleb,” my boyfriend is extremely knowledgeable on his Scripture. There are a few areas, however, where our interpretations of the Bible differ (namely, the Law of Sabbath keeping), but I keep praying that the Holy Spirit will guide us to the truth.

*Leah Beitlich
Stoddard, Wis.*

I am troubled by portions of Thomas H. Trapp’s article, “Born a second time,” where he debates a non-Lutheran, Christian pastor about conversion [Mar.]. The article reads, “I pointed out that baptism ‘saves . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ’ (1 Peter 3:21).” This is only part of the verse. The entire verse reads “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

The missing part of this text appears to have significant meaning. Does omitting the part, which speaks about the “pledge of a good conscience toward God,” help him make his point more clearly?

*Johan Ihlen
Trevor, Wis.*

It is important to see that Pastor Trapp did not distort the meaning of the 1 Peter passage when he quoted only part of it.—ed.

Re: “Who is Jesus?” by John Jeske [Mar.].

The first time I read the article I had to pause and reread the bottom of the first column, which said, “A special power of God’s powerful

love enabled Christ to be born to a pure virgin. This was necessary if he was not to bring sin with him into the world. . . .”

At first it sounds as if Mary was “pure” (holy) and that she needed to be without sin if Jesus was to be without sin. As we all know, that is not true. Mary was a sinner just like all of us.

I hope the author meant to suggest that Mary was pure in the sense that she was a virgin and not that she was pure in the “holy” sense. If so, I think that the article should have been reworded to make it clear that everything pure and holy in Jesus was the result of Jesus being God and being conceived by the Holy Spirit and had nothing to do with Mary apart from the fact that she was a virgin.



Dave Hannenberg

We took the phrase to mean that her virginity was untainted. Thanks for the alert.—ed.

Concerning the several letters published in the Readers forum arguing against celebrating Holy Communion on Easter and Christmas: to say “the Word can stand alone” [Mar.] gives the impression that the sacraments can be surgically cut out of the Word of God and that the Bible stands isolated apart from them. As a sacramental church we hold that the Word of God always includes and celebrates the sacraments and the Word of God.

Let us therefore heed the voice of the 2000-year-old New Testament church and encourage each other to use the precious gift of Christ as we celebrate his incarnation and resurrection.

Thomas Schultz



Palatine, Illinois

In response to issues of teens—let’s continue to listen to what these kids are saying. **If 84% of teens want mentors, tutors, and coaches, that**

is something significant [“Beyond Bo-Peep,” Feb.].

Someday I’m not going to know the “in-talk” (probably true already), but I’d want a Christian female mentor for my daughter, who may not want to be “just like me” when she grows up.

I think having Christian freedom is all about seeing issues from different angles. When kids are little they role-play what they see adults doing. Sometimes young people need to see people serving God in a variety of ways. Many laypeople support the church in various activities, including Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society, Lutheran Pioneers, and Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries. These are great “charity” activities for teens to get involved in.

We shouldn’t pressure kids to do church work. God loves a cheerful giver. The best we can do is pray for their success and provide ways for them to remain in the Word.

*Lisa Scheunemann
Newburg, Wisconsin*

CORRECTION

An article taken from Religion News Service in Mar. 2001, p. 28, quoted Pope John Paul II as saying, “The gospel teaches us that those who live in accordance with the Beatitudes—the poor in spirit, the pure of heart, those who bear lovingly the sufferings of life—will enter God’s kingdom.” The actual quote should read: “Those who have chosen the way of the Gospel Beatitudes and live as the ‘the poor in spirit’, detached from material goods, in order to raise up the lowly of the earth from the dust of their humiliation, will enter the kingdom of God” (General Audience, Wed., Dec. 6, 2000).

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.



The blessing of representation

Armin J. Panning

“Taxation without representation is tyranny.” That complaint expressed a major grievance that led the colonists to turn against the English government in the American Revolution. The result is a U.S. government in which we elect senators and representatives to act for us in the halls of government.

The United States has a representative form of government at the state and federal levels. Are we equally aware of, or appreciative of, the fact that we also have a representative form of church government?

It could be different. Just as there are different forms of secular government in the world, so there are different ways of providing leadership for church bodies. Scripture does not mandate one form over another. By God’s grace, however, we all have a voice in the affairs of our synod—in and through the delegates we send to represent us at our biennial synod conventions.

Section 3.10 of the WELS constitution deals with “delegates.” It stipulates that the number of voting delegates is not to exceed 400. Hence, with a total synod membership of a little over 400,000 souls, each delegate represents about 1,000 members.

There are three categories of voting delegates: lay delegates, pastors, and male teachers. The constitution requires that half of the voting delegates be lay delegates. In other words, lay delegates need to be chosen in about 200 of the some 1,200 congregations of our synod. It is the task of the synod secretary to determine an equitable rotation among the congregations for supplying delegates. He is also charged with publishing a list of all voting and advisory delegates at least 60 days prior to the convention. This list appears in *Forward/NL* (see the May 2001 issue).

Section 3.20 states, “All matters to come before the convention shall be presented in writing to the president by a deadline determined by the president and vice presidents.” The written material received by the president is then published in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM). This is the voting delegate’s prime source of information regarding the issues on which he is to represent you at the convention.

You may say, “Having someone represent me is a far cry from being there myself and being able to speak my own mind.” True, but obviously not all members of a 400,000 member church body can be assembled at once. Although not all can be directly involved, all can benefit from the process.

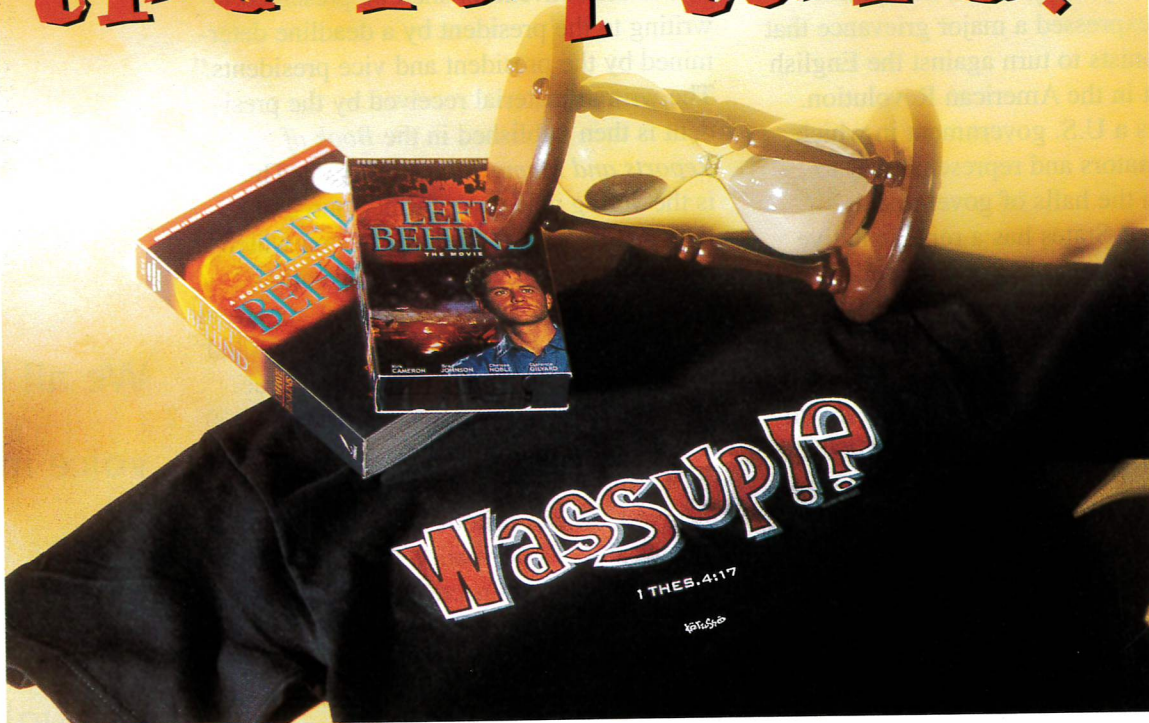
A wealth of information is prepared and disseminated in connection with the convention. That material is available to all members. The constitution speaks clearly when it stipulates: “a copy of which [BORAM] shall be made available to each congregation, pastor, and male teacher of the synod, and to each lay delegate” (3.20 a).

A copy of BORAM is likely to have arrived at your congregation already. Ask for it. The church library is an excellent place to find it. Granted, it has no pictures, and there’s little “white space,” but next to *Forward/NL*, it’s perhaps the easiest way to get to know the workings of your synod. Inform yourself about the issues that are confronting our church body. Share your concerns with the delegate who will be representing you. And don’t forget to pray that the Holy Spirit give him a rich measure of wisdom and understanding as he votes on key issues.

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

We all have a voice in the affairs of our synod—in and through the delegates we send to represent us at our biennial synod conventions.

Wassup with the rapture?



The *Left Behind* movie and book series has captivated millions, but many are not consulting the book that holds the truth about the rapture—the Bible.

John M. Parlow

It all started with a shirt. “Wassup!?” Big, bold red letters set against the black material seemed to shout in the morning. Luke had recently purchased the T-shirt at the mall and was eager to wear it to school. “Hey, Dad, cool shirt, huh!?”

Upon closer inspection my fears as the parent of a pre-adolescent boy subsided. The T-shirt wasn’t the work of the Budweiser advertising team but was created by Kerusso, a company that manu-

factures clothing with a Christian message. In small letters under the word “Wassup!?” was the reference—1 Thessalonians 4:17.

“Hey, Dad, it’s a shirt about the rapture. You know we believe that, don’t you?”

“Thanks for the eschatological reminder, Son,” I replied with all the spunk of a 12-year-old. “I think I remember something said about it at the seminary when we studied the end times.”

Left Behind thinking

We do believe in it, you know? The rapture, that is. It’s in the Book. And it’s a popular teaching today . . . and a misunderstood one. Millions of Christians and not a few seekers have been captivated by the *Left Behind* movie and book series.

The afterlife again sells in a post-modern culture that admits there is something bigger than itself. According to the author of *Left Behind*, Christ will return secretly and

“rapture” all Christians from the earth and take them to heaven. A seven-year period of tribulation will then occur on earth, followed by a 1,000-year reign of peace by Jesus himself, concluding with judgment day.

Although the order of events may vary among Evangelical Christians, there seems to be unanimous agreement that Christians will suddenly be removed from earth and the unbelieving populace left behind. According to many steeped in such Reformed theology, the scenario will unfold like this:

“Cars driven by people who spontaneously disappeared careened out of control, of course. The toughest chore for emergency personnel was to determine who had disappeared, who was killed, and who was injured, and then to communicate that to the survivors” (*Left Behind*, pp. 29,30).

“CNN showed via satellite the video of a groom disappearing while slipping the ring onto his bride’s finger. A funeral home in Australia reported that nearly every mourner disappeared from one memorial service, including the corpse, while at another service at the same time, only a few disappeared and the corpse remained. Morgues also reported corpse disappearances. At a burial, three of six pallbearers stumbled and dropped a casket when the other three disappeared. When they picked up the casket, it too was empty” (*Left Behind*, pp. 47,48).

The Bible’s teaching

Is that what the Book says is going to happen? Not exactly! Let’s just let

the Book, God’s Word, speak for itself. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:15ff, when Jesus returns he will rouse and raise all the dead (Daniel 12:2, John 5:28,29). The voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God will summon them out of their graves.

The Bible says nothing about a double return of Christ. . . . There will be only one return.

Paul was originally writing to calm the fears of Christ-followers in Thessalonica, who were concerned that their loved ones who had died would be at a disadvantage at Christ’s second coming. They were afraid that they would miss out on the joys of witnessing his triumphant return. Paul assures them that this is not true. Their loved ones who had fallen asleep in Christ will also participate in that victory celebration. They will be caught up together with the be-lievers who are alive at that time to meet the Lord in the air.

The verb Paul uses to tell us what will happen is a Greek word that means “we shall be snatched, seized, caught.” The word “rapture” conveys the same thought. It is derived from the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Bible, which uses the word *rapiemur*, “we shall be snatched” or “seized,” in this passage.

“Hey, Dad, do you know why we’ll need to be sucked up into the sky?”

“All right, let’s see if you’ve got game. Why?”

“So your feet don’t get burned. We learned in class that on judgment day God’s going to burn up the earth and change it into the new heaven

and new earth [2 Peter 3:10,13]. God just doesn’t want us standing there!”

“Do you know where it says that, Luke?”

Pointing to the Bible reference on the front of his shirt, he said, “It’s in the Book.”

He’s right (although it has to do with more than burned feet). 1 Thessalonians 4 tells us that believers will rise to meet Christ in the air, not prior to, but on the last day, on the day when the trumpet of God will signal the end (compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16 with Matthew 24:31). Then will be the final judgment.

The Bible says nothing about a double return of Christ, one being secret and a second one visible a number of years later. There will be only one return.

On that day, according to Matthew 24:30, all the nations of the earth “will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.” On that day, according to Revelation 1:7, “every eye will see him.” The Christians will not mysteriously disappear while life goes on as before on the earth. As Christ’s ascension into heaven was visible (Acts 1:11), so his descent in the clouds of heaven and his saints’ ascension to welcome their returning Lord and Savior in the air will be visible to all.

So what advice would I give you as you await that day?

The back of Luke’s shirt wasn’t bad: “Watchin’ the sky . . . Ready to fly!”



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

There is

A chaplain shares the hope of life after death through Jesus our Savior to two women whose “gods” didn’t offer that same comfort.

Kenneth L. Wenzel

“O Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good. Do men make their own gods? Yes, but they are not gods!’” (Jeremiah 16:19,20).

The prophet Jeremiah had the sad ministry of telling the people from Judah and Jerusalem that the Lord had withdrawn his hand of blessing from them. He did so because they had turned to false gods. Diseases, war, and famine would strike their land and lives. They would die with no comfort. They would see that their homemade gods were no gods at all. They would not find in them any comfort and hope. In great distress, they would finally listen to Jeremiah’s message about the true saving Lord. God’s grace would restore them with the blessings of peace, hope, and life.

The above circle of sin and grace was repeated again at the deathbed of an organ transplant patient in the hospital. Since Stan had been delinquent in his Lutheran faith and was frightened, he went to his pastor for a review and a renewal of faith several months before his surgery. Things

went badly in the surgery, and Stan never recovered. The family called for a Lutheran chaplain to help, and I was the chaplain on call that day.

I walked into the room and found three women weeping at Stan’s side. One was his wife, another was his mother, and the third was a friend.

In her grief, the mother collapsed and was put into a wheelchair. I took her out of the room to a place where we could talk.

Sobbing, she told me that she depended on her son’s care and that she was a Jehovah’s Witness. She also reminded me that her religion does not believe in life after death. “Once you die—that is it—there is nothing more.”

Then to my surprise, she suddenly cried out that she could no longer follow her faith as she watched her son dying on the bed. She sobbed, “There has to be more than just life on earth.”

She told me that she had once been a Christian, but had abandoned that faith many years ago. Now she realized that her present faith and god offered no hope and no comfort. Her religion was worthless. What should she do?

I asked her if she remembered anything about the Christian faith she

more

once had. She sobbed something about life after death. The door was now wide open for me to share with her the good news of Jesus' saving life that her son had reviewed and embraced before his surgery.

I told her that her son had the peace and comfort that Jesus had won on the cross for all people. It was also a gift she could have through faith in Jesus, the saving Lord God. There was hope and life after death in Jesus the Savior. I shared with her that Jesus is also the true Lord, who lives and rules in our daily lives to help us in our times of trouble.

She listened quietly to the saving message of Christ. This Lord offered her hope and life. The true Lord calmed her down and gave her the strength to be able to say her final good-bye to her son.

Only in Jesus is there certain hope, comfort, and life.

Her Christian friend entered the room where we were talking to check up on us. I told her what the mother had said. She affirmed the same message of Jesus and offered to take her to her church so that they

could restudy that message. I prayed that the Lord would restore her faith and soul and bless her with the precious truths and comfort of Jesus.

Back in the hospital room with her dying husband, Stan's wife also began sobbing. She belonged to the Wiccan faith and practiced witchcraft. She had placed a little black bag with crystals, pictures, and other items above the head of her dying husband. It had not protected her husband, nor did it offer any healing or comfort.

In tears, she set aside her faith, for she had no hope and comfort. She then told me that her husband liked the 23rd Psalm. There seemed to be some hope and comfort there for him. Would I recite it and explain what it meant?

Again, the door opened for the good news of Jesus. After reciting the 23rd Psalm, I explained how Jesus was the Shepherd of the 23rd Psalm. I shared how his death upon the cross gives sinners peace with God and opens the door to eternal life. This was the comfort of the 23rd Psalm. Her husband was soon going to be with Jesus in the blessings of eternal paradise. All who trust in Jesus as their Savior from sin have Jesus as the Shepherd who gives forgiveness

and heaven. Only in Jesus do we find certain hope, comfort, and life.

She also quietly listened. But, tragically, I felt that although she approved of such a faith for her husband, such a faith was not for her. In the darkness of unbelief, she still hung onto her hopeless crystals and amulets. It made no sense. She would stay with her idols even if they did not do her any good and offered no comfort. Afterward, I prayed that the Lord would somehow sprout the seeds of a saving faith from the gospel I had shared with her.

Like Jeremiah, in the day of distress I saw "worthless idols that did them no good." I also was given another mission opportunity to share the precious meaning and comfort we have in Jesus the Savior even in the distress of death.

May the one true Lord open many more doors for us to see and to say, "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth."



Kenneth Wenzel is a chaplain with Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc., Milwaukee.

FRUITFUL SENIORS



Older church members need to continue to bear fruit for the church—and the rest of the church needs to encourage and help them to do so.

Nicole R. Moline

The population in the United States is aging. By 2050 there are projected to be at least 80 million Americans over the age of 65, more than double the current number¹. Baby Boomers are creeping into their retirement years, and life expectancies are rising.

So, what is WELS doing to act on this knowledge? And, what are older church members doing?

The church's actions

In the summer of 2000, the Commission on Adult Discipleship (CAD) produced and distributed a senior ministry handbook from information compiled by its Senior Ministry Committee. In this handbook, CAD notes that "members dropping out of service in the church are like parts of a body being amputated (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). While the scope and type of service may change for senior members, the opportunities, rewards, and blessings remain" (p. 11).

The handbook shows a church how to form a senior ministry committee, suggesting that the committee should set goals and objectives that are in line with the congregation's mission. Then, it should take on one project at a time, taking the

time to formulate a plan of action, publicize the project, implement the plan, and evaluate the results.

The handbook is careful to note that "There is no right or wrong way for a congregation to incorporate senior ministry into its structure. The structure isn't nearly as important as is simply doing it" (p. 30).

Individual members' actions

And doing it they are. Seniors across the United States are serving their Lord in a variety of ways.

At St. Paul, Winneconne, Wis., Lois Gosseck tutors a catechism student as part of her congregation's Generation to Generation program, which uses seniors as spiritual grandparents. These "grandparents" help congregation members who are experiencing problems with their confirmation instruction. The seniors meet with the pastor once a week to review the catechism lessons. Then, the seniors meet with their students.

Gosseck admits to being apprehensive at first. "I was a widow and was used to doing everything with my husband," she explains. "Now I had to do things like go to Bible class alone. This type of commitment helped. I decided to try it because maybe someone would benefit from

it. I encourage others to get involved because I really enjoy it."

Marcy Filteau organizes the Graduate Sponsors program at Salem, Escanaba, Mich. Graduate sponsors are older members who write to high school graduates in the congregation so that the young adults keep in touch with their home congregation. Filteau finds satisfaction in "doing God's work. If God uses my efforts to save one soul, it is worth it."

Filteau's fellow member, Jerome Kingsbury, runs Salem's Dial-A-Devotion ministry. Each day he records a three-to-six-minute devotion on an answering machine reserved for callers seeking devotions. Kingsbury says he has "the satisfaction of getting the Word out."

Each of these dedicated Christians could have retired from serving the Lord when they retired from their earthly jobs. However, these older Christians know that that is not what God intended. God did not put a timetable on how long we are to serve him. God says that the righteous "will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him'" (Psalm 92:14,15).

TAKING ACTION

To find out more about the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS), call 414/321-9977. Visit their Web site at <www.wels.net/owls>.

To become involved in WELS Kingdom Workers, call 1-800-466-9357 or e-mail <kingwork@wkw.wels.net>. Visit their Web site at <www.wels.net/wkw>.

TRY ONE OF THESE:

- Be part of a Sunshine Committee that sends out cards with spiritual messages to those who are hospitalized or moving.
- Organize tours and events for congregational groups.
- Serve as church historian, gathering information and pictures.
- Give presentations to children in the congregation about the “good-old days.”
- Reassure shut-ins with telephone calls and visits.
- Serve as a church greeter.
- Participate in evangelism programs—prepare mailings, keep records, do telephone surveys.

Ideas taken from the Senior Ministry Handbook produced by the Commission on Adult Discipleship. To receive a copy, call 414/256-3278 or e-mail <cad@sab.wels.net>.



Helen Yohann, assistant office coordinator for OWLS, and Lester Ring, OWLS President, have discovered the joy of being fruitful seniors.

OWLS' actions

Members of the Organization for WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) definitely fall into that category of still bearing fruit. OWLS exists to provide ways for seniors to gather together in service to God and fellowship with one another. They organize many programs that help the church—and the volunteers who are involved with the programs.

For example, many OWLS members work with Lutheran elementary schools, Sunday schools, and vacation Bible schools in the Crossing Generations program. Tasks include tutoring students, helping teachers with recess duty, and coordinating craft projects.

The prison ministry project also gives OWLS members a chance to contribute to the body of Christ. Volunteers help with the mailing and correcting of Bible study materials for more than 20,000 prison inmates. Many volunteers also serve as pen pals to prisoners.

Each of these programs coordinated by OWLS allows senior members to remain active in the church, benefiting both the seniors and God's kingdom.

WELS Kingdom Workers' actions

Volunteering with WELS Kingdom Workers can provide the same benefits. One function of WELS Kingdom Workers is to help seniors volunteer in home and world mission fields, alongside WELS missionaries.

Retirees Richard and Charlotte Halfman taught English as a Foreign Language for WELS' mission in Russia from May 2000-May 2001. Fellow retirees Ray and Joanne Solofra served in Zambia from 1998-2001. Ray was the mission field's handyman, while Joanne helped by performing various

first of a two-part series

domestic tasks. In the United States, East Fork mission in Apacheland always welcomes volunteers.

Older members can also build churches—literally. Volunteers with Builders For Christ, a division of WELS Kingdom Workers, build churches, schools, parsonages, and fellowship halls at a reduced cost. Carpenters, electricians, masons, plumbers, finishers, or just generally handy people are needed. Builders For Christ's roster includes over 350 men and women, including many retirees.

Your actions

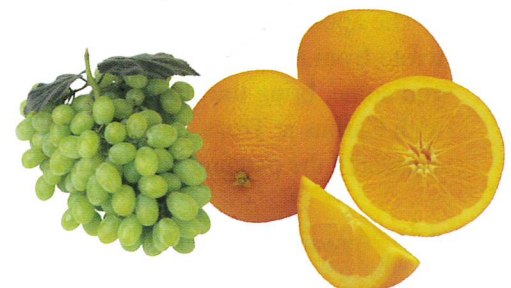
We can't deny that it's happening. The United States' population is aging. At the same time, we also know that there is much work to be done for the Lord. Why not allow older members to take charge of a portion of this work so that the body of Christ can function at peak performance?

Active senior ministry will benefit both the church and senior members themselves. Don't wait to begin this important ministry. Seniors, take the initiative. Talk to your pastor today about the work that you would like to do. Organize a senior ministry committee in your congregation. Go and work for the Lord.



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

¹Based on middle series Bureau of the Census population projections released in 1996. Similar projections prepared by the Social Security Administration in 1995 support these figures. For more information, see <www.aoa.gov>.



Finding the meaning of life



The hope of the resurrection gives us the power to let go of our stuff, to be in the world but not of the world.

Steven C. Degner

Twenty-first-century Christians don't have it easy when it comes to living in a consumer culture. Like clothes sloshing around in a washing machine, we are inundated by multimedia messages that plead with us to find happiness in our stuff and pleasure in our personal choices.

Marketing experts constantly search for new fashions, styles, sensations, and experiences. Revlon makes 177 different shades of lipstick. The "super" market of the 21st century offers 30,000 different items. It's hard to resist the call to "indulge yourself. Buy now. Pay later."

The people who had nothing

The key to surviving this challenge of the 21st century is found in the lives of the first-century Christians. They joyfully proclaimed the resurrection of Christ as the sure hope of everlasting life. They lived with the reality of their own bodily resurrection. They preferred to travel light rather than be burdened down with too much stuff.

The apostle Paul traveled light. He wrote from a prison in Rome: "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments" (2 Timothy

4:13). That was all Paul needed, a warm coat and a handful of scrolls. Maybe that was all he had.

The 21st-century church needs to fix its eyes on what is unseen.

The man who had nothing had everything in Christ. "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8). The more you long for Christ to appear in glory, the less you will seek lasting satisfaction in material goods and services.

First-century Christians appear very strange to 21st-century Christians. We puzzle over their lack of attachment to things. "Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need" (Acts 2:45). They did not seem to have the need for things that we

have. They were so infused with the hope of the resurrection that stuff became unimportant to them.

The people who have everything

When Paul walked through the marketplace in Athens, he was shocked to see idols to different gods. It says in Acts 17:16 that he was "greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols." What if Paul spent a week with us? Would he be distressed by our lifestyles and shocked by our culture? Does a different form of idolatry afflict us?

Huge blocks of time and energy are expended in taking care of things. Closets and attics are full. Garages—one-car, two-car, and now three-car—are full. There are even multiple shelves to hold more stuff. Luxuries have become necessities. Among the weary and burdened are Christians who cannot resist the siren call to "shop 'til you drop."

Have you ever felt like you were being sucked into a large hole and were unable to resist the pressure of the culture around you? Earlier this year a man died in northern California when he was cleaning out the debris from a large reservoir. He was standing in only two feet of water when the water started flowing

down the drain. The circular motion of the water had such force that it sucked him down the drain. It is hard to estimate the suction force of consumerism that swirls around us and threatens to pull us away from Christ.

Ours is a rich land. It drips with milk and honey like the land of Canaan. With the blessing comes the warning. "Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws, and his decrees that I am giving you this day" (Deuteronomy 8:11).

Focusing on the future

First-century Christians survived the challenges of persecution, pain, and suffering, with their hope fueled by the promise of the resurrection. The early church rose above its pain and suffering by focusing on what was coming in the future. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen,

but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17,18).

The 21st-century church needs to fix its eyes on what is unseen. All the stuff that fills our lives can become secondary and insignificant. With Paul we can confess boldly, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, *to attain to the resurrection from the dead*" (Philippians 3:10,11).

When I think of my own struggle to let go of things from this life, a picture comes to my mind. During World War II, soldiers on a Pacific island were plagued by little monkeys that would steal food and pillage their tents. Every effort to capture the monkeys and scare them off failed. They were too quick. One soldier had a brilliant idea. He filled a narrow-neck bottle with nuts and fruit. The monkeys reached in and would not let go of the nuts in the bottle. They were

easily captured with a net and transported to another island. One soldier remarked how sad and pathetic the monkeys appeared as the nets were being thrown over them. They would not let go. Too often that pathetic little monkey has been me, trapped by the net of the times in which we live.

"Steve, we don't hear enough about the resurrection." I will never forget these words that were spoken to me by a cousin I was visiting several years ago. "We don't hear enough about the resurrection. We hear a lot about Jesus dying on the cross for us, but we don't hear enough about the resurrection." Resurrection people never grow weary of hearing about the resurrection. The hope of the resurrection gives the power to let go of our stuff, to be in the world but not of the world, and to travel lightly into the 21st century.

Steven Degner is pastor at Star of Bethlehem, Santa Maria, California.



WHATEVER

A taste of ministry

Sometimes we prematurely shut doors in situations where we should be more open-minded. Could God be guiding you to the ministry?

Kraig Petersen

“One of my chief goals this weekend is to show you that this is something you could see yourself doing,” Pastor Gibbons told me in reference to the ministry as we were traveling toward his house in Livonia, Mich. This was one of many heart-to-heart conversations we would have during my Taste of Ministry weekend with him.

It started with the ringing of the last school bell on Thursday. I grabbed my bags and jumped into Pastor Gibbons’ car. I already knew him well through my acquaintances with his son and daughter, Mike and Stephanie. This saved me from any awkwardness that there could have been and allowed Pastor and me to flow easily from everyday conversation, such as catching up on how school, athletics, and the ladies were treating me, into more focused topics such as my post-high-school plans.

When we arrived at his house, I was persuaded by Matthew and Christopher (two other sons of Pastor Gibbons) to play a game of indoor basketball. Naomi (Pastor’s other daughter) made dinner for us before we took off to watch the Huron Valley Lutheran High School girls’ basketball team play.

That first night began the most relaxing and enjoyable weekend I’ve had in a long time. Don’t get me wrong; we kept busy. But it never seemed like anything we did was a chore. Among some of the things Pastor Gibbons and I did were shut-in calls, breakfast meetings with church board members, choir practices, talking with students, rehearsing Scripture readings, and attending Matthew’s basketball game.

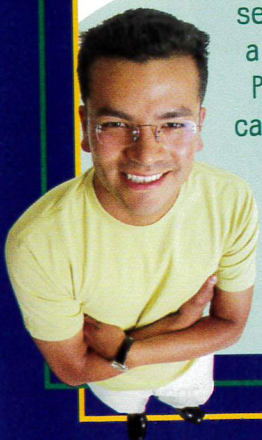
The most beneficial times were the long talks Pastor Gibbons and I had in his church office, during our tour of Detroit, in the comfort of his home, and everywhere that we had a chance. We talked about the future and the ministry and how I fit into the picture.

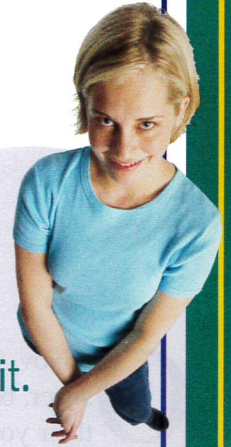
Sunday was the highlight of our weekend. With Pastor Gibbons’ help, I read the Scripture lessons for church. As I was walking back to his car after the services, I remembered Pastor Gibbons’ words in the car ride on the first day and found myself thinking, “This is something I could see myself doing.” The Taste of Ministry experience helped me realize more fully what a great privilege serving the Lord can be.

During the weekend Pastor explained to me the difference of measuring success between that of the ministry and other professions. He showed me that just because a minister doesn’t always know how far reaching his words might be, the power of the gospel is still always at work. Sometimes it isn’t until years later that someone might approach a pastor and tell him how something the pastor said really had an effect on him.

I don’t want to wait years to let Pastor Gibbons know what an effect his talks had with me. Instead, I want to thank him and his family for the strong encouragement and warm hospitality they showed me while I stayed at their house. The talks and experience will never be forgotten.

Kraig Petersen, a senior at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, is a member at St. Paul, Saginaw.





The best decision ever

Perhaps the best way to know if you want to be a teacher is to try it.

Cynthia Deno

I never really thought that much about becoming a Lutheran schoolteacher until my seventh- and eighth-grade teacher talked about why Lutheran teachers are needed and what characteristics and qualifications are needed to be a successful teacher. Still, I didn't think it was for me.

Then, about a month before my freshmen year started, my pastor approached me and said, "Cindy, would you be interested in teaching Sunday school this year?"

It took a few seconds for his words to register. Could he really be asking me, a 14-year-old girl, to teach? Could he be willing to place the lives of little souls into my hands for an hour each week? My next thought was, "Why?" Is our church really that small that he wasn't able to find somebody more qualified?

Before I knew it, I had opened my mouth and vocalized the word, "Sure." I then thought to myself, "What am I getting myself into?"

He told me that I would be teaching the youngest class—three- to six-year olds. A slew of thoughts rushed into my mind. What will happen if the kids don't like me? What if I make one cry? What would happen if one of them never wants to come to Sunday school or church again because they were afraid of me?

The first few weeks were unorganized, but somehow I managed to get through them. I was relieved that not one child cried or hated me. They all seemed to get along with me, and no one left church screaming, "I hate Sunday school."

The first time I realized that I was actually enjoying it was when one child asked, "If God is everywhere, do I step on him?"

As the weeks went on, we all became acquainted with each other, and I improved on my teaching. One boy only used one color to color with—Jesus' hands, eyes, robe, the sky, water, and animals were all a distinctive shade of green. One child invited me to her fifth birthday party and told me that I could be the donkey for "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." A three-year-old boy invited me to come and help him milk his cows, and another asked me if I could baby-sit for her doll every day while she was in preschool. One four-year-old girl said that she did not want to go to heaven because she wouldn't know where her house was, she would get lost, and God would never find her.

To say the least, I loved teaching Sunday school that first year and still enjoy it today. Every Sunday when I enter church, I am attacked by little pairs of flailing arms and slobbery kisses, and I hear tiny, excited voices crying out, "Hey, Mom, there's my teacher!"

How could I pass up such a wonderful opportunity to hear and experience these things every day as a teacher?

Many ask, "Why not teach in a public school? The salary would be much higher."

I say, "If I'm going to teach, why would I want to teach only half a person, teach their mind, but not their soul?"

I plan on becoming a Lutheran preschool and kindergarten teacher. To those of you who say, "Why on earth would anybody want to be around a bunch of kids her whole life?" try saying "Sure," and see for yourself.

Cynthia Deno, a senior at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., is a member at St. John, Woodville, Wisconsin.

Just ordinary people

Roger, Dorothy, and Japheth Justman were just three ordinary people. Or were they?

Jerome L. Enderle

On Nov. 19, 2000, my wife's sister, brother-in-law, and their youngest son were killed in a car accident. Dorothy, Roger, and Japheth Justman are with their Lord and Savior Jesus.

Family and friends gathered in Wausau, Wis., to pay respects at Northland Lutheran High School, where Japh was a senior.

The Justmans' three older children—Jodi, Jared, and Becky—greeted those who filed by the caskets. One man explained that he was the driver of the other vehicle. He told them how sorry he was, even though the accident wasn't his fault. Tears filled my eyes as Jodi, Jared, and Becky each gave him a hug and showed their Christian love.

For four hours people filed by. People I had never seen before told us who they were and explained how Roger, Dotti, and Japh had influenced their lives. When it was time for the service, hundreds of people still were lined up through the gymnasium, the commons, and up and down the halls.

Finally, with the gymnasium packed with over 800 people, the service began. It was filled with songs of joy and celebration. The pastors' messages contained God's Word and filled us with peace and joy. Roger, Dotti, and Japh were in heaven with Jesus—not because of who they were or what they had done, but because of their faith in their loving and living Savior.



Dorothy, Japheth, and Roger Justman

I was filled with amazement at the outpouring of love and respect. I had loved Roger, Dotti, and Japh. But to me they had been just three ordinary people.

The next day the scene changed, but the circumstances didn't. Everything moved to Hartford, Wis., where Roger and Dotti grew up. Lines of people stretched out the door to the parking lot. This time it was my privilege to bring God's words of comfort, words of celebration and victory, to a church filled with at least 500 people.

As we returned from the cemetery, I again began to wonder, "Why this outpouring for Roger, Dotti, and Japh—just three ordinary people?"

Then it dawned on me. Roger, Dorothy, and Japheth Justman weren't just three ordinary people. They were three ordinary Christian people.

Roger and Dotti had been brought to their Savior's kingdom in baptism.

They learned of their Savior in their family homes. I preached the sermon when they were joined in Christian marriage 28 years ago. They had brought Japh and their other children to the Lord in baptism and seen to their Christian upbringing.

Roger, Dotti, and Japh knew Jesus had come to live, die, and rise again. They lived their Christian faith and, in living their faith, had touched and influenced the lives of thousands of people.

Three ordinary Christian people had let the lights of their faith shine brightly. Three ordinary Christian people had been the salt of the earth and had seasoned it well. Three ordinary Christian people witnessed to their Savior in life, and they continued to witness to their Savior, even in death!

Yes, Roger, Dotti, and Japh were three ordinary Christian people. So are we. Each of us is the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We know what Jesus did for us—and the world. We can witness to our Savior every day in everything we say and do. Individually we can touch and influence the lives of thousands. Collectively, we can touch and influence the lives of millions.

The salt of the earth. The light of the world. That's the way I'm going to remember the Justmans: as three ordinary Christian people. But so am I, and so are you.

Jerome Enderle is pastor at Grace, Dix Hills, New York.



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

In the first frame Snoopy is shivering. In the next, Linus and Lucy notice their canine friend is cold. "We should do something," they agree in the third frame. "Be warm, Snoopy," they cheer in the next as they walk away. In the final frame, Snoopy is still shivering, but now he's also doubting the sincerity of his friends.

Ever felt like Snoopy? Or acted like Linus and Lucy? Jesus said, "All men will know you are my disciples if you love one another." Love with feet is called *ministry*. Ministry means service, especially serving others with God's Word and sacraments. Through such means of grace, God keeps us spiritually healthy. Ministry—it's good for you, and it's good for others.

Health factor—Ministry

God's Word

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:10,11).

1. Peter labels each ability a "gift." What discourages people from thinking of their abilities as gifts?
2. Paul wrote, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). His grace is his undeserved love for sinners. Why does Peter call our gifts or abilities God's grace?
3. "Speaking the very words of God" is an uplifting phrase. What does that tell you about serving others with your words?
4. "The strength God provides" is as limitless as he. What does that tell you about your ability to serve?
5. According to Peter, what is the purpose of ministry?

My soul for personal check-up

1. Recall a time when you concluded that your abilities were a gift. What made you realize that?
2. Ministry isn't always fun, but joy in serving is a pretty good indication that this might be my gift. What kinds of service to others make you the happiest?
3. How will you carry out your service this week?
4. You probably don't need a program to do whatever you decided in the previous question. But how might your church help you?
5. What might help you remember that you're giving glory to God as you serve others?
6. Send a thank-you note, maybe even anonymously, to someone who has served you. Let that person know you give God credit for the way God has worked in him or her.

My church for group check-up

1. List the ministries in our church that require primarily "speaking" gifts.
2. List the ministries in our church that involve primarily "serving" gifts.
3. Which of these two slogans do you think best describes our church: "Needs in search of Givers" or "Givers in search of Needs"? Explain why.
4. If you were searching for a church, which of the above slogans would you like to see under the church's name? Why?
5. How do we help people in our church discover the best ways for them to serve?
6. What disadvantages can you think of for a formal plan to match members to ministry? Advantages?

Web-med

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

Listen to Pastor Mueller's sermon on "Service" at <http://www.wels.net/sab/ra/message.html>.

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

FINANCIAL CHALLENGE LOOMS for WELS

WELS hits budget bumps now with forecasted \$8 to \$10 million shortfalls in sight.

Program cuts in 2001-03 and the need to increase offerings by \$8 to \$10 million per year to avoid more cutbacks will create challenges for WELS and its members.

That doesn't mean we should wring our hands, just use them to help.

"Nothing God ever permits in his church is a calamity," says WELS

President Karl R. Gurgel. "There are always opportunities. The challenge is to use what he continually gives us in the best possible way."

He continues, "What we can't see with our eyes, we need to see with our eyes of faith. He will never leave us without the necessary resources to do his work."

What's happening

Although there is enough money to continue God's work, reduced resources have already forced WELS to cut back on programs in 2001-03 to maintain a balanced budget.

Deciding which of the five areas of ministry received what wasn't easy. Funding for existing programs like

WELS Budgeting 101

Most people need to wisely manage their money on a fixed income. The synod operates in a similar way. It has a limited amount of revenue and must determine how best to use that money so that God is glorified. The WELS constitution states that the synod must maintain a balanced budget. Therefore, the synod must make sure that its expenditures do not exceed its revenues.

Because the synod's budget is larger than most people's individual budgets (the year 2001-02 budget is \$55.4 million), the principles behind it are more involved and follow a process called decision package budgeting.

In this process, the Synodical Council asks each area of ministry to set up its budget according to programs of ministry. This allows expected revenue to be budgeted based on how important the programs are to doing the Lord's work.

To evaluate ministry at the lowest level, each unit in each area of ministry is asked to rank its ministry packages in priority. Each unit is currently allowed to protect packages that total in cost 60% of its last year's budgetary fund base.

When an area of ministry puts all its units' packages together, it respects that 60% protection point. The area

of ministry then prioritizes the packages of all its units and is currently able to protect packages that total up to 90% of the area of ministry's base from the previous year.

This approach forces the areas of ministry to examine ministry packages across all the units and prevents "the same as last time" or "just add a percentage to last budget" approach.

The Synodical Council, through its Budgeting Committee, works particularly with the packages from all the areas of ministry that are above the 90% level. All new packages must be identified so that their value can be assessed.

The Budgeting Committee also asks that all new and existing packages be related to the challenging opportunities of WELS' mission objectives vision (MOV) so that money budgeted supports the ministry most important to WELS.

Every two years one of the areas of ministry, in rotation, is asked to do zero-based budgeting. This "tear down and build up" method asks the area of ministry to go through its ministry programs for the Synodical Council, beginning with its very first package. This is designed to give the Synodical Council an in-depth look at all the ministry of that particular area instead of basically only those packages above the 90% level.

cross-cultural expansion or program maintenance for ministerial education schools had to be reduced, and new programs such as a third parish assistant, several new world missionaries, and new home mission starts had to be put on hold (see “Program cutbacks”).

“You try to strike a balance of the work that is being done to focus on the WELS Mission Objective Vision (MOV) statement,” says Ronald Rathke, chair of the Budget Committee of the Synodical Council. “It became very apparent in our budget process this year that we were going to have to constrain some areas of ministry that we wouldn’t like to, that would hamper our MOV.”

He continues, “But there was a cooperative effort among the administrative committees. . . . They saw the same focus that we did.”

More severe cuts may need to be made in the 2003-05 biennium when current projections show a possible \$8 to \$10 million less in each budget year. In 2003, WELS may have to put an additional \$3 million for each year into the budget to fund a compensation proposal to more adequately care for WELS called workers (see p. 27). That proposal will be voted on at the synod convention in August.

Yet the synod constitution dictates that the synod must operate with a balanced budget.

Why it’s happening

Three primary reasons contributed to the current program cutbacks and possible upcoming revenue shortages.

1. A leveling off of an annual major donation and a change of how WELS uses that donation.

In the 1970s, Marvin Schwan began giving WELS annual donations of up to \$5 million. Since his donations depended on his company’s profits and supported continuing programs in WELS, we created the Gift Fund for his gifts, from which we used the earnings and 30% of the principal each year.

After Schwan’s death, his foundation continued—and increased—the gifts to WELS.

“At that time we were cash starved in WELS. We were only opening one to three home missions a year, and there were no new world missions. Plans were in place so it was easy to show the foundation plans for good use of those dollars,” says Ron Roth, administrator of the Commission for Communication on Financial Support.

Each year the annual gifts became larger—\$10, \$12, \$14 million, \$5 million of which would go into the Gift Fund, the rest directly to programs and projects.

The Gift Fund grew, once in excess of \$20 million. With that kind of base plus increasing individual gifts, WELS accelerated the start of new programs. To keep the projects going, we also began using more of the Gift Fund.

During the years 1996 to 2001, we opened 70 new home missions in three years, started five new world mission fields, began humanitarian ministry in international fields, added a secondary teacher education program and an early childhood education program, developed the staff ministry program, increased student financial assistance for ministerial education schools, added consultants for school principals and congregations considering opening a Lutheran elementary school, and added a Commission on Worship administrator.

In 1998, gifts from the foundation began to level off, now at a level of \$10.6 million each year. “These gifts are generous and a great blessing,” says Roth. “This level helps us do more kingdom work without discouraging our congregations and members from being generous.”

The foundation also wanted to see the money used rather than put in a “holding fund.” Since the gifts now came from a foundation rather than a business, the rationale for the Gift Fund no longer existed. In 2000 all

PROGRAM CUTBACKS



Harold Hagedorn,
Board for Home Missions

Needed 100% of last year’s budget to keep existing programs running as they were with modest expansions.

Received 97%.

Programs that are being eliminated, being cut back, or seeking other sources of funding: cross-cultural ministry expansion.

Additional programs that are approved but not funded: seven new missions.

Comments: “From 1997-1999, WELS home missions had 70 new missions and ministries begin, for which we are thankful to our gracious God, but this only highlighted where more ministries are needed! In the next two years, we may be able to open three new missions. We had a thrust going. Now it’s not just slowed, but on hold. It troubles my heart. Our church’s membership is flatlined and millions need to hear the gospel, but we are now put in neutral, rather than able to aggressively address these issues.”



Daniel Koelpin,
Board for World Missions

Needed 121% of last year’s budget to keep existing programs running as they were.

Received 113%.

Programs that are being eliminated, being cut back, or seeking other sources of funding: Russian seminary graduate subsidy.

Additional programs that are approved but not funded: a missionary in Albania, fourth missionary in Brazil, third missionary in Hong Kong, seventh missionary in Russia.

Comments: “World missions is working hard to make national churches self-supporting, but in order to reach that point we need manpower. . . . Although the positions that were not funded were vacant, it doesn’t spare the impact felt on the missionary field. I know there is a slowing of the U.S. economy, but compared to most people in the world, we still have the largest discretionary income. An investment in spreading the gospel overseas is worth putting our resources into.”

the donations started going directly into the budget. This means there is no investment income from the Gift Fund for WELS to use.

Yet WELS had to continue using the Gift Fund to support ministry programs. "One factor that caused us to draw on the Gift Fund was that the growth in giving was not keeping up with the cost of project growth," says Peter Dorn, chairman of the Support Committee of the Synodical Council.

He continues, "We wanted to maintain our programs. We didn't want to cut back in what we were doing."

PROGRAM CUTBACKS



**Wayne Mueller,
Board for Parish
Services**

Needed 114% of last year's budget to keep existing programs running as they were.

Received 104%.

Programs that are being eliminated, being cut back, or seeking other sources of funding: district training for evangelism teams, district worship coordinators, large and small church convocations.

Additional programs that are approved but not funded: third parish assistant.

Programs that may need to be eliminated in 2003 if budget shortfall continues: Sunday school developer, new principal mentor, district funds.

Comments: "Parish services employs 26 full-time people. We have no buildings. If there is a budget shortfall we will have to cut people, which means fewer services. . . and there are over half a million dollars in requests for additional services, like a fourth parish assistant who would spend half his time working with parishes and half his time working with schools. There are dozens of congregations and schools on the waiting list for parish assistance. The congregations must wait an average of one and a half years for assistance, while we cannot provide any assistance right now for established schools."

In 1999-2001, about \$10.1 and \$11.3 million (respectively) were used from the Gift Fund to support our ministry programs, the most WELS has ever used.

Right now, plans call for us to use up the remaining monies in the Gift Fund. About \$4.6 million and \$2.9 million will go into the budgets for the next two years.

What remains—about \$2.5 million—has been earmarked for "Seek and keep," a program in which grants will be given to individual congregations for outreach projects and maintaining membership.

Putting the money back into the congregations helps fulfill the MOV.

"Two objectives we are trying to achieve with this program are to lead people to a passion for the lost and to individualize spiritual growth and personal witnessing," says Dorn.

"These grants generate enthusiasm and give people a jump-start to begin doing things in outreach that they weren't otherwise doing. . . . Our thought was to support congregations because that's the front line in the battle to win souls."

2. The inability of congregational mission offerings to keep up with inflation.

Congregations do a lot to support the work of the synod. In 2000, almost \$17.5 million was received from congregation mission offerings in support of synod ministry programs. Unfortunately that was only a .4% increase from the previous year. A 3.4% increase was needed just to keep up with inflation. Congregational mission offerings have fluctuated over the past 10 years, making it difficult to project what will come in. In the past, WELS pulled from the Gift Fund to cover any shortfalls. In 2003-05 that won't be an option.

3. A drop in individual mission offerings.

Individual mission offerings also went down from \$2.075 million to \$1.46 million.

PROGRAM CUTBACKS

Doug Wellumson, Administrative Services

Needed 104% of last year's budget to keep existing programs running as they were.

Received 103%.

New programs in 2001-2003 biennium: one assistant programmer for Information Services.

Programs that are being eliminated, being cut back, or seeking other sources of funding: Web site maintenance, funds to assist congregations in moving pastors and teachers, 10% of funds for called-worker support recipients.

Additional programs that are approved but not funded: Assistant director of communications, trainer/process analyst, Web site assistant.

Comments: "There is a growing expectation of more services, but we can't do it with fewer people. . . . We're going to deplete a lot of restricted funds. That means we're using what we have squirreled away. When you eat all the nuts and it's Apr. 3 and there is still snow on the ground, you need to figure out how to keep on eating."

Factors such as bad weather in the Midwest in December, rising energy costs, a plunging stock market, and increasing benefit costs may be some of the causes for shortages in congregational and individual mission offerings. Members also have had to face the challenge of giving more to support building programs and other projects in their local congregations.

What we are doing about it

Although gifts and offerings given to support budgeted ministry programs decreased in 2000, over \$7.4 million was given or committed to the Forward in Christ (FIC) thank offering, two-thirds of which will go to mission outreach. Over \$4 million has already been given. This means in overall giving there was positive growth in 2000.

But the FIC thank offering isn't just a thank offering. It's also a

stewardship program. Its goals are to teach the biblical aspects of stewardship principles and to raise proportionate giving in WELS from an average of three percent of member income to four percent, which would result in a 33 1/3 percent increase in gifts. If this would happen, we would not be facing the shortages projected in upcoming years. The Synodical Council hoped that this program would help prevent the shortfall they saw coming. Yet participation in the FIC stewardship program has been limited so far.

“Financial stewardship should be the foundation for Christian giving. Then you can talk to people about giving to programs with the understanding that you’re giving to the Lord. You’re giving a percentage income, your firstfruits, in generous proportions—all things that come

out of the teaching of Christian stewardship,” says Roth.

He continues, “When those things aren’t undergirding the programs, it becomes bill paying. When you pay your bills, you’re careful not to overpay them. The calculation is, ‘What’s due?’ If you wanted to say thanks to someone for something, it would be, ‘How much can I do?’ It’s a totally different dynamic and attitude.”

Besides promoting the FIC stewardship program, WELS leadership is taking steps to prevent the projected shortage and to make the best possible use of available monies.

• In gift planning, more emphasis will be placed on current giving. Right now, all 17 gift planning counselors (stewardship teachers for individuals) work with estate planning and current giving. In the future, 4.5

gift planning counselors will work solely on current giving.

• If the compensation proposal passes in August, the Commission for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS) will work with the district presidents and circuit pastors to take the message of compensation and a stewardship program to fund it to all congregations.

• A new program called Third Millennium Mission Partners is being put into place. This will allow people or congregations to adopt a mission or a program and take responsibility for it.

• The finance department and the Synodical Council are working more closely with CCFS and the areas of ministry to determine what to expect from new giving and the use of existing restricted funds.

• Areas of ministry had to reeval-

Terms used in WELS budgeting:

Area of ministry—a group assigned responsibility to carry out specific services for WELS. The five areas of ministry in WELS are administrative services, home missions, ministerial education, parish services, and world missions.

Biennium—the two-year time period between synod conventions. The synod budget runs on this two-year cycle, as does the synod theme.

Challenging opportunities—the key thrusts of WELS at this time as determined by WELS’ Synodical Council. They are: lead people to a passion for ALL the lost and equip them to reach these people, focus ministerial education on outreach, and individualize spiritual growth and personal witnessing.

Congregation mission offerings (CMO)—offerings given by congregations directly to the synod. This money goes directly into the synod budget.

Designated funds—offerings assigned by a donor to a specific fund or for a specific purpose.

Gift Fund—a middle ground between placing offerings directly into the budget and placing them into an endowment fund. Serves as a buffer, which can give WELS planning time to respond to changes in the size or number of gifts. Only money designated by a donor for the Gift Fund is placed into this fund.

Individual mission offerings (IMO)—offerings given by individual congregation members directly to the synod. This money goes directly into the synod budget.

MOV—mission objectives vision. Developed by the Synodical Council, it explains the synod’s purpose and direction.

Restricted funds—money designated to an area of ministry that can be used in a limited way for specific projects by that area of ministry. Only a certain amount may be spent each year and the money spent should support one-time projects that will not need to be absorbed into the budget.

Stewardship—using all the resources God has given us—time, talents, and money—for the purposes to which God calls us.

Synod mission offerings (SMO)—the total of IMO and CMO offerings.

Synodical Council—the governing body of WELS. Total membership numbers 21 and includes representation by pastors, teachers, and laypeople. Each district is represented by at least one layperson.

Undesignated funds—offerings not assigned by a donor to a specific fund or for a specific purpose. These flow directly into the budget.

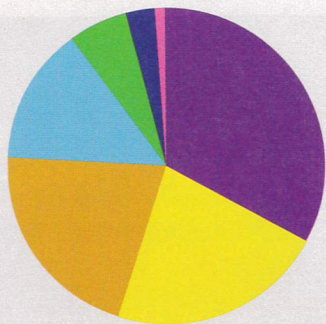
Proposed synod budget for 2001-02 \$55.4 million

The synod's main operating expenses are paid from the Budgetary Fund. These include subsidy for the ministerial education schools; opening new home and world missions; assisting parishes with school concerns, special ministries, and evangelism work; and providing support such as legal, accounting, and real estate services to the five areas of ministry.

(*Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 132)

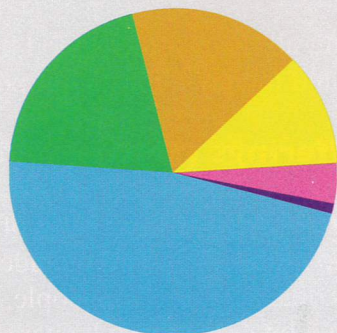
What comes in*

- 33% Congregational mission offerings
- 22% School tuition and fees
- 21% Transfers from gift funds
- 14% Individual gifts and memorials
- 6% Transfers from restricted funds for continuing programs
- 3% Bequests and planned giving
- 1% Endowment earnings and other



What goes out*

- 47% Board for Ministerial Education
- 20% Board for Home Missions
- 17% Board for World Missions
- 11% Administrative Services
- 4% Board for Parish Services
- 1% System-wide



*Percentages are based on 1999-2000 figures as reported in the 2001 *Book of Reports and Memorials*.

uate their programs for the 2001-03 biennium and will need to look even closer for 2003-05. "We have a period of two years to make a thorough evaluation of how we want to approach the future in terms of our structure, and our programs, and how we deliver services to congregations," says Dorn. "What are we spending money on, and are we doing it effectively and efficiently as a synod?"

Congregations and members can help as well.

"We need to look at the worldwide mission that the Lord has given us, to become more knowledgeable and concerned about the work we do together as a synod to carry out the mission, and to voice our encouragement to others to help us with this worldwide mission that the Lord has placed before us," says Richard Lauersdorf, vice president of mission and ministry for WELS.

"We celebrate what the Lord has enabled us to do," he continues. "But now we also have to face the challenge and see if we are up to what it appears we need to do."

Praying for and supporting the FIC stewardship program and thank offering is one step. Personalizing outreach is another.

"We all need to work hard and get into the Bible and pray about how we all individually address the Great Commission," says Dorn.

What the future holds

The Synodical Council looks as far as 10 years down the road when forecasting revenues, but cannot forecast anything with certainty. Only God knows for sure. And he will continue to bless us.

"Even as we look forward to the challenges that look like a steep incline for us, let's not forget to look in the rear-view mirror and see how richly the Lord has blessed us with the increased programs that we have been able to start to carry out the mission he has given us. To celebrate his grace, we start with

that," says Lauersdorf.

But let's also not forget the work that lies ahead.



PROGRAM CUTBACKS



Peter Kruschel,
Board for
Ministerial
Education

Needed 105% of last year's budget to keep existing programs

running as they were.

Received 103%.

Programs that are being eliminated, being cut back, or seeking other sources of funding: less administrative assistance for presidents of the schools (which leads to reduced efficiency in correspondence and other administrative duties), less money for maintaining programs.

Additional programs that are approved but not funded: Master's degree program at Martin Luther College (MLC), a sixth full-time student teaching supervisor at MLC.

Programs that may need to be eliminated in 2003 if budget shortfall continues: MLC's early childhood ministry, staff ministry, and secondary teacher education programs

Comments: "My concern is that new programs in their infancy will be eliminated before we are able to assess their full value and that we'll need to limit enrollments. This would be devastating because of the severe shortage of male teachers and pastors. However, we need to keep in mind the words of Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14:6: 'Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.' It is a privilege to be doing this work, and the Lord will still get his work done. There is comfort, joy, and peace in that."

Note: Because of inflation, rising fuel prices, rising costs of benefits, and other factors most areas of ministry needed more than 100% of their previous budget to run existing programs.

Paying called workers double honor

What is more important to you—your church's organ fund or your pastor? For many years in WELS, the answer may not have been as obvious as you think.

According to Bill Gabb, chairman of the Human Resource Committee, pastors have been "willing to let their congregations put programs over their salaries."

A similar sequence of events happened at the synodical level. As reported in the 2001 *Book of Reports and Memorials*, "Synodical resolution after synodical resolution repeated the biblical truth that the worker is worthy of his wage but then found it painfully necessary to add that because of financial constraints it was not possible to compensate the worker at a worthy wage level" (Report of the Synodical Council II, p. 97).

Since 1975, different synod committees examined this issue but were never able to resolve it. In 1997, the Synodical Council charged the Human Resource Committee (HRC) to examine called worker compensation.

Jon Flanagan, director of WELS Human Resources, says, "As a synod we must prioritize this issue. Areas of ministry must plan to know that implementing a new compensation plan will affect their other work. The committee recognizes the need to compensate called workers in keeping with their office and we do not want to fund the synod's budget at their expense any longer."

As they worked, the committee developed goals, which included developing a compensation package that reflects the scriptural principles that pertain to the financial support of called workers, provides the opportunity for those who are served by the gospel to provide financial support to those who serve them with that gospel, and enables called workers to provide for the material well being of their families and

devote their energies, time, and attention to the work of the public ministry.

The HRC used these goals to develop a new compensation plan that is being presented for approval at the 2001 synod convention. Their plan includes a Bible study that encourages congregations to study passages such as 1 Timothy 5:17,18, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'"

"As a synod we must prioritize this issue. . . ."

The HRC plan also includes considerations for base salaries, cost of living adjustments, educational levels, levels of responsibility, social security, housing, housing equity, utilities, health and life insurance benefits, and business expenses. Many of these components, such as cost of living adjustments and housing equity, were missing from recent compensation plans.

If the synod in convention approves the HRC's compensation plan, the HRC would then focus on training and using district organizations to make presentations to all congregations and calling bodies, starting in early 2002. The focus would be on how compensation planning fits into the overall ministry planning and stewardship of each body. Each calling body would have to decide the extent to which it would use the HRC's compensation plan.

As Flanagan notes, "This plan is dynamic, not static. Those who use it must be committed to ongoing planning because needs change and

internal and external factors change. This plan is a place to start. It is not made up of hard and fast rules."

Implementation of the plan at the synodical level would begin July 1, 2003. Called workers whose salaries are paid from the synod budget would have their compensation adjusted accordingly. This mainly includes missionaries, administrators, and ministerial education professors.

When the plan was presented at the 2000 district conventions, many pastors were concerned about how this would affect their congregations. They do not want to be a burden to their congregations or see other programs put on hold to fund their salary. However, Gabb says, "called worker guilt is unnecessary because the plan does not call for compensation that is out of line with other church bodies or even the average income of the people they serve." He adds that called workers should allow their members the privilege to do something they've been wanting to do for a long time—begin to give their called workers a salary that reflects double honor and high value.

If the compensation proposal passes, it will not be because there is now money to fund it. In actuality, this new compensation proposal will cost the synod about \$3 million more per year. If the proposal passes, it will be because members feel that they are not giving their called workers double honor with their present salary levels.

To find out more about the compensation proposal, ask your pastor to see a copy of the 2001 Book of Reports and Memorials or view it on-line at <www.wels.net/sab/boram>. Let your synodical representative know how you feel about the compensation proposal so that he can make an informed vote.

More Forward in Christ mission opportunities

Although the Forward in Christ celebration comes to a close in July, the time for giving thanks is only beginning. Perhaps you would like to show your thankfulness to God by volunteering for a Forward in Christ mission project.

Many projects are underway, and more are being planned. Listed below are the most recently approved projects.

Hispanic outreach ministry in Anchorage, Alaska \$12,000

Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, called a missionary pastor to reach out to Hispanic residents for six months. The pastor will test the field to determine if a full-time Hispanic-ministry pastor is needed, to nurture those already gathered, and to train Hispanic members.

Mission volunteers to Russia \$50,000

Seminary professors, both active and retired, will teach classes at WELS' seminary in Russia.

MLC professor to Apacheland \$24,000

A Martin Luther College professor will provide assistance in Apacheland during the summer for three years.

Cameroon two-man teaching team \$10,250

A two-man teaching team will travel to Cameroon for a period of five weeks to present three weeklong seminars in the three areas of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon (LCC). Seminars are for pastors and layworkers, scheduled at six-month intervals. A former LCC missionary will head each team.

Developing an early-childhood ministry in The Woodlands, Tex. \$20,000

A new early-childhood ministry will be established to discover if it

can be an effective outreach tool. It will also provide a model for other emerging early childhood ministries and outreach experiences for an early-childhood educator to bring back to his congregation.

District lay assimilation/retention training teams \$36,000

District lay assimilation/retention teams will be developed. The teams will train congregational coordinators for new-member assimilation and retention.

Ministry to special needs community members \$17,200

This two-year project will encourage and work with congregations to initiate Jesus Cares Bible classes for members who are developmentally disabled and help congregations use existing classes for outreach into the community. The project will select and train an individual in each of two districts to be mentors/trainers. They will work directly with congregations. Home missions and evangelism will encourage congregations to use the mentors/trainers and these classes in their overall outreach efforts in the community.

Reaching and retaining young adults \$12,600

This project will discover principles used by congregations that are effectively reaching out to and involving young adults, ages 19-35, and develop model programs of ministry to young adults. A team of "experts" will be built. The team will build effective ministry of outreach and nurture to young adults and assist other congregations in developing ministry to and by young adults.

For more information, contact Gene Ludwick, Forward in Christ administrator, at 414/256-3250, <eludwick@sab.wels.net>.



The Forward in Christ thank offering is sponsoring a two-man teaching team that will travel to Cameroon to present seminars for pastors and layworkers in Cameroon. These seminars will help improve the way Cameroonian children like these are taught God's Word.

FROM BEGINNING TO END
Through the Bible in one year

June 2001

1. 1 King 8:54-10	17. 2 Kgs. 20-23:27
• Psalm 96	18. 2 Kgs. 23:28-25
2. 1 Kgs. 11	• Daniel 1
• Ecclesiastes 1 & 2	19. Dan. 2 & 3
3. Ecc. 3-7:14	20. Dan. 4-6:23
4. Ecc. 7:15-12	21. Dan. 6:24-9
5. 1 Kgs. 12-14:18	22. Dan. 10-12
6. 1 Kgs. 14:19-16	23. Ezra 1-3:7
7. 1 Kgs. 17-19:18	24. Ez. 3:8-7:10
8. 1 Kgs. 19:19-21	25. Ez. 7:11-10:24
9. 1 Kgs. 22	26. Ez. 10:25-44
• 2 Kings 1-2:18	• Nehemiah 1-3
10. 2 Kgs. 2:19-4	27. Neh. 4-7:38
11. 2 Kgs. 5-8:6	28. Neh. 7:39-73 • Ps.
12. 2 Kgs. 8:7-10:31	13, 33, 85, & 127
13. 2 Kgs. 10:32-14:14	29. Neh. 8 & 9
14. 2 Kgs. 14:15-17:23	• Ps. 99 & 144
15. 2 Kgs. 17:24-18	30. Neh. 10-11:9
• Ps. 6 & 59	• Haggai
16. 2 Kgs. 19 • Ps. 27,	
9, 120, & 140	

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY****Pastors**

Chworowsky, John F., to Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis. (retirement)
Cordes, Nathan A., to St. Matthew, Niles, Ill.
Doletzky, Paul A., to Bethany, North Fort Myers, Fla.
Glasgow, Robert G., to Grace, Pueblo, Colo.
Godfrey, William E., to retirement
Graf, John M., to Director of Planned Giving, Milwaukee, Wis.
Leerssen, William T., to St. John, Brewster/Beautiful Savior, O'Neill, Neb.
Lockman, Steven M., to Emanuel, Flint, Mich.
Moore, David W., to East Flagstaff exploratory, Flagstaff, Ariz.
Panning, Armin J., to retirement
Polzin, Ralph J., to retirement
Schlicht, Stephen R., to Immanuel, Black Creek, Wis.
Sloan, Roger D., to St. John, Rib Lake/Zion, Ogema, Wis.
Thompson, Donald L., to Shepherd of the Palms, Jupiter, Fla.
Wendland, Paul O., to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
Zimdars, Ernest H., to Our Savior, Pomona/Christ the King (ELS), Bell Gardens, Calif.

Teachers

Anderson, Roselyn J., to retirement
Bartelt, David W., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
Berg, Amy, to St. Peter, Helenville, Wis.
Berger, Marie L., to retirement
Buege, Amy L., to Redemption, Milwaukee
Buske, Terry A., to St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.
Butler, Harmon R. Jr., to Trinity, El Paso, Tex.
Cords, Dorothy M., to retirement
Daley, Evelyn K., to retirement
Dyke, Karen M., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Eberhardt, Vicki L., to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
Enter, Sandra L., to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.
Ferge, Sarah, to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Festerling, Kimberly, to Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich.
Flunker, Thomas G., to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Gartner, Kimberly S., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Glowicki, Joshua T., to Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
Glowicki, Shaun E., to Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
Gosdeck, Kurt D., to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
Grosz, Susan K., to retirement
Grundmeier, Ruth A., to Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.
Haar, Susan G., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Hayes, Aubrey L., to Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa
Hennig, Barbara M., to retirement
Hintze, Annmarie Y., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Horn, Katherine L., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Hosbach, Carolyn J., to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Jeffers, Brenda L., to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.
Johnson, Sandra L., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Jorgensen, Kathryn M., to St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.

Kirk, Daniel B., to retirement
Krause, Sheila M., to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
Krug, Faith E., to retirement
Kuehl, Daniel J., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Kuhl, MaryAnn, to retirement
Kurtzweg, Connie S., to Grace, LeSueur, Minn.
Mahnke, Frederick O., to retirement
Mahnke, Naomi R., to retirement
Markgraf, Peter A., to Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Mildebrandt, Andrew G., to Shepherd of the Hills, LaMesa, Calif.
Ninmann, Justin L., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
Nommensen, Theodor O., to retirement
Paul, Corinne M., to Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.
Paul, Terry L., to Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.
Polack, Duane U., to retirement
Rahn, James C., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Richards, Jill M., to Hope, Nozomi, Japan
Rodewald, Karen L., to Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.
Russow, Kay L., to Beautiful Savior, Spooner, Wis.
Sackenheim, Lynn F., to retirement
Schibbelhut, Gregory L., to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.
Schmidt, Ruth L., to retirement
Soloviyov, Lori L., to Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.
Tennier, Arlene I., to retirement
Wallman, Carol A., to retirement
Winder, Rhoda M., to retirement

Staff ministers

Jahns, Thad C., to St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.
Nelson, Erik J., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Omak, Wash.—Trinity (75). June 3. Dinner, 5 PM. Service, 7 PM. Dessert to follow. 509/826-2311.
Jefferson, Wis.—St. John (150). June 10—Service at Christberg, 1:30 PM (3 miles east of Jefferson, corner of Christberg and Highway 18). Refreshments and games to follow. June 17—Service, 8 & 10:30 AM.
Allenton, Wis.—Zion (140). June 17. Service, 10:30 AM. Catered meal, 12:30 PM. RSVP, 262/629-5914.
Westland, Mich.—St. John (125). June 24. Service, 9:30 AM. Dinner and program to follow. RSVP, 734/721-4650.
Fort Wayne, Ind.—Holy Scripture (25). June 24. Service, 4 PM. Banquet and entertainment to follow. RSVP, 219/478-1717.
Edmonds, Wash.—Salem (50). July 8. Service, 11 AM. Lunch to follow. Service, 4 PM. Dinner and program to follow. 206/542-3003.
Grass Lake, Mich.—St. Jacob (160). July 8. Service, 10:15 AM. Pig roast to follow.
Galesville, Wis.—Bethel (25). July 15. Regular service, 10:15 AM. Fellowship meal and activities to follow. Anniversary service, 3 PM. RSVP, 715/662-2209.
Baileys Harbor, Wis.—Christ (125). July 22. Service, 1:30 PM. Dinner, 3 PM.
North Fond du Lac, Wis.—St. Paul (100). July 22. Outdoor service, LeMieux Park, 10 AM. Picnic to follow.
Manitowoc, Wis.—St. John, Newtonburg (150). Aug. 19. Service, 8 & 10 AM. Refreshments between services.

COMING EVENTS

Western Wisconsin District retreat—June 21-24. Schwan Retreat Center, Trego, Wis. Elton Stroh, 608/837-3819.
Dedication service—St. John, Lannon, Wis. June 24, 2 PM. Open house and refreshments to follow. Service, 8 & 9:30 AM. Open house dates with refreshments and tours, July 1, 8, & 15, 11 AM-noon.
OWLS convention—Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors. July 10-12. Collins Plaza, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 414/321-9977.
WELS Tech 2001—Technology conference for pastors, teachers, and laypeople. July 15-18, Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis. <www.wels.net/welstech2001>. Early bird discount extended to June 1. Save \$50—send in your registration today! For a registration brochure, contact Debbie, 414/256-3210; <welstech2001@sab.wels.net>.
Asian Mission and Ministry convocation—July 29-Aug. 2. Schwan Retreat Center, Trego, Wis. Leon Piepenbrink, 651/306-0645.
Michigan Lutheran Seminary class of 1971 reunion—Aug. 17-19. Larry Dittmar, 616/532-7017.
Campus ministry staff conference—for pastors and lay and student representatives. Sept. 7-9. Radisson Hotel, Milwaukee. Registration deadline is Aug. 15. Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279.
Church Librarians' Organization—Sept. 22. St. John, Baraboo, Wis. 414/256-3222.
Capital area Christian women's retreat—Nov. 2-4. Devils Head Resort, Baraboo, Wis. Joy Strutz, 920/623-5516.

NEEDED

WELS musicians, entertainers, and Dixieland band—for national weekend music festival in Red Wing, Minn., summer of 2002. Loren Lucht, 651/388-2149.
Project and assistant managers—for Builders For Christ, a division of WELS Kingdom Workers. Some construction experience helpful but not necessary. Dale Mueller, 800-466-9357.

NAMES WANTED

Arcadia/Independence/Whitehall, Wis.—Nathan Strutz, 608/526-2285.
Bella Vista/Pea Ridge/Hiawasse/Gravette/Bentonville, Ark. and Pineville/Anderson, Mo.—Russell Kobs, 501/876-2155.
Chicago, Ill.—Martin Schoell, 847/362-4424.
Lake Whitney, Tex.—Don and D'Anne Thompson, 253/694-4212.
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada—Brian Pechman, 306/249-2636.

SERVICE TIMES

Bella Vista, Ark.—Beautiful Savior. Service, 8 AM. 501/876-2155.
Land O'Lakes, Wis.—Land O'Lakes Lutheran Outreach, Land O'Lakes Fire Hall, County Hwy. B. May 20-Sept. 9. Service, 11 AM. 715/479-8307.
Whitefish Bay, Wis.—Divinity-Divine Charity. Starting Apr. 1, service time will be 9:30 AM. 414/332-7572.

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 glory

It's no surprise that Elijah was there when the LORD revealed his glory to the disciples in his transfiguration.

James A. Aderman

Elijah was there. On a Galilean mountain, 900 years before Christ. God displayed his glory in the flash of a fireball that consumed his own sacrifice. The shout of awestruck people rumbled into the valley, "The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!" And God listened.

Elijah was there. On another mountain, with Christ, when the LORD again displayed his glory in blinding brilliance. But now it was God who spoke and his awestruck people who listened. "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5).

Why Elijah was there

Elijah was there. Enveloped in the radiance that is the Son of God, in the resplendence that grace affords every citizen of heaven. Elijah was there, along with Moses. They lived on, though their lives on earth had ended—for one almost nine centuries before and for the other about 14 centuries before. They lived by the promise of the one they stood with, the Resurrection and the Life.

It was no fluke of divine whimsy that Moses and Elijah were there. Moses mediated the covenant between the Lord and his people. Elijah called God's people to embrace that covenant.

Moses was the ancient hero of faith who led Israel from slavery to statehood. Elijah was the ancient hero of faith who boldly proclaimed



God's Word in the state of Israel.

The LORD spoke with both on Mount Horeb.

The two men shared deaths cloaked in mystery: Moses buried by God, Elijah whisked into heaven in a whirlwind.

Both—unarmed and in danger of losing their lives—confronted kings and watched in awe as their God used the powers of creation to protect and prosper them.

To both, God revealed himself primarily not as the stern God of demands but as the generous God of grace.

Moses was succeeded by Joshua, Elijah by Elisha. In Hebrew the names of both successors mean the same thing: the LORD saves—the same name their ultimate successor went by, Jesus (*Yeshua*).

Both trusted *Yahweh's* millennia-old commitment to destroy evil and its hold on humans through the Messiah's skull-smashing battle with Satan.

What Elijah's presence means

Moses told his people that they could identify the coming Savior when they recognized someone like him in their midst. Malachi wrote that the Messiah's coming would be

announced through a second Elijah, a preacher of repentance for sin and of righteousness through God's grace.

Now they stand with Jesus in the pure, blinding glory of heaven. They speak about Jesus' going up to Jerusalem one last time—to be hailed as the Son of David; to be denounced, renounced, and ridiculed; to be crucified for the sins of the world; to rise in a triumphant display of victory.

Elijah, the archetype of all Old Testament prophets, was there in that heavenly glow. The apostles could not miss the significance. Elijah was there. Gloriously alive. Elijah, their mentor. Elijah, the prophet whose name means, "The LORD is my God."

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.

For further study

1. Jesus describes the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all Old Testament believers "not [as] the God of the dead but of the living" (Matthew 22:31,32). How do the events of the transfiguration emphasize that truth? How does that truth heal your grief and enhance your view of the future?
2. Read Revelation 21:9–22:7. How is the glory of heaven, the glory believers will share, described?

Here's the keys!

“Here’s the keys!” Remember the excitement, the exhilaration, when permitted to use the family car, all alone, for the first time? In an instant we forgot every time in the past that our parents ever distrusted us. They trusted us now with the keys to the family car.

“Here’s the keys!” For some, there may have been a special time—graduation, birthday, wedding day—when your parents gave you the keys to your very own car.

But for some of us, there were other times when we heard just the opposite. “Give me the keys. You’re grounded!”

Taking the keys away, even if we didn’t see it for the moment, was an act of love. Perhaps there was evidence of dangerous, reckless driving, a speeding ticket. Taking the keys away may have been a form of discipline for some other potentially harmful behavior. Whatever the reason, love made them either give us the keys or take them away.

It’s no different with an even more priceless set of keys, the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Our gracious heavenly Father entrusts them to us, his sons and daughters. Through the Ministry of the Keys the Lord gives us permission to put these keys into the hands of others. “Here’s the keys,” he commissions us to say to someone. “The keys that unlock the door of heaven through the forgiveness Jesus earned are yours.”

If we were excited, exhilarated by having the family car for an hour or two, what about the eternal gift of heaven? If we thought it was really something great to be given the keys to our very own car, what about the keys to a heavenly mansion? Don’t worry about an extended warranty

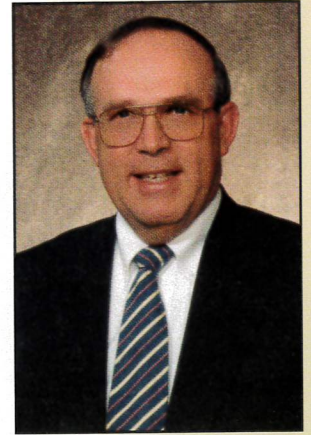
agreement. You won’t need one. No recalls, either. Only perfection—forever.

What a privilege to be able to present someone with the keys to heaven! It’s love, God’s love, that makes you and me willing to share this love with others. It’s also God’s love, reflected in our love, that would seek to warn anyone who is turning away from God’s love.

The world calls it “tough love,” saying or doing something to someone at the risk of being called unloving. It’s the love of a parent for a wayward child that cannot, for the sake of momentary peace, jeopardize his child’s eternal peace by remaining silent about sinful behavior. This same love motivates a pastor, church elder, any one of us not to ignore the visible sin of a fellow Christian. It’s the concern each of us is to have toward every other Christian—not wanting anything to take heaven’s key out of the hands of a relative, friend, anyone.

A number of times I’ve said to one of my children, “Here’s the keys! You can use the family car.” I’ve never had the pleasure of giving one of my seven children a car. And yet, as a Christian, a pastor, I’ve enjoyed the greatest privilege to use the keys the Savior entrusted to me to share. To countless individuals I’ve had the privilege of saying, “Here’s the keys. Thanks to the Savior’s blood, shed for us, I have the pleasure of telling you that you’re forgiven. Heaven is yours. Here’s the keys!”

“Here’s the keys!” Take them from the Savior’s hands. Use them for the eternal good of others. See the people’s joy as you share with them what has been shared with you, the keys to the kingdom of heaven.



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

What a
privilege to
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What's love got to do with it?

For the Christian, God's love in Christ has everything to do with life.

Thomas H. Trapp

“What's love got to do with it?” belts out pop vocalist Tina Turner. Her Grammy award-winning song defines love as “a sweet old-fashioned notion” from which she wants to stay an arm's-length away. The song concludes: “Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?” If you open yourself up emotionally to others, you get hurt. Avoid pain. Stay away from love in a relationship, Tina encourages.

Love is God's greatest commandment

Jesus goes in the opposite direction. He instructs us to develop relationships based on love. One day Jesus' enemies tried to discredit him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus quoted two commandments to them, but he essentially gave them a one-word answer: love. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:36-39).

What's love got to do with it? Everything, according to Jesus.

A loving relationship with God and those around us is not to be avoided but embraced. Jesus goes so far as to command, “Love your enemies.” This is more than a “sweet old-fashioned

notion.” It is sacrifice. It is what Christian love is all about. In fact, Holy Scripture uses a unique word for this kind of love—agape. Agape-love is not narcissistic or egotistic. It is not self-seeking or self-serving. It is patient and kind and protective. It is totally self-giving. It is the kind of love God has for this fallen world of sinners. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

A loving relationship with God and those around us is not to be avoided but embraced.

The outstretched arms of Christ on the cross broadcast this unconditional, unequivocal, eternal love of God. It is not a “sweet old-fashioned notion.” It's a bloodstained, non-stop devotion—of God's care for us.

Love has everything to do with life

But not everyone has experienced this love. Some are only familiar with lies and deception that claim to be love. Without such knowledge of God's love, we too would shout out, “What's love got to do with it?”

For the Christian, God's love in Christ has everything to do with life.

That is why, instead of crying out with Grammy award-winning Tina Turner, we sing out with Christian hymnist Isaac Watts:

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”
(*Christian Worship* 125:4).



Thomas Trapp is full-time campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

¹From <www.sing365.com/music/lyrics>.

What's coming?

Jesus said it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. The people then asked Jesus if the rich cannot be saved, “Who then can be saved?” Our question is similar, but different, “Can a nice atheist be saved before an obnoxious Christian?” Find out in July.

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the greatest of them all?” The disciples were afraid to ask Jesus this question, but they talked about it. In fact, they argued about it. In Luke 9 Jesus used a human object lesson to answer them. Discover more in August.



Neola Raasch from Ft. Ripley, Minn., writes of her granddaughter: "It was not a typical baptismal ceremony, but baby, pastor, water, and the Word were all present when on Aug. 12, 2000, Olivia Marie, newborn daughter of Eric and Hilda Raasch, was baptized in Little Round Lake, Ft. Ripley, Minn., by her uncle, Pastor Robert Raasch."

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.

God, our Father

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

"Yet, O Lord, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand."

Isaiah 64:8

"Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
This, then, is how you should pray:
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Matthew 6:8,9

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons
and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:18

To my husband on Father's Day

While other men nurture their careers, thank you for nurturing this family.

While other men busy themselves making and remaking their images, building corporate muscles, buying pricey suits, thank you for building up the body of Christ and clothing yourself in humble contentment and joy—cloth spun in Jesus' own blood.

Thank you for raising not dollars but children, and filling our home not with techno-noise and toys or the wallpaper of endless schedules, but with music, games, and a warm steady glow.

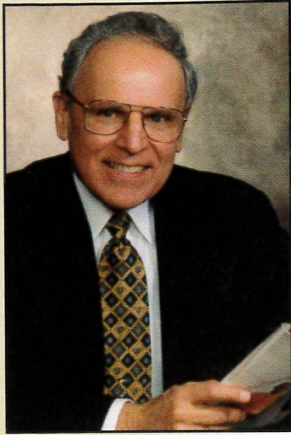
Thank you for Sunday morning habits, unspoken, for Genesis, Romans, and Daniel after dinner.

Thank you for giving humble hours to church, teaching our children to serve, and for saying no to committees and councils on occasion, showing our children you value them more than friends and strangers.

Thank you for reaching out to church, school, community, but keeping your grip firm here—on the family, the home God gave you.

Happy Father's Day.

—anonymous



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

Your church is there to give you comfort but not to make you comfortable.

Comfort, O.K. Comfortable, not.

If you are comfortable in your church, have a pastor who is always there for you, join the Sunday faithful, and “pay your dues,” be warned. What follows may invade your comfort zone.

Your church is there to give you comfort but not to make you comfortable. To the contrary! The church is a body, and you are one of its members. For the church to be working well, the members need to be working well. Emphasize that word “working.” Better, “serving.”

We all like to feel comfortable, I think. I’m seldom more comfortable than when I’m relaxing in my favorite easy chair. But I’m also not getting anything done. Similarly, if the church were primarily concerned about making us comfortable, maybe it should consider providing easy chairs for everyone. But that won’t get the church’s work done.

Still, many of us expect our churches primarily to make us, the members, feel comfortable—much like a hospice or a club. At least that’s what church-leadership guru William M. Easum avows. He goes so far as to identify most North American churches as “apostate” for that reason. In Easum’s mind, we have abandoned the faith for our own comfort.

I’ll leave it to you to wrestle with Easum’s judgment. More important here, we need to deal with what’s behind the judgment.

Our churches are sorely challenged today in our pluralistic society. We have virtually flat-lined in size as a church body for years already, down 4,416 members from 1997 through 1999. We seem to say when we

oppose Church Growth (the movement that makes more of social dynamics than of God’s gospel to get numbers of people) that we are against church growth (gaining souls for Christ). We lament significant backdoor losses in our congregations.

So what are we doing about it? God comforts us, not to make us comfortable, but to have us share comfort with others. When he gives the church marching orders to reach the lost, he’s not talking just to the clergy. When he gives the church pastors and teachers, he tells them to equip the believers for works of service. When God works on us through his Word, he makes us to do good works for him in Christ Jesus.

God wants us out of our easy chairs and on the job for him.

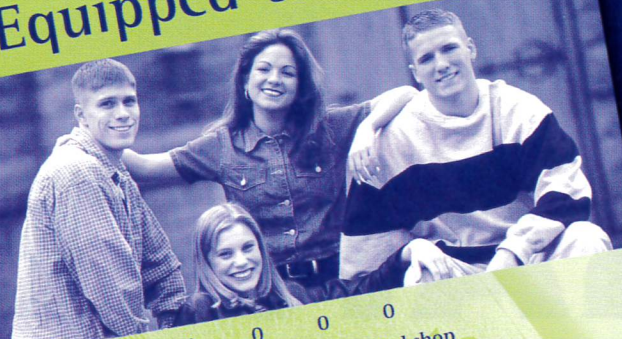
Is that too simple or too hard? If your church is just easing its way through the days and weeks, ask yourself, “Am I too comfortable here?” If your church seems to be sleepwalking through its mission, ask yourself, “Is it time for me to wake up?” If your church is not growing, ask yourself, “Am I growing and going with my faith?” If you think your church has everything you need, ask yourself, “What have I brought to the church for others?” If you are quietly comfortable in your church, ask yourself, “Is God comfortable with me?”

Gary P. Baumler

WELS CYD

September 29 - October 1, 2000 • YMCA Camp Matawa • Campbell sport, Wisconsin

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Sunday School

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Planning Manual for Strengthening Sunday Schools

Produced by Commission on Youth Discipleship, Board for Parish Services

The Commission on Youth Discipleship, a part of WELS Parish Services, exists to encourage and assist WELS congregations and parents as they nurture youth in the Word from birth through high school. The CYD Administrator is Dr. Michael Pfeifer who is ready to assist you in your ministry to the youth of your congregation.

E-mail: cyd@sab.wels.net

NO GUARANTEES

There is a great chasm of difference between the guarantees the Great Physician can make and the lack of guarantees made by human physicians.

Eric S. Hartzell

When you put on that green gown and they wheel you away to surgery, know one thing: There are no guarantees. No doctor will say that a procedure is absolutely certain as to its happy outcome or your money back. That's why you have to sign at the end of that terrible list of things that can go wrong.

When you sign, you are in effect saying, "I understand that there are no guarantees you can fix what is wrong, but please try. My insurance company and I will pay even if (God forbid) something goes wrong and I am worse off."

We don't blame the medical world for no guarantees. We just acknowledge their limitations and ours. We understand that when one human being tries to fix another's body or mind, there are no guarantees.

God's guarantees

There is a great chasm of difference between the Almighty's practice and ours. He guarantees his work on body and mind and soul. He can heal and restore and correct and save. Every operation done by his Holy Spirit is 100% successful. You lose only if you refuse the operation.

David needed a heart transplant. (We all do.) He asked the Physician, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). The Physician has advertised his ability to do this. He says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). He will not fail. There will be no deaths on the table, no straight lines on the heart monitor.

The Healer never had to say that the sin was too great, that it was inoperable. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18),

God guarantees. No leprous skins that Jesus touched stayed leprous. Ten lepers were healed—even nine ungrateful ones. And for all who suffer from spiritual melanoma, the apostle promises, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Our God even guarantees life to the dead. "Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live" (Ezekiel 37:13). No small print. No possibility of error.

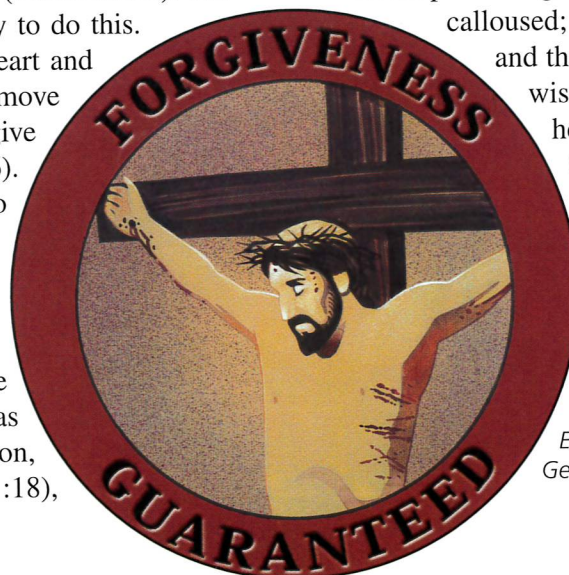
Absolutely guaranteed

People still go to doctors even if doctors don't guarantee their work. The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., exists because people will pay a great deal and go to much trouble to find the very best doctors even though there are still no guarantees.

Why don't more sick souls go to God? Why don't they follow his prescriptions? Why do they insist on striking out on their own or in visiting every other quack who hangs out a shingle?

God wonders this himself. "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them" (Acts 28:26,27).

Jesus is God's guarantee. God loves us, sick though we are. He sent Jesus that we might not perish. Guaranteed!



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