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FORWARD IN CHRIST

August 2001

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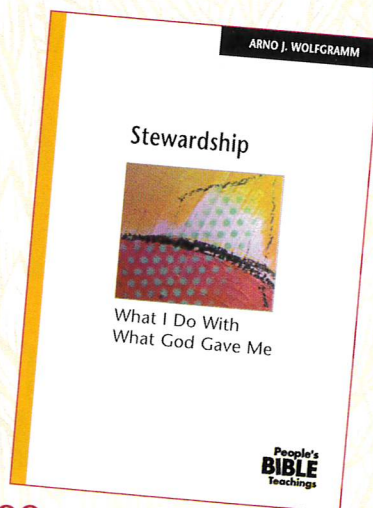
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Beware of shortsighted boasting

So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. 1 Corinthians 3:21,22

Paul M. Janke

In a cartoon, a sweaty, nervous-looking pastor is looking out at his congregation from the pulpit. Behind him is the reason for his anxiety. It's a gigantic portrait of his predecessor with an inscription beneath it that says, "The best pastor a guy ever had."

The cartoon is funny because it exaggerates a real-life phenomenon. Christians do sometimes rate the pastors who've served them as "favorite" and "least favorite." They were doing something like that in Corinth in the time of the apostle Paul. One of the many problems vexing the congregation at Corinth was an ongoing argument over which of the pastors who had served them was the best—Paul or Apollos or Peter (Cephas). This boasting about men—and the quarreling that resulted—wasn't funny. It was destroying the unity of the congregation, and it was shortsighted.

Detracting from God's glory

Those who boast about their favorite pastors may not realize it, but they are actually taking credit from Christ and giving it to men. While a pastor's sinful nature may enjoy being the subject of people's boasting, a wise pastor won't cultivate or condone that sort of thing. Paul, for example, was not pleased that some of the Corinthians boasted, "I follow Paul" (1:12). Paul reminded the Corinthians that he hadn't died on the cross for them. Nor had the



Corinthians been baptized into the name of Paul. Jesus Christ, not Paul, was their Savior.

The role of a pastor is vital. Pastors plant and water the seed. They preach and teach the saving news of Jesus Christ and him crucified. But only God can make the seed grow. To credit a pastor with one's individual spiritual growth, or with the numerical growth of a congregation, is to empty the cross of its power. Pastors are to be judged not on the basis of their charm or eloquence, but on their faithfulness to the Word. The key requirement of stewards of the gospel is that they prove faithful.

Limiting God's blessings

Boasting about men is also short-

sighted because it fails to understand that God can bless us through the gifts of each pastor who serves us. No two pastors are alike. Paul was a peerless theologian, able to share keen insights about the Scriptures. Apollos was known for his eloquence. Peter, the former fisherman, likely brought a common touch to his ministry. But why choose one pastor as the favorite and discard the rest? Why not appreciate the gifts and strengths of each pastor and regard his set of gifts as a blessing from the Lord?

Paul told those who were boasting "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Cephas," that it's actually the reverse that's true. Paul and Cephas and Apollos belonged to them. He reminds us as believers in Christ that "All things are yours." Don't place limits on the ways God can bless you by playing favorites with your pastors. God, who made the present and the future yours, can also see to it that you are blessed through the faithful labors of a variety of pastors.

There is one boast that we can make. It's the boast that says, "I belong to Christ." The price he paid for us at the cross was immense. To boast of that sacrifice is anything but shortsighted.



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

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Cover illustration by Dean Lindberg

Although there is only one gospel ministry regardless of the number of people gathered together, there are differences in the way congregations function according to size.

8

bits & pieces



How many people are at your church every Sunday? 100? 200? 35? In his article, "Where everybody knows your name" (p. 8), Mark Paustian discusses the blessings and the difficulties of attending and serving a small church. Regardless of how many attend your church, you can learn much about the experiences of over 350 small WELS churches from this article.



Have you ever had trouble explaining what makes confessional Lutherans different from people of other religious groups? A new series, written by Pastor Wayne Mueller, will examine 12 deeply held convictions that when put together make Lutherans unique. Read the first article on the white robes of righteousness on p. 12.



Contest after contest pits people against each other to determine who is the greatest. The Bible, and two articles this month, warn us about the dangers of asking, "Who's the greatest?"

- In our Bible study (p. 3), Pastor Paul Jahnke discusses the problems of "rating" your pastors, instead of giving all glory to God.

- Jesus talked much about what makes a person "great." Pastor Tom Trapp explores Jesus' words on that subject and how these words apply to us today (p. 36).



We've added four pages this month so we could bring you the pictures and assignments of the 2001 graduates of the synod's worker-training college—Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

—JKT

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Each spring, John Ibisch, a religion teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, has his junior class read two issues of Forward in Christ magazine and write letters to the editor. Here are some of this year's letters.

Your magazine is encouraging and inspiring. One of my favorite features is the "Thought for today." I read the April edition with the article "The full armor of God." It is a wonderful message, marvelously construed. This article kept me thinking, and its meaning stayed with me for a long time.

I would like to offer a suggestion. Your "Thought for today" is the first article in this magazine. It is between an advertisement and the table of contents. Because of that it is easy to flip right past it and not look back. I think you should use a more brilliant graphic to catch the reader's eye. It would be a loss to have people miss out on such a wonderful message.

*Jennette Franke
Milwaukee, Wis.*

I would like to offer my thanks and encouragement for all of your work in extending the family of Christ through Forward in Christ magazine each month. I always find interesting topics to read about in each edition. I also think this magazine can be used as an awesome ministering tool with your idea to "share it" and leave the copy somewhere in public. I think many lives could be touched if just a few more people would "accidentally" leave their copy somewhere.

I especially enjoyed reading through the color-filled pages in the April edition. As I paged through the magazine I was intrigued to read the articles with the most colorful pictures by the title. So I guess it was the pretty fairy that led me to read "Once upon a time . . .". I really liked how the messages in the Bible were compared with simple fairy tales. Some good points were made that I never thought about before.

There is a small change I would like to see. My suggestion would be to put a comforting/welcoming Bible passage on the cover of each month's edition. I feel this would be beneficial to have as the first message seen when someone picks up this magazine. Maybe the passage from the "Thought for today" or from another article would work to tie into the rest of the magazine.

*Lisa Festerling
Menomonee Falls, Wis.*

Forward in Christ magazine seems to be heading in the right direction. Many articles are informational and provide the reader with new facts about WELS, like the March article about the technology advances in our Lutheran schools. The magazine gives the reader a real picture of what is going on in WELS.

This magazine is supposed to be an outreach tool to reach those who are not familiar with WELS, or even Christianity. Yet, a lot of information is given on specific details of WELS culture and worship style. I feel that these articles do not give readers enough positive gospel message that will grab their attention and lead them to inquire more about what WELS is and what Christ is all about. There should be more emphasis on what outreach missions and efforts are being made in WELS. More stories should focus on how the Word has been a huge influence in the lives of people.

*Justin Nelson
Mukwonago, Wis.*

My opinion of the magazine is that it was creative and well-organized. It helped me understand some problems that teens are facing today and also helped me with a few things that I needed help on. **I liked knowing that there are teens out there who feel the same way I do,** and the magazine reached out to us and gave us advice.

The one thing that I would want to see more of is more ideas for young

teens to get involved with their congregation. So many teens are not going to church on a regular basis because they think it is boring, so I would really like to see some ideas on how we can get more teens who want to go to church rather than the teen being forced to go. I guess I really think teens need people on their own level to talk to about God and some hard situations that are going on in their lives.

*Meghan Wenzel
Milwaukee, Wis.*

I would like to commend you on the new style of this magazine. I feel the color really helps readers associate what the article contains by the many pictures and highlighted quotes. I also feel that it gives the reader something to focus in on and think about.

I feel that one thing could still be improved to increase reader knowledge about certain articles. At the end of each article, you provide the author's name and his congregation. I think that if you gave the readers a way to contact these people either by phone or by mail, it could provide the readers a way to get answers to questions they might have regarding the article.

*Chris Kordecki
New Berlin, Wis.*

Your April issue of Forward in Christ was well-written. The new color issue is definitely a plus. I would love to see an article in your magazine about ways that you can strengthen your own faith by sharing it.

Lisa Proeber

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, conciseness, and relevance. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or Forward in Christ magazine.

A closer look at close communion

Walter F. Beckmann

The March issue of this magazine contained a letter from a WELS member who was in a WELS church on a communion Sunday. She noticed an usher talking to a woman who was obviously a visitor attempting to receive the sacrament. The discussion ended abruptly when the woman took her purse and left.

A way to avoid this kind of incident would be to practice open communion. But that's not an option. The Bible charges us to be faithful servants of Christ with the secret things of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-4). We have a responsibility to make sure that the people we commune are truly penitent and that they realize that they are receiving the true body and blood of Christ so they receive the sacrament to their good and not their harm. Also, our participation in the Lord's Supper is to express the unity of our faith and not our religious diversity.

If we follow our scriptural beliefs we won't be able to avoid all awkward situations. Many people will not agree with us no matter how carefully and lovingly we try to explain our practice. Not everyone agrees that faith in Jesus' death and resurrection is the world's only hope of salvation. But we can't back down from scriptural teachings and proclaim only doctrines that couldn't possibly displease anyone.

We must, however, strive to present our doctrines in as loving a way as possible to win others and not drive them away. I've always felt that the loving thing to do is to not offer Holy Communion at a service at which we would expect many visitors. I can't imagine sending out an invitation to the neighborhood saying, "Come and join us for our church dedication service, but don't try to take communion."

Another thing we could do is greet all guests as they enter church. Visitors are less apt to get upset at our communion practice if they've been warmly welcomed than if the first words spoken to them are, "You can't take communion."

An important tool for presenting our communion practice in a loving way is a carefully worded announcement or bulletin insert. Keep it brief and positive. If you're not satisfied with what you have, check with other WELS churches.

Communion ushers should be carefully trained to present themselves as warm and caring servants of our loving Lord who are trying to help people have a blessed experience at the Lord's Table. They should avoid appearing as stern security guards on the lookout for unworthy guests.

When you invite friends to church, explain our communion practice. If a visitor is upset, speak to him immediately and ask for an opportunity to discuss his concern.

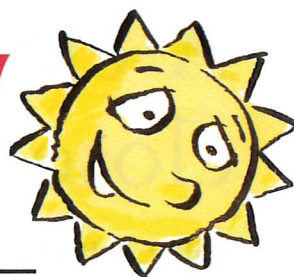
Our communion practice is drawn from God's perfect Word. We won't try to change either of them. But we're not perfect. We will make mistakes as we apply our practice in real-life situations. God will forgive us, but let's also learn from our mistakes and try not to repeat them.

As we strive to maintain a scripturally-sound, evangelical communion practice, let's also examine our own hearts. There have probably been more times when I should have been more concerned about my personal communion preparation than times when I had an awkward situation with a guest or visitor.

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

We have a responsibility to make sure that the people we commune are truly penitent and that they realize that they are receiving the true body and blood of Christ.

“Where everybody



In a world where “bigger is better,” the 350 small WELS congregations—those that average 50 or fewer in worship—can find something beautiful in the “twos and threes.”

Mark A. Paustian

To the Small Church, People dear to God, do you wring your hands because your congregation numbers fewer than 90 worshippers on a “good Sunday?” Fewer than 50? Not even 30? Because of this you despair?

Well, you have it all wrong! Your size is not a problem to be solved, but a gift to be celebrated, an opportunity to be seized. You have what the world is looking for! Don't you remember the song? “You wanna be where you can see, our troubles are all the same. You wanna be *where everybody knows your name.*”¹

Some folks aren't sure that there even is such a thing as community anymore. To them, you're too good to be true. But make no mistake, they are searching for it just the same, hungering and thirsting for precisely what you have. The connection they long to make with somebody, anybody, takes millions of people to the Internet every day. Stop and think about that for a minute. In an impersonal world, you offer a skin-on-skin handshake, an ear, a shoulder, a friendly face. In a world where “bigger is better,” you have found something beautiful in the “twos and threes.”

In an anonymous world, you call each other by name.

Size isn't the problem

No, size is not your problem. Sin is. If we in small churches only cared

enough to speak to people we don't already know, to break open our cozy little circle for others! If only lost-people-staying-lost offended us as much as the silly insults we think we've suffered at church! If we just couldn't stand it anymore—our own comfortable silence, our own complacency, one more Sunday without seeing someone new—what then? Our problem, friends, is our failure to love as we have been loved. I don't ask you to fix the problem, try harder, or do one blessed thing to make up for it. Just learn to be sad and troubled for the right reason. Not, “There's only 42 of us,” but “We have sinned.”

You are not a shrunken down version of a large church. You are, in a word, different.

Now, receive your forgiveness.

Because, friends, as surely as we are the problem, the solution is Jesus—the life he lived for us; the death he died in our place; the reality of him alive again; the power of that sweet absolution found in his Word and sacraments; his Spirit that never leaves us alone, who is making us a tool in his powerful right hand; and the depth of his desire to love the people near us through us. To the

Church with just a “little strength,” Jesus wrote, “I have placed before you an open door” (Revelation 3:8).

All of this you already knew, Small Church. But there are a few more things I write to you, just in case you didn't know.

You are not alone.

When my exploratory mission congregation averaged 89 people in church on Sundays, I announced the electrifying fact that we were larger than most WELS congregations! We stopped calling ourselves a “little church.”

If your congregation averages 50 or fewer in worship, you are in excellent company. There are close to 350 congregations like yours in WELS, more than one out of every four! Just so you know that your experience as a “little flock” in Christ's kingdom is not some sort of failure or aberration from the “normal” Christian experience.

You are different than your larger sister congregations.

There is only one gospel ministry regardless of the number of people gathered together. However, there are differences, according to size, in the way congregations function. You are not a shrunken down version of a large church. You are, in a word, *different*. So don't defeat yourselves by means of unrealistic comparisons between your program and that of

knows your name

larger congregations. Be careful of structures and methodologies that you've seen in bigger churches, as well as the expectations and definitions of success that you may have learned there.

Because you don't have to do it all. Better that you find one thing to do as a congregation that meets a significant need in your community, that matches the gifts that Christ

himself has already placed in your midst, and that you do that one thing beautifully and well. That's better than doing a dozen things poorly. Admire what the flagship churches can accomplish in terms of their multifaceted programs, just as I do, but don't overlook your own great strengths.

You keep everything personal. At your best, in Christ, you preserve the beautiful simplicity of gospel ministry. You are intimate, relational, responsive to need, busy in worship, prayer, and good works. You develop the ministry potential of many who would hide in a larger church. Your shepherd is uniquely blessed to have time for his sheep. He is able to connect with you in a personal way. And, as a matter of church history, you, Small Church, are remarkably resilient.

This is your time.

It's too easy to say that our problem is a shortage of resources, that we'd do more if God provided more.

While I strongly agree with those who say that our mission needs to be reflected in our budgets—say, a minimum of 10% spent on evangelism—a caution is in place. While you wait for that happy day, be careful of how closely you identify your cash flow with your ability to do ministry.

In my last days in a small congregation, I was privileged to baptize the son of the sister of the friend of the father

of a teenager I had met 12 years earlier. The gospel made its own path by means of the love Christians had for the people they knew. And it didn't cost a dime.

It's also too easy to say, "We're living in the last times. That's why we don't grow. What do you expect?" Take a different point of view, that of the apostle Paul. "In a crooked and depraved generation . . . you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life" (Philippians 2:15,16). A darkening world is your opportunity to be the Church. Some lonely soul right this moment wonders, "Does anybody really care about anyone anymore?"

That's an easy one.

You do.

In Christ, you care, and for starters, when it seems as if you can do so very little, you can pray. Get into your "twos and threes" and pray for the opportunities God loves to provide.

Then, maybe today, you meet some young woman. She confesses that she's alone. Into your place of worship, into that sacred space, she will come if you ask her. What she'll say when she hears what Jesus has done, what she'll cry when she sees it reflected in your faces: "Surely, God is in this place."

And she'll be saved.

Mark Paustian is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

*Theme song of *Cheers*. Written by Judy Hart Angelo and Gary Portnoy.



DISCOVERING THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

A Travel-Canvass-Witness trip took me out of my comfort zone and brought me closer to God.

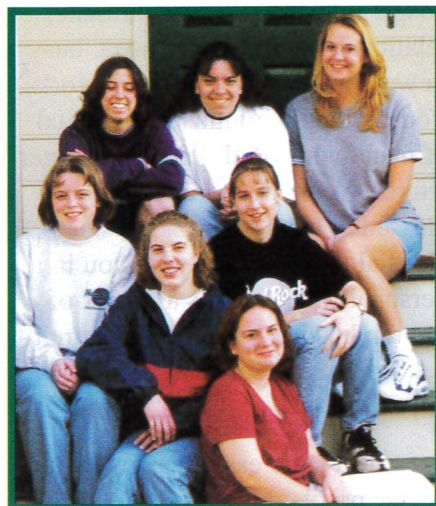
Ruth E. Westendorf

Two years ago, six other college students and I left on a trip that changed me forever. We volunteered for a Travel-Canvass-Witness (TCW) team.

I had been on three previous TCW trips, so I thought I knew what to expect. Our group would travel to another state (I've been to Alaska, Kentucky, California, and Virginia already), where we would join the pastor and members of small WELS congregations in an evangelism effort. Since most members couldn't take a week off to go door to door contacting people and handing out brochures, they sent us out to do it for them. Sometimes members would join us, especially in the evening or on the weekend, but mostly we went out alone.

I have to admit that the real reason I volunteered to do TCW was for the adventure. What other way would I get to travel all over the country for free, get really close to a group of other students, and—oh yeah—try to bring people to Christ? I mostly saw the door-to-door stuff as the work I had to do to go on the trip.

On this trip, we spent one week at



In the spring of 1998, (from top, left to right) Angela Boehm, Naomi Barth, Cara Groff, Katie Blahnik, Amy Dolan, Ruth Westendorf, and Charlotte Groth traveled to Richmond, Va., to help Living Water, a mission congregation.

one congregation and the next week at a church about 150 miles away. The first week went as I expected. We canvassed Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Thursday was our free day for sightseeing, and Friday and Saturday we did more door-to-door work.

On a typical "work" day, we met at the church for a short Bible study, then "hit the streets" at about 10 AM. We had an hour for lunch, and

then we knocked on doors until about 5 PM. After dinner, we were free for the night.

I was used to going door to door on my previous trips; it wasn't so scary. You never had to get too personal with people or share anything about yourself. At this church, we were separated into pairs and sent out with questionnaires and pamphlets. We asked people basic questions: "Do you believe in God?", "What do you think a church should be most concerned with?", and, of course, "Would you like more information about our church?" Nothing too tough.

At the second church, however, we had a bit of a problem.

First, the itinerary called for us to be at the church by 8 AM in the morning (groan) for Bible study and to be to our assigned neighborhood by 9:30 AM. Then we did nine-and-a-half hours of canvassing a day instead of the six hours at the other church.

But what really worried us was what the pastor wanted us to say.

This pastor expected us to get more personal. He gave us a two-part format. First, ask what the person thought of when they heard the

word “church.” Not so hard. But then we were to give them what the pastor called a “shortie of law and gospel.” That was a little more scary.

I knew from experience how easy it was for your mind to go completely blank when someone answered the door. How was I supposed to come up with a convincing one- or two-sentence synopsis of the law and gospel under that kind of pressure? Why couldn't he have scripted out that part for us? What were people going to think when they opened their door to find some college kid with a funny accent on their doorstep babbling something about sin and their Savior? We would be laughed at! Ridiculed! Doors would slam! People would mock!

We should have known better.

Our first day went dismally. We were all nervous and uncomfortable, spoiled, I think, by how easy we had it at the other church. We stumbled over our words and dawdled between houses. We even hoped that people wouldn't be home. By the time we were to go out again after supper, we were tired and grumpy and, frankly, didn't get much done.

But on the second day, after a good night's sleep, things looked a little brighter. We were still uncomfortable, but in spite of us, God worked through us. Contrary to our expectations, people were receptive to our message. Some were merely polite; some simply said “not interested” as soon as we opened our mouths; and, yes, one or two doors closed rather forcefully. But some people listened carefully. They wanted to talk to us about our faith and were excited to hear about a place where God's Word was preached boldly and confidently and where people gathered for fellowship and discipleship.



WELS Kingdom Workers sent Rachel Ruddat, Ruth Westendorf, Erin Cares, Ryan Geiger, Dave Wendland, and Jason Paltzer to Alaska in the summer of 1999 to spread God's Word.

I soon realized that, surprisingly, people were more receptive to this approach than they had been to the “survey” method of the week before. They saw that we were interested in their thoughts, criticisms, and feelings, and that our reason for talking to them was not just to boost church attendance but to acquaint them with our Savior and this Christian family.

Unlike in the first city, we opened up a dialogue on what a church really should be about. Some people talked for only a minute; a few talked for over an hour. It was an amazing and enlightening experience. Responses ranged from “Church should really be about kids; they need a good moral influence” to “I was really burned at my last church. I want a church that will accept me, but at the same time not ignore the truths of the Bible.” It was exciting to show them exactly the place they had been looking for!

By the end of the week, we nearly doubled our daily amount of contacts. We were no longer afraid of what people might say or think of us—we were excited about what we could share with them. I learned, uncomfortable as it may seem, that speaking God's truth and letting the Holy Spirit work through the Word does work. We didn't need to sugarcoat and hide

our mission, hoping that the church's youth activities and Sunday school would attract people to church, where they would be exposed to the gospel. We could speak plainly about our goal—we were there to bring people to their Savior.

We shouldn't have hesitated. All of us had been to Lutheran high schools or colleges; we had all heard the Great Commission and Paul's assurance that the gospel is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). What were we afraid of? That someone would slam a door in our face? We should have been more afraid of missing a golden opportunity to share the hope that we have and the joy of knowing our Savior.

I hope that the people we talked to while we were at the first church were attracted by the traditional worship format, the friendly atmosphere, or the youth programs, and were then touched by the gospel. But I can say with certainty that the people who were drawn to the second church were there because they had heard God's Word and wanted to hear more.

Ruth Westendorf is a member at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.

The 12 attributes presented in this series reflect what makes Lutherans unique. Although each attribute on its own may be shared by other religious groups, when all the attributes are studied together a uniquely Lutheran image emerges.

LUTHERANS wear white robes

The white robe is a beautiful picture that the Bible uses to teach justification by faith—a distinctly Lutheran teaching that God has declared us righteous through the merits of Christ.

Wayne D. Mueller

How do you spot a Lutheran in a crowd? Does he have powdered sugar on his lips from the Bible class donuts? Is she carrying a hotdish into the fellowship hall? Are they always singing every verse of every hymn?

Sometimes trite humor does nothing but fuel the world's shallow view of Christianity. More and more, society lumps all Christians into a generic mass. To the secular mind, all denominations are "faith-based" organizations with crosses on their churches and little fish stuck to the back of their cars.

Our biblically illiterate populace can't tell a Lutheran from, let's say, a Baptist or Presbyterian. Any differences, they figure, are external, based on culture, tradition, or petty arguments about some fine point of teaching.

So when the unchurched go church hunting, polls tell us, they base their choice on the pastor's

personality, the friendliness of the people, or programs that meet their perceived needs.

A closer look

It's more serious, however, when Lutherans themselves cannot move beyond their stereotypes to give witness to their faith. Can you explain in a few thoughtful words how your church differs from the one down the street? If not, you may want to check in here for the next few months. We are going to discuss a dozen distinctive blessings God gives Lutherans—blessings that in their entirety no other church enjoys.

Since Lutherans today come in all sizes, ages, ethnic backgrounds, and colors, you cannot spot a Lutheran by how many verses he sings or what she puts into her casserole. Christ's church exists to affect hearts, so we will have to look below the surface for these blessings.

White robes

If we could see Lutherans as

God sees them, Lutherans would be among the ones wearing white robes.

Throughout the Bible, the white robe is a symbol of God's greatest blessing to the sinner. The prophet wrote, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

Jesus assured the faithful in Sardis that they possessed this robe of righteousness. They would walk with him in heaven, he said, "dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never erase his name from the book of life" (Revelation 3:4,5).

The white robe is a symbol of moral perfection. Although we can never live a morally holy life, Jesus became fully human and lived a righteous life as our substitute. Jesus was "tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). God placed our

sins on him and gave us his righteousness. "God made [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Then, by the power of his word in baptism, the Spirit gave Jesus' moral perfection to us. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Justification by faith

The white robe is one of many beautiful pictures the Bible uses to teach justification by faith. Justification—the teaching that God has declared us righteous through the merits of Christ—is the heart of the gospel and the distinctive teaching of the Lutheran church.

All religions offer some method of salvation. Non-Christian religions offer basically the same method with different formulas. They all teach that we must save ourselves with meditation, good works, charity, or oneness with nature. Aspects of this "save yourself" heresy creep into most Christian denominations too. Most non-Lutheran churches have some element of self-help salvation, either to earn forgiveness or to come to faith in forgiveness.

But the Bible proclaims a radically different salvation. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known" (Romans

3:21). God forgives sinners without any regard to their obedience to the law. The world lives in constant doubt, never knowing if it has worked hard enough to please God. "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Any effort to "help" God moves us farther from Jesus, not closer to him.

Justification by faith gives all glory to God for our salvation. Any effort to "help" God moves us farther from Jesus, not closer to him. "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ" (Galatians 5:4). Even the faith to believe in justification is God's gift to us (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Uniquely Lutheran

Only the Lutheran church teaches justification by faith with biblical clarity and emphasis. The truth that God credits Jesus' righteousness to us sinners permeates our hymns, liturgies, selection of Bible readings, school curricula, and catechism lessons.

Justification by faith is a great comfort to sinners. It weans the weak back to stronger faith. It motivates and energizes Christians

for thankful living. It allows us to die in peace.

On the inside of every Lutheran is trust that God justifies the sinner. A white robe covers his heart. But if you want a visible sign that there are Lutherans around, it might be that they are singing all the verses of one of their favorite hymns: "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less Than Jesus' Blood and Righteousness" (*Christian Worship* 382).



Wayne Mueller is administrator of the Board for Parish Services.



A closer look at Lutheranism



“FROM INFANCY YOU HAVE KNOWN . . .”



Make sure that your children and the children in your congregation know God's Word, which will “make [them] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

Gerald F. Kastens



Have you ever watched a plant grow from a seed to maturity? What a wonder it is to observe a kernel of corn germinate and poke a tender shoot through the moist, warm ground in the spring of the year. With sufficient rain, sunshine, fertilizer, and care of the soil the young plant grows and develops a stalk, leaves, cobs, and silk. Ask any gardener, and he'll tell you that large, perfectly-shaped ears of corn don't just happen. It takes nurture and the right growing conditions for a seed to germinate, sprout, develop good roots, and grow strong.

This is just as true when it comes to raising young children. Each child is a unique and wonderful gift from a gracious heavenly Father. They are “planted in” or enter God's kingdom through baptism. The gift of faith is clearly God's work, no one else's.

But God has given parents (Proverbs 22:6) and the church (Matthew 28:20) the task of sharing and nurturing faith. At no other stage of life

is this work more critical than during the first years of a child's life. Time spent with a child in everyday home activities become the foundation for what occurs later. Prayers, songs of praise, and Bible stories taught to a growing youngster provide the roots for the spiritual development of a young child.

Parents are a child's first teachers. Along with the diapering and the burping and the cooing is the responsibility of nurturing faith. What happens during those early years, in part, determines lifelong attitudes and dispositions.

Helping parents instill in their children a prayerful habit and frame of mind, a disposition of praise, of trust, of hope, of confidence in God's promises is also the business of Lutheran churches. The writer of Proverbs says it well: “Train a child

in the way he should go.” “The way he should go” implies a strong foundation, strong roots. A church's vision for every family includes young children rooted and growing strong in the Lord.

Many of our Christian homes lack confidence and the resources to nurture the tender shoots that God entrusts to them. That's why Christian congregations must step up and help in the form of in-the-home parenting resources. (Lutherans used to call it cradle roll.) Establishing a cradle roll or parenting program may be the single most important thing a congregation can do to help today's parents.

Assisting parents from the start

Strong Roots for Tender Shoots was developed and published by the Commission on Youth Discipleship and Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) to provide a curriculum that helps parents cultivate their child's growing faith from birth. Each of the components is designed to reach into homes with the Word.

The curriculum provides parents with encouragement and resources to train and nourish the faith of children (pre-birth to age four). Twice each year parents can receive from their congregation age-appropriate information about being a Christian parent and resources for teaching children songs, prayers, and Bible stories. Each congregation is encouraged to organize this initiative by selecting individuals to manage the delivery of the material to parents.

The best way to get materials to parents is in person at their homes.

Other ways you and your church can help parents

- When a child turns four, contact parents to encourage them to enroll their child in Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school. This makes certain that every child is enrolled in a program of Christian nurture and prevents children from falling through the cracks.
- Each of the items can be purchased separately. Use the pamphlets and books for a parenting program held in a member home. Each Tips and Truths tract can serve as the basis for a parenting lesson.
- Distribute these items to unchurched families with children. Let them know, "We care about families."
- Place these materials in public places like the laundromat and dentist's office. Include information about your church and children's programming on the inside cover.

Recruit mature Christian parents or grandparents to make home visitations in order to create a strong bond between the church and the home. For the long haul, the benefits of this initiative far outweigh the effort. The next best way is to deliver the materials to the parents in church. Another good way is through parenting classes. The least effective approach is to send everything through the mail or stuff it into a church mailbox. People-to-people rather than paper-to-people is an important ministry principle when it comes to helping Christian parents.

Adult Bible study

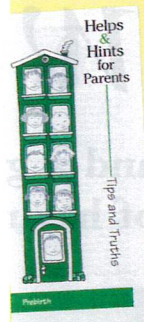
Regularly schedule and offer Bible study about baptism. Many of today's Christian parents do not fully appreciate the importance of baptism. Some parents take for granted that baptism is a magical process. They may view the sacrament as an "immunization" that guarantees faith nurturing for several years.

"Spiritual Rebirth—How to Enjoy and Live the Blessings of Baptism" is available to teach parents about the importance of baptism and the Christian nurture of children. The three-lesson course by Professor Richard Gurgel is short enough to encourage participation and is designed so that volunteers can teach it in the home as well as in the church. The last lesson of this NPH Bible study provides an ideal way to launch your parenting effort. It allows you to tell parents, "Guess what? Your congregation is willing to assist you by providing material and encouragement to help you nurture your child's faith."

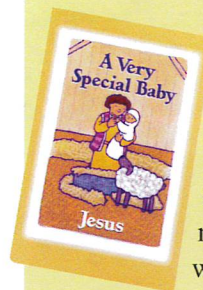
Get well soon

Too often churches merely react to circumstances and events that

Strong Roots for Tender Shoots offers the following items:



- **Pre-birth tract:** This tract encourages parents-to-be to nourish their own faith so that they are equipped to nurture their child's faith.
- **Tips and Truths:** These nine tracts are to be delivered to parents, beginning with the birth of their child and continuing at six-month intervals, until the child is four years old. The tracts provide encouragement, prayers, activities, Christian songs, and lists of resources for parents.



- **Children's books:** Seven books are provided for each child. Some are Bible-story books. All are based on the truths of Scripture, sharing God's message of law and gospel with parents and children.

Refrigerator magnets:

These serve as visual reminders for parents.

Order Strong Roots for Tender Shoots from Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022.



affect children and their parents. So much of what we do communicates, "I hear that you are sick. Get well soon!" There's a better approach—prevention. Intentionally ministering to parents with small children may provide the kind of preventative action that will help parents avoid heartache and frustration as a child grows. Eternal consequences are at stake. Didn't Jesus say, "Let the little children come to me"?

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

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Now I see clearly

The Lord, and a good night's sleep, helps a daughter see the difficulties of having her church bury her unchurched father.

Sherry Baker



The following article is an e-mail received by Ron Muetzel, pastor at Trinity, Bay City, Mich. Muetzel explains: "Sherry joined Trinity as an adult confirmand four years ago. She came out of an unchurched, alcoholic, dysfunctional family. Her dad's health was failing. He went in the hospital at the beginning of February. Sherry had been witnessing to him. She asked her pastors (Mark Schulz and myself) to visit him. We did and witnessed. His response was positive, though not a great deathbed confession. The middle of last week she inquired about our willingness to do his funeral.

"I explained the difficulty, though I did offer to do it (based on his positive response to our Christian witness). Sherry and I had a long discussion.

"On Thursday [2/8/01] she sent the e-mail I am passing along to you. On Sunday [2/11/01] her dad died while she and her sister were in church.

So many of our pastors and churches are faced with the request to bury people who have no church. Sherry's e-mail comes at it from a family member's perspective."

My goodness, how eight straight hours of sleep clears things right up!

First of all dad ate solid food today for the first time in over a week. His 6'2" frame is weighing in around 135 pounds right now.

He is more alert. His speech is more understandable, and the doctors are not removing as much blood as before. He has been moved from ICU to a private room on the fourth floor.

Ginny, the lady he has lived with,

brought an enlarged framed picture of his dog, Kiwi, for him. She is also going to smuggle the dog into the hospital I said nothing

Eating today and moving him has exhausted Dad, and he is not breathing as well tonight.

Back to the issue of “whose responsibility is it for our spiritual life.”

When we look at all the different aspects of our lives, we have our physical bodies to consider. Some people take responsibility and remove smoking, drinking, and junk food from their lives and focus on exercise and nutritious food. Some don't. They smoke, drink, eat whatever they want, and never exercise.

When we look at the intellectual part of our lives, some people set out to learn new things on a regular basis, study, read, or challenge themselves intellectually. Some don't. They vegetate in front of TV sets 24-7.

When we consider our financial responsibilities, some people budget, set aside money for rainy days, investments, insurance, bills, and live within their means with extra to put away. Some don't. They let someone else pay their bills and worry about all that nasty thinking and planning, and they just kind of go off into their own little la la land never really knowing what is what or when or why. . . .

Well, you get the point, I could go on and on. But I won't.

There is just one more: When it comes to our spiritual lives, some people become church members, become known in the church, talk with their pastors, have someone to marry them and someone to bury them, and a place with other members to study the Word of God and discuss applying Scripture to their lives.

When challenges hit, the church family is there. When someone is going through the dark night of the soul, a pastor is available to offer prayer and spiritual direction. When marriages seem a bit rocky

and off track, there is a pastor to say the one thing that gets them back on track: “Put Christ in the center of this relationship.” Week after week every Sunday, a service is given that focuses on truth, light, and the Word, getting everyone back on track and out of their checkbooks, daily grind, arguments, and weariness.

Some people never become members of a church. Some people never attend services. Some people have never once sat with a pastor and received guidance, answers, and direction.

Some people flounder and don't know where to get married or who will marry them. . . . Some people die, and the living scurry trying to find someone to bury them. Maybe Aunt Sue can get Uncle Joe's second cousin's pastor from Indiana to drive up to do the service. Sure enough, he said he can. Only one problem. He has absolutely no idea who he is burying. When he gives the eulogy he uses cue cards the family has filled out. “Ah . . . yes, everyone, as we bury Sam he was umm, ah, he was . . . oh yes . . . he was a member of the Moose Club, and ah . . . umm he shot a lot of golf. . . .”

I exaggerate here, but I have a point to make. I always try so hard to do the right thing, to help clean up messes, fix this and fix that, tidy up here and there, offer my hand for this and for that, take care of, take care of, take care of . . . be available, have the answers, fix the messes, repair the repairs, etc., ad nauseum.

Oh, wonderful sleep helps me to see clearly.

What an awful predicament I put my pastors in. They did not know

my dad from Adam. Yes, they knew me and my sister because we are members. We not only worship there, we fellowship there, we tithe not only money but our time because we are committed to our church. But they did not know my dad.

They had to ask themselves, “Will I be burying someone who maybe hasn't accepted Jesus as his Savior? Will I be burying someone who doesn't even know or understand the significance of the gospel? Will I be asked to say things I am not even sure of? Will I be giving my time to someone who if given any choice would choose 1,000 plus things to do before they would ever go to church or read the Bible?” What a spot I put them in!

Today I called Ginny and told her the entire funeral arrangements were up to her. My pastors would not be doing it, nor would any dinner be at the church. She could decide and plan everything.

She quickly switched the subject over to the dog.

I tried to get the subject back, but she sat the phone down as she retrieved the dog and held him on her lap when she returned to the phone. Then she said, “Well, we at least have more time for the preparations now that he is feeling better.” I wished her a good night and said I would talk to her later.

My sincere apologies to my pastors for putting them in such a spot.

Lessons to be learned here are too many to list. Thank you, Lord, for clarity after a good night's sleep.



Sherry Baker is a member at Trinity, Bay City, Michigan.

Changing



Let God's Word guide you and his Spirit empower you as you contemplate change.

Carl R. Henkel

I haven't always liked vegetables. Spinach, asparagus, green beans, carrots—I hated them all. Today I could make a meal of any one of them.

Actually, my ideas about many kinds of food have changed. I can remember as if it were yesterday that day in grade school when I threw-up the peach upside-down cake my teacher forced me to eat. Even though I was gagging on it, she insisted that nothing be wasted. Just a couple weeks ago I had a piece of peach upside-down cake—and loved it!

Opinions and viewpoints change

I don't know exactly when the changes took place or why, but over time I grew to love that which I once hated.

I've discovered that my opinions about many things have changed over the years. My taste in music has changed. My favorite color is no longer orange.

Some significant changes have also taken place in the way I look

at things. I have a greater tolerance for diversity (at least I hope I do!). I am less judgmental of others' viewpoints. I am quite willing to admit that I don't have all the answers and that I no longer see everything as either black or white. I am more tolerant of others' idiosyncrasies, weaknesses, failures, and sins, having become acutely aware of my own. Even more important, I have become significantly more appreciative of the amazing grace of God, recognizing how totally dependent upon it I am.

Furthermore, I no longer consider admitting to change as a weakness. Vulnerability, perhaps, but not a weakness.

A classic example from the Scriptures of one who underwent a radical change was Peter. The man who wrote the two epistles that bear his name was of a much different temperament and character than the one we were introduced to in the four Gospels. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to openly acknowledge the changes

that occurred in his life. The time he spent in the presence of Jesus, along with the powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit, had taken away the sharp edges and left in their place a temperate, teachable, and tender spirit.

The author of a book I just finished reading, a pastor, noted that he had deliberately changed his preaching style five times during his ministry. The changing listening habits of ever-changing audiences made him realize that the effectiveness of the never-changing Word of God can be hindered

and hampered if preachers fail to change with the times. St. Paul said much the same thing when he wrote, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

God's unchanging Word changes things

Understandably, some in the church fear change and feel threatened by it. Although it is certainly true that many changing beliefs toward current issues have badly distorted the Holy Scriptures, it would be deplorable to equate all change with "liberalism." I remember that 40 years ago I loathed carrots!

Today's Christians must continue to study the Scriptures just as our forefathers did, being bold

enough even to change preconceived notions and ideas if God's Word permits or, indeed, requires it. Just because a particular issue may have been studied 40 years ago doesn't mean that a fresh study of the sacred Scriptures will and must necessarily bring us to the same conclusion as that reached in an earlier time.

It would be deplorable to equate all change with "liberalism."

God's Word carries tremendous power, and if we truly trust the Word and allow it to do its work, it will change false ideas and wrong opinions even as it changes sin-stained hearts. As times change and as I, under God's grace, am able to change too, I am becoming more and more aware of my need for others. There was a time, I suppose, when I felt that I could live in a vacuum if necessary.

I didn't have a strong dependence upon the love and support of others. That's changed! Ironically, the presenter of a seminar I attended

recently observed that "Maturity is not independence. Maturity is realizing our dependence on others and dealing with it in a mature way." I guess that means I'm growing up.

What changes have occurred in your life? What useful changes are you resisting? Let God's Word guide you and his Spirit empower you. Still, as changes come and changes go, there is One whose love never changes. God be thanked, Jesus is "the same yesterday, today, and forever."



Carl Henkel is pastor at Mount Olive, St. Paul, Minnesota.



tastes

WHATEVER

Hands of a hero

A God-fearing woman's hands tell the story of her life.

Ashley Biedenbender

S ometime, if you happen to pull into the parking lot of the Riverwalk Apartments, here is what I suggest you do: step into the entrance and press the button labeled "Bilse."

You will be greeted by the friendliest voice you have ever heard. It may sound somewhat confused, but friendly just the same. This voice will invite you upstairs to her room. You will know it is hers by the pretty flowers hanging on the door—no doubt some prize she won at a game of bingo.

When the door opens, standing there will be a 4'7" petite woman named Minnie. She'll smile up at you with sparkling eyes and reach up and put your face between her withered hands.

While you set your coat down, Minnie will offer you water, ice cream, and cookies. Sitting with you on the sofa, she'll tell you that her new TV is too fancy, that she misses you, and that she is out of soap. Smiling, she'll pick up a ball of yarn and two crochet needles and begin another washcloth. The yarn is dark blue, and it makes her fragile hands look weary.

It is these hands that intrigue me most. For 30 years these hands helped prepare the meals for students at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis. These hands cooled the foreheads of those same students when they were sick. These hands caressed the faces of her three daughters, bringing them comfort, encouragement, and calm. These

hands gently cradled her grandchildren. These hands placed down "Skippo" cards in victory after beating me in her favorite game. These hands wiped away a stream of tears as she placed into God's hands her husband of 55 years.

It is these hands that I have always known and that now touch mine to tell me she is tired. I can see the strain in her hands' face. As I escort her to her bed and take off her shoes to tuck her in for a nap, she breathes a light sigh. She drifts off to sleep, and I study her wrinkled and worn face. In the fading sun, she looks so fragile, and I realize how old she really is. So small may be the amount of time I have to be with her. She is so close right now, lying there in such peace, but in a moment, she could be gone.

The woman who has done so much for so many people is nearing the end of her life. She knows this, too. So she cherishes each moment, faces each day with a smile, and lets the love in her heart flow to everyone she meets. She will tell you that she is thankful for life, love, and her Savior Jesus.

Oh, how I am thankful for her. She has touched my life, and she has touched my heart. She is my roots. She is my Great Grandma Minnie.

Ashley Biedenbender, a member at Faith, Mt. Pleasant, Mich., will be a freshman at Mt. Pleasant High School.





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

"You will be my witnesses," Jesus said. What does a witness do? He simply and personally tells what he's seen. That's still Jesus' plan for 21st-century disciples. In some ways, that requires training, practicing, and following up. After all, we have a great story to tell, and we want to tell it as clearly as possible. But always, for all disciples, witnessing is a lifestyle—a way of living our joy in Jesus that's natural and obvious.

"Let your light shine before men," Jesus said, "that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). How we let our "light" shine is our lifestyle and our witness. How healthy is your lifestyle witness?

Health factor—Lifestyle witnessing

God's Word

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. . . . He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. ²Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁴Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵"By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." . . .

⁷As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes. . . . ⁸When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." . . . ¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to say to [Naaman], "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

¹¹But Naaman went away angry. . . .

¹³Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" (2 Kings 5:1-13, selected verses)

What opportunities did each of these characters have for witnessing?

- * The young Israelite girl
- * Naaman
- * The king of Israel
- * The girl's parents
- * Naaman's servants
- * Naaman's wife
- * Elisha

My soul for personal check-up

1. The servant girl testified in a big way. When have children witnessed to you?
2. Think of a child who has demonstrated faith in Jesus. How might you encourage him?
3. In this story, the kings and commanders weren't the best witnesses; the servants were. When have you observed something like that?
4. Illness can provide special opportunities for witnessing. How might you witness to someone who is ill?

My church for group check-up

1. How might we provide opportunities for adults and children to witness to each other when someone in our church is ill?
2. Members of our church have different lives. One meets hundreds of people each week. Another meets no one except the mail carrier. One crisscrosses the country. Another never leaves town. Yet all four are witnesses. How might each one, by his or her lifestyle, give testimony to God's love in Christ?

Web-med

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

LivingBold is an on-line magazine for Christian teenagers. Go to <http://www.LivingBold.net> to read new articles each week. Subscribe to receive a weekly e-mail pointing you to sites on a variety of life situations. The WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship sponsors this service, but adults will find most of the sites meaningful for them, too.

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



MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

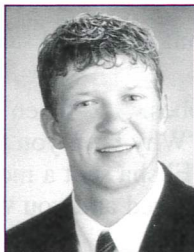
One hundred fifty people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 19. Those receiving Bachelor of Science degrees were in the teacher track or the staff ministry program. Men who received Bachelor of Arts degrees were in the pastor track.



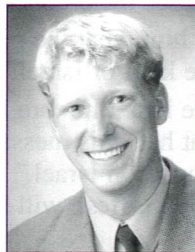
Melanie A. Achey ●
New Ulm, Minn.



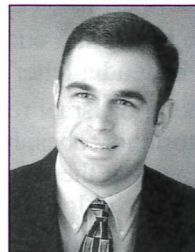
Shaun M. Arndt ◆
Watertown, Wis.



Aaron J. Bauer ●
New Ulm, Minn.



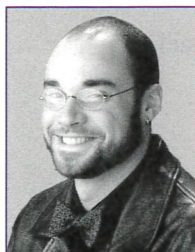
Joshua J. Bauer ▲
Lake Mills, Wis.



David C. Bendix ◆
Echo, Minn.



Hannah L. Berg ●
New Ulm, Minn.



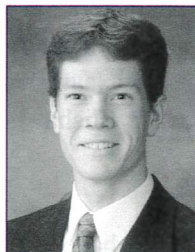
Michael D. Berge ●
Appleton, Wis.



Paul T. Biedenbender ◆
Juneau, Wis.



LynnMarie K. Bigelow ●
Lake Villa, Ill.



David M. Boettcher ◆
Chester, N.J.



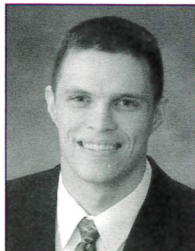
Jared M. Bonow ◆
Brown Deer, Wis.



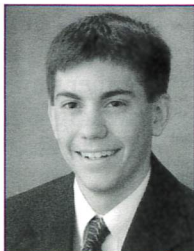
John P. Bortulin ◆
Saginaw, Mich.



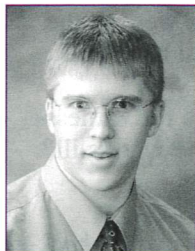
Kristi J. Brown ●
Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.



Johann W. Caauwe ◆
Bloomington, Minn.



Douglas M. Carter ◆
East Jordan, Mich.



Jared D. Christensen ▲
Sleepy Eye, Minn.



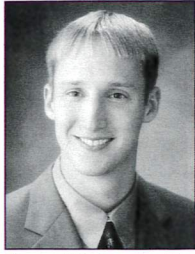
Jennifer L. Davis ▲
Star Prairie, Wis.



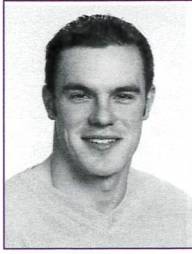
Hedy L. Daylo ●
Tomah, Wis.



Kari M. C. Deglow ■
Johnson Creek, Wis.



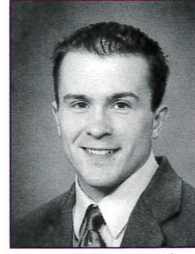
Samuel C. Degner ◆
St. Peter, Minn.



Jayson J. Diersen ●
Caledonia, Minn.



Clark D. Dittbenner ▲
New Ulm, Minn.



James E. Douglas ◆
Grayling, Mich.



Erin A. Enter ▲
Nicollet, Minn.



Sarah A. Filiere ▲
Adrian, Mich.



Christopher D. Fischer ●
Watertown, Wis.



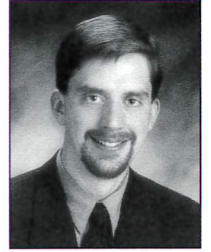
Heidi J. Fischer ▲
Appleton, Wis.



Jamie L. Fischer ▲
Watertown, Wis.



Wendy L. Fischer ▲
Fremont, Wis.



Justin S. Foxen ●
Crete, Ill.



Kelly M. Gawrisch ▲
New Berlin, Wis.



Crystal E. Gentz ▲
Juneau, Wis.



Kristin M. George ▲
Brookfield, Wis.



Naomi A. Grebe ▲
North Mankato, Minn.



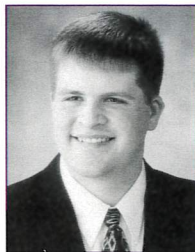
Michelle S. Grubbs ●
Minneapolis, Minn.



Paul J. M. Grubbs ●
Minneapolis, Minn.



Nicholas J. Guillaume ◆
Sioux City, Iowa



Jeremiah J. Gumm ◆
Yuma, Ariz.



Justin G. Gut ●
Mosinee, Wis.



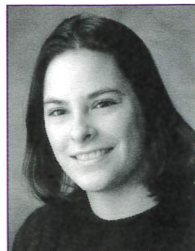
Jason C. Hacker ◆
Bay City, Mich.



Kevin E. Hahm ●
Ixonia, Wis.



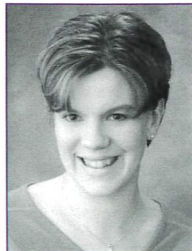
Gretel E. Hahnke ▲
Fond du Lac, Wis.



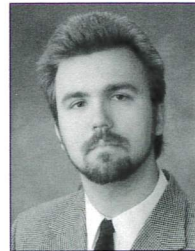
Melissa A. Harris ▲
Hartland, Wis.



Meredith C. Hartwig ▲
Greenville, Wis.



Kristina N. Heidtke ▲
New Ulm, Minn.



Timothy J. Hemling ●
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Rebecca A. Hermanson ▲
New Ulm, Minn.



Angela M. Hintz ▲
Kenosha, Wis.

- ◆ Bachelor of Arts
- * Seminary Certification Program
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education
- X Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry

MLC graduates



Michael S. Homan ●
Madison, Ind.



James R. Hoogervorst ◆
Neenah, Wis.



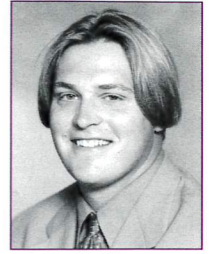
David T. Horton ◆
Watertown, Wis.



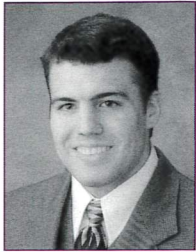
Misty S. Huebner ▲
Watertown, Wis.



Gerhardt H. Juergens *
Ladysmith, Wis.



Michael L. Kampman ◆
Rio Rancho, N.M.



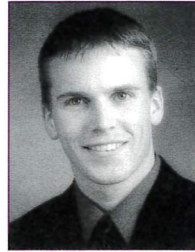
Nathan P. Kassulke ◆
Inver Grove Heights,
Minn.



Sara K. Kassulke ▲
Inver Grove Heights,
Minn.



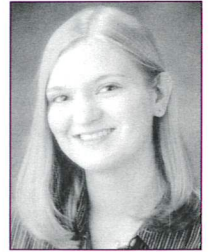
Michael A. Killinger ◆
Sebewaing, Mich.



Peter J. Korthals ◆
Mequon, Wis.



Cindy M. Krause ▲
New London, Wis.



Rachel M. Krieger ▲
Tecumseh, Mich.



Nicole M. Kroening ●
Sussex, Wis.



Tracy L. Krueger ▲
Waupun, Wis.



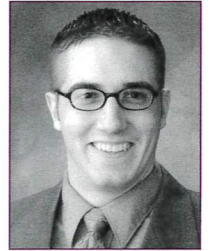
Elizabeth J. Kuschel ▲
South Milwaukee, Wis.



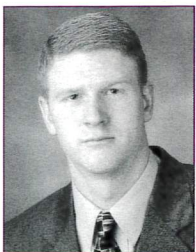
Carla S. LaBair ▲
Mayville, Mich.



Michelle K. Lamb ▲
Eldorado, Wis.



John P. Langebartels ◆
Imlay City, Mich.



Timothy D. Learman ◆
Peshigo, Wis.



Jennifer L. Lemke ▲
Weyauwega, Wis.



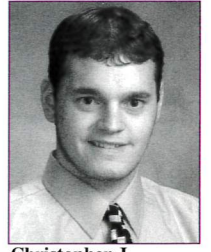
Michaela A. Lemke ●
Ocala, Fla.



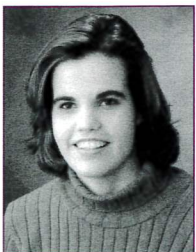
Angela M. Luckow ▲
Beaver Dam, Wis.



**Catherine E.
Luebchow** ●



**Christopher J.
Luebke** ▲
Kaukauna, Wis.



Rebekah J. Marten ▲
Wyoming, Mich.



Sandra L. Martens ■
Marquette, Mich.



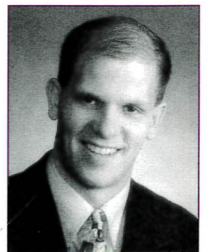
Micah A. Martin ◆
Muskego, Wis.



Gregg T. Mattek ◆
New Ulm, Minn.



Heather A. Mattek ▲
New Ulm, Minn.



Brian A. Mensching ▲
Marshfield, Wis.



Heather A. Miller ■
Oshkosh, Wis.



Lara K. Moldenhauer ●
Jackson, Wis.



Phillip V. Moore ◆
Milwaukee, Wis.



Michaela M. Mueller ▲
Neenah, Wis.



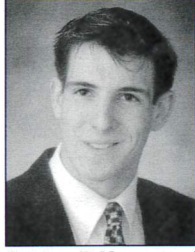
Paula R. Mueller ▲
Jefferson, Wis.



Anthony J. Natalie Jr. ▲
Waukegan, Ill.



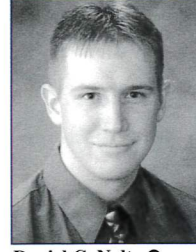
Brett G. Naumann ◆
Wauwatosa, Wis.



Stephen P. Naumann ◆
Benton Harbor, Mich.



Amanda L. Nelson ■
Mukwonago, Wis.



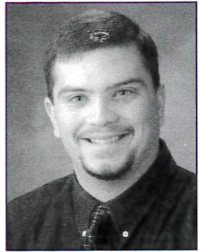
Daniel C. Nolte ●
Manitowoc, Wis.



Jenise E. Nolte ●
Manitowoc, Wis.



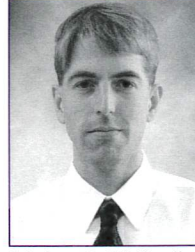
Sara E. Parsons ▲
Eagle River, Wis.



Michael H. Peek ▲
New Ulm, Minn.



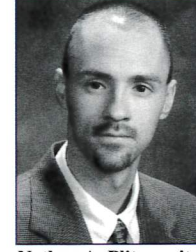
Tyler R. Peil ◆
Midland, Mich.



Mathew R. Pfeifer *
Oskaloosa, Iowa



Cari E. Pieper ▲
Columbus, Ohio



Nathan A. Plitzuweit X
Kansas City, Mo.



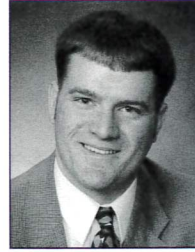
Steven H. Prael ◆
Eau Claire, Wis.



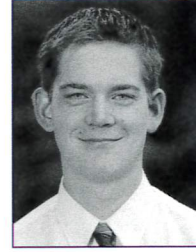
Casey D. Pufahl ●
Lake Mills, Wis.



Amy S. Pundt ▲
Globe, Ariz.



Benjamin L. Rank ●
Oshkosh, Wis.



John S. Ristow ▲
Hartland, Wis.



Michelle L. Ross ▲
Nicollet, Minn.



Gina T. Schaefer ▲
New Berlin, Wis.



Amber L. Scharrer ▲
Hemlock, Mich.



Benjamin A. Scherbarth ◆
Two Rivers, Wis.



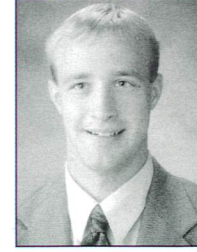
Daniel T. Schmidt ◆
Kenai, Alaska



Stephanie A. Schramm ▲
Ixonia, Wis.



Scott M. Schultz ◆
West Bend, Wis.



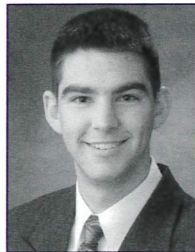
Brian J. Schwanz ●
Neillsville, Wis.

- ◆ Bachelor of Arts
- ▲ Seminary Certification Program
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education
- X Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry

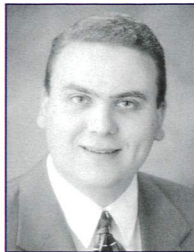
MLC graduates



Gena E. Schwartz ▲
St. Paul Park, Minn.



Nathan J. Smith ▲
Zumbrota, Minn.



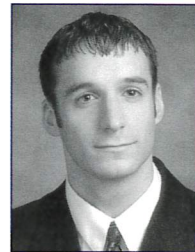
Jason A. Snodie ●
Watertown, Wis.



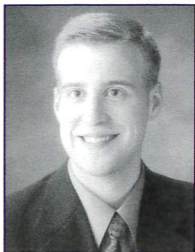
Anna J. Spevacek ▲
Whiteriver, Ariz.



Tanya J. Spevacek ▲
Whiteriver, Ariz.



Marcus W. Spiegelberg ◆
Grand Junction, Colo.



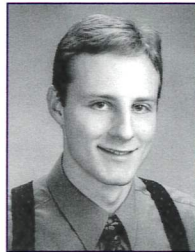
Ryan J. Stangl ●
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Peter D. Sternberg ◆
Rhineland, Wis.



Kara L. Swenson ■
Neeah, Wis.



Christopher J. Tasma ◆
Middleville, Mich.



Stephanie E. Tess ▲
Green Bay, Wis.



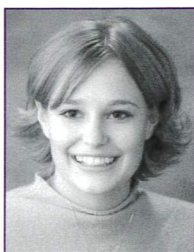
Karin B. Tiarks ▲
Burnsville, Minn.



Julie L. Tjernagel ▲
Cottage Grove, Minn.



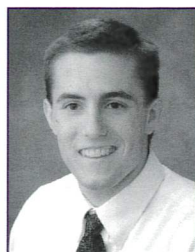
Amanda C. Treder ▲
Stevensville, Mich.



Jill S. Uhlenbrauck ▲
Appleton, Wis.



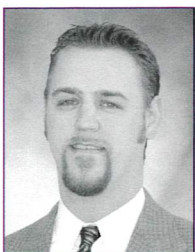
Korey P. Van Kampen ◆
Kingman, Ariz.



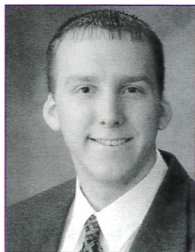
Collin J. Vanderhoof ◆
Appleton, Wis.



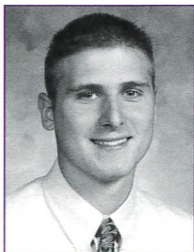
Elizabeth A. Vetting ▲
Appleton, Wis.



Joel T. Vogel ◆
Kennewick, Wash.



Timothy R. Wagner ◆
Burlington, Wis.



Justin C. Walz ●
Wauwatosa, Wis.



Sarah R. Warmuth ▲
Jefferson, Wis.



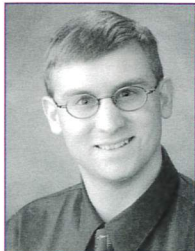
Stephanie A. Weber ▲
Midland, Mich.



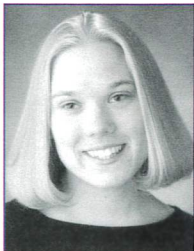
Clayton G. Welch ◆
Tucson, Ariz.



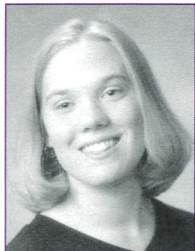
Brandy E. White ▲
Chesaning, Mich.



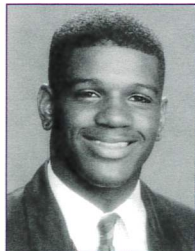
Christopher D. White ◆
Saginaw, Mich.



Alison L. Wiedmann ▲
Guntur, India



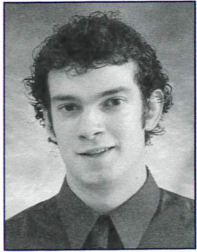
Heather L. Wiedmann ▲
Guntur, India



Brandon A. Wigley ◆
Milwaukee, Wis.



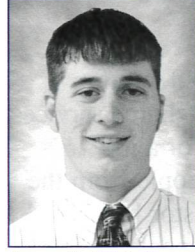
Heather E. Wilcox ●
Des Moines, Wash.



Nathan L. Wilke ◆
Redwood Falls, Minn.



Matthew J. Willems ●
New Ulm, Minn.



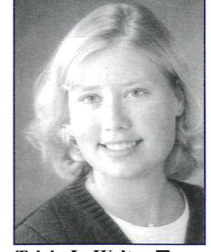
Aaron R. Winkelman ◆
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



Jessica A. Wolfe ▲
Goodhue, Minn.



Ryan C. Wolfe ◆
Colfax, Wis.



Tricia L. Wolter ■
Hustisford, Wis.



Dustin B. Yahnke ◆
Kendall, Wis.



Erin J. Zastrow ▲
Hustisford, Wis.



**Kristine M.
Zschernitz** ▲
Neillsville, Wis.

NOT PICTURED:

Rochelle M. Fischer ▲
Manitowoc, Wis.

Sara M. Mielke ●
Loveland, Colo.

Jennifer L. Mulinix ●
Minneapolis, Minn.

Jennifer E. Neuman ▲
East Troy, Wis.

- ◆ Bachelor of Arts
- * Seminary Certification Program
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education
- X Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry

Call assignments

Teachers

Achey, Melanie A., St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.
Bauer, Aaron J., Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Bauer, Joshua J., Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.
Berg, Hannah L., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Berg, Jennifer M., Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.
Berge, Michael D., East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Bigelow, LynnMarie K., Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.
Boese, Sarah J., Resurrection, Rochester, Minn.
Brown, Kristi J., Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Buch, Nathan M., Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Christensen, Jared D., Resurrection, Rochester, Minn.
Cloute, Philip J., Zion, Valentine, Neb.
Daylo, Hedy L., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Deglow, Kari M., St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn.
Diersen, Jayson J., California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
Enter, Erin A., Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.
Fischer, Christopher D., Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.
Fischer, Heidi J., Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Fischer, Wendy L., Crete, Crete, Ill.
Foley, Matthew D., Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo.
Foxen, Justin S., St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio
Gawrich, Kelly M., St. John, Pardeeville, Wis.
Gentz, Crystal E., Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
George, Kristin M., Zion, Hartland, Wis.
Grebe, Naomi A., Martin Luther, Madison Heights, Mich.
Gregovich, Joshua D., St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Gut, Justin G., Peace, Otsego, Mich.
Hahm, Kevin E., Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
Hahnke, Gretel E., Trinity, Brillion, Wis.
Harris, Melissa A., Our Savior, Bylas, Ariz.
Hartwig, Meredith C., Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev.
Heidtke, Kristina N., Apostles, Billings, Mont.
Hemling, Timothy J., Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.

Hintz, Angela M., Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Homan, Michael S., East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Huebner, Misty S., Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.
Kassulke, Sara K., St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
Kasten, Daniel J., Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Krieger, Rachel M., Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio
Kroening, Nicole M., Atonement, Baltimore, Md.
Krueger, Tracy L., Trinity, Kiel, Wis.
Kuschel, Elizabeth J., Crete, Crete, Ill.
Lamb, Michelle K., Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Lemke, Michaela A., Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Luckow, Angela M., St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
Luebchow, Catherine E., Waucousta, Campbellsport, Wis.
Luebke, Christopher J., St. Paul, St. James, Minn.
Marten, Rebekah J., Zion, Clatonia, Neb.
Martens, Sandra L., Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.
Mattek, Heather A., Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Mensing, Brian A., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Miller, Heather A., Cross of Glory, Baton Rouge, La.
Moldenhauer, Lara K., Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, Ariz.
Moldenhauer, Tabitha A., Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.
Mueller, Paula R., Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Mulinix, Jennifer L., St. John, Wrightstown, Wis.
Natalie, Anthony J., St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Nelson, Amanda L., Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Neuser, Beth A., Faith, Anchorage, Alaska
Nolte, Daniel C., Martin Luther, Madison Heights, Mich.
Oakland, Kari J., Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Parsons, Sara E., Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Peek, Michael H., Trinity, Neenah, Wis.
Pufahl, Casey D., St. Croix LHS, St. Paul, Minn.
Pundt, Amy S., St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Rank, Benjamin L., Trinity, Kiel, Wis.

Ristow, John S., St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
Ross, Michelle L., Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Schaefer, Gina T., Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
Scharrer, Amber L., St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.
Schlieve, Rebecca R., St. Peter, Kekoskee, Wis.
Schramm, Stephanie A., St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Schwanz, Brian J., St. Martin, Watertown, S.D.
Schwartz, Gena E., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Smith, Nathan J., St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.
Snodie, Jason A., Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Spevacek, Anna J., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Stangl, Laura M., to St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.
Stangl, Ryan J., St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.
Swenson, Kara L., Emanuel, New London, Wis.
Tiarks, Karin B., St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Tjernagel, Julie L., Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.
Treder, Amanda C., St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.
Uhlenbrauck, Jill S., St. John (Forest Home), Milwaukee, Wis.
Walz, Justin C., Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Warmuth, Sarah R., Redeemer, Tomahawk, Wis.
Weber, Stephanie A., Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
White, Brandy E., St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Wiedmann, Alison L., Zion, Valentine, Neb.
Wiedmann, Heather L., St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb.
Wigley, Lisa D., Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Wilcox, Heather E., First, Green Bay, Wis.
Willems, Matthew J., Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
Wolter, Tricia L., Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Zschernitz, Kristine M., Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.
Zuberbier, Sarah G., St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.

Staff minister

Plitzuweit, Nathan, Apostles, San Jose, Calif.



Marketing in evangelism

Marketing is the area of business that specializes in promoting a company's products or services. When it comes to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, marketing coordinator Bruce Tieves promotes God's Word and individual churches. In this way, marketing becomes a form of evangelism.

Tieves started working in early May for Media-Assisted Outreach, which is part of the WELS Commission on Evangelism. Tieves graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communications from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, in 1990. Tieves then served as a marketing manager for St. Michael's hospital in Stevens Point, Wis., for about five years. Much of his work included promoting service lines, physicians, and the recent addition of a six-story clinic to the hospital, as well as new satellite clinics.

While at St. Michael's, Tieves worked with the advertising agency that created the WELS "I am" cam-

paign that was designed to bring people to Easter 2000 church services.

"I wasn't looking for a job at the time, but the people from the ad agency and my pastor had heard about the marketing specialist job at WELS and recommended me for the position. I am originally from Milwaukee and liked the idea of going back." He was also intrigued by the idea of using marketing in evangelism.

"I try to help congregations develop marketing and evangelism plans that work together. My favorite part of the job is assisting congregations in helping people to find Jesus with the end goal of getting them to heaven."

His specific duty is to work with churches individually, educating them about marketing/evangelism plans, and trying to reach out to unchurched people in the community. He fulfills this task by using advertising, public relations, direct mail, newsletters, and brochures. His long-term goal is to develop some



As marketing coordinator, Bruce Tieves helps congregations develop marketing plans that complement their evangelism efforts.

standardized, cost-efficient tools for evangelism that will not become quickly outdated and "can be used from Florida to California."

Tieves looks forward to working more in this position, which helps to reap "the rewards of the evangelism effort."

To contact Tieves, call 414/256-6484 or e-mail <brucet@sab.wels.net>.

Adam Goede

Obituaries

Delmer Edward Hallemeier 1914-2001

Delmer Hallemeier was born Sept. 7, 1914, in Manitowoc, Wis. He died Apr. 16, 2001, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1939 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Hallemeier served as a teacher at St. John, Root Creek, Wis., and as a pastor at Bethany, Appleton, Wis., and Peace, Green Lake, Wis.

Hallemeier is survived by his wife, Gertrude; one son; one daughter; 10 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by one daughter.

Anne Irene Otte 1947-2001

Anne Otte (nee Dunn) was born Feb. 17, 1947, in Osceola, Neb. She died Apr. 27, 2001, in Ulysses, Neb.

Otte served at Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

Otte is survived by her husband, Martin; two sons; two daughters; and two grandchildren.

Norman W. Berg 1920-2001

Norman Berg was born Mar. 29, 1920, in Saginaw, Mich. He died May 17, 2001, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1944 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Berg served as an instructor at Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Mobridge, S.D.; and as a pastor at St. Peter, Globe, Ariz.; Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.; Grace, Benton Harbor, Mich.; St. Peter's, Plymouth, Mich.; and Grace, Scroggins, Tex. From 1962-1968, he served as president of the Michigan District. From 1966-1968, he served as

first vice president of WELS, following which he served as the Executive Secretary for the General Board for Home Missions until 1988.

Berg is survived by his wife, Eleanor; two sons; three daughters; and 16 grandchildren.

Edna Humann 1904-2001

Edna Humann (nee Gruetzmacher) was born July 28, 1904, in New London, Wis. She died June 5, 2001, in Coon Rapids, Minn.

Humann taught at Emanuel, New London; St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich.; Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.; and St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.

Humann was preceded in death by her husband, Ervin. She is survived by two children, 12 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Spreading the Word through song in Europe

It is a bright Sunday morning and you decide to go on a walk with your family through the cobblestone streets of Mainz, Germany. As you walk past the windows of a few open shops, you begin to hear the sound of singing. You casually approach a group of American choir members, who are singing several acapella selections in Latin, English, and German on the street corner. Wondering about the free entertainment, you read the flyer that one of the members holds out to you. It invites you to a free afternoon concert to be held nearby at Christuskirche (Church of Christ).

This was the scene on the last day of Wisconsin Lutheran College's two-week choir tour, which began on May 21 in Berlin, Germany. Director James Nowack and his wife, Dorothy, led the choir of about 70 students to eight different churches throughout Germany, Austria, and Czech Republic.

Seven years after coming to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Nowack began the plans to fulfill his dream of bringing a "mature college choral program" overseas. David Timm, national executive director of WELS Kingdom Workers, heard the idea for the European tour and asked Nowack if the choir could perform a concert for the benefit of WELS' European Chaplaincy in the Frankfurt area on June 3.



The Wisconsin Lutheran College choir gives a short public performance at the Salzburg Dom in Austria.

Nowack explains, "It happened (and not coincidentally, I believe), that the air reservations had already been made to have the choir depart Frankfurt on June 4."

By God's will, the plans fell together perfectly. Phillip Kieselhorst, the WELS chaplain in Europe, wrote about the concert: "What a great experience this concert was for our people. My [attendance] fears were squashed when a crowd of over 140 people came to the concert! I would say 30-40 of these were our people, so the rest were visitors."

The crowd was able to hear many different selections of music, both sacred and secular. Halfway through the concert, Kieselhorst gave a devotion in both German and English.

The rest of the tour was a success as well. In large tourist areas, the choir was able to give small public performances. The choir also worshiped with members at the Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church in Plzen and gave a concert later the same day.

Nowack said, "The choir made quite a good impression on this little congregation. Many of the native Czech members had never seen so many Christians in one place."

Nowack hopes to bring his choir on an international tour every four years. Looking into the future, one can already picture the eager families gathering to hear the music of God's praise in the streets of another far-away country.

Adam Goede

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

A young visitor to our church came up to my husband after service, eyed him in his cassock and surplice, and said to him, "You know, men aren't supposed to wear dresses." After a moment she added, "Is there anyone else in there with you?"

*Kris Cherney
New Ulm, Minnesota*



Read an article that you'd like to share with a friend or neighbor? Give them your issue or tell them to look it up on the Web.

Current issues are at <www.wels.net/sab/frm-nl.html>. Past issues are also in the works.

So don't keep this magazine a secret. Share it, and the Web site address, with those who need food for their souls.



Meet the editorial staff—uncut

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

Getting to know Walter Beckmann

At six feet six inches tall, he towers over everyone in the Conference of Presidents. His deep, booming voice can be heard from a distance. He writes editorials for *Forward in Christ* magazine.

But what else do we really know about Walter Frederick Beckmann? Let’s see.

His heritage

Beckmann grew up in La Crosse, Wis., son of Walter and Esther (nee Parsch) Beckmann.

“My father was born in Germany and came to this country in 1923. He worked on a farm in Minnesota to repay his uncle for his ticket to the United States (via ship). He worked briefly for a railroad and for a hospital, but most of my life he was employed by the G. Heileman Brewery.

“While he was working at the Lutheran hospital in La Crosse stoking furnaces, he met my mother, who was working in the hospital laundry.”

His family

Beckmann says his marriage and the births of his three children are some of his most memorable experiences. He also remembers other important “dates.”

“I met my wife (Marilyn Miller) at Northwestern Prep. Our first date was a toboggan party on March 4, 1948.”

His ministry

Beckmann’s first call was to St. John, Battle Creek, Mich. In 1963 he was called to begin Grace, Falls Church, Va., the first WELS congregation in what has become the North Atlantic District.

“In 1963 my closest WELS neighbor was almost 500 miles away on the other side of the Appalachians. At the end of 1963 what was to eventually become the North Atlantic District was our one church with 24 communicant members. By the end of 2000 we had 46 churches and exploratory fields with 4,305 communicant members.”

His service as a district president

In 1983, Beckmann became the

first district president of the North Atlantic District, the only one the district has had.

“The fellowship I’ve enjoyed on the Conference of Presidents is an experience I wish all of our pastors could enjoy.”

His lighter side

Although he works hard, Beckmann also leaves time for relaxation.

“What would I like to do in my spare time? Probably read some of the history books I’ve collected over the years and also do some of the many things that are available here in the nation’s capital of which my wife and I often say, ‘We really ought to do that.’”



Walter Beckmann and most of his family at his oldest grandson's graduation from St. Croix Lutheran High School. Walter Beckmann is third from the right.

District news

Nebraska

Lulu Sokol, a member of Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb., celebrated her 107th birthday on Apr. 7. Sokol was visited by the mayor of Omaha and received a letter from the governor.

South Central

On Apr. 5-7, Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., hosted three days of lectures by WELS attorney Craig Parton. The lectures made the community aware of the biblical underpinnings of WELS.

Northern Wisconsin

On Oct. 22, 2000, Mt. Zion, Ripon, Wis., honored Norma Rahjes for 70 years of serving her Lord through music. Rahjes played the organ and directed three con-

gregational choirs during those 70 years. On May 20, members of Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis., gave thanks for the 42 years Wallace Krause served as choir director.

South Atlantic

St. John, St. Johns, Antigua, celebrated a Ministry Sunday on May 27. The service recognized the 25 years of service Dennis Needham has provided as principal in Antigua. Laymember Jacqueline Phoenix was installed as the youth and music coordinator. Phoenix is a former student of Needham's and is enrolled in the congregation's Caribbean Christian Training Institute.

California

Kindergarten student Erin Plocher of Our Redeemer Lutheran School, Santa

Barbara, Calif., won second prize overall in the Santa Barbara County Drug Awareness Poster Contest. Nadine Moger, also of Our Redeemer, won the kindergarten award. Over 2,500 posters were entered by students in kindergarten through grade eight.

Southeastern Wisconsin

In April, the Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School Band, Jackson, Wis., took a trip to New York City. They performed in two worship services and worked with WELS missionaries in New York City to pass out flyers for a special service in a park.

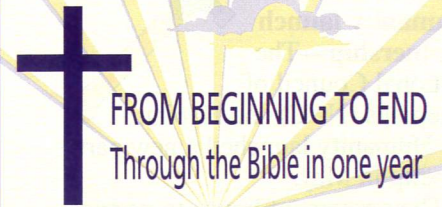
Western Wisconsin

On May 6, Mount Olive, Monroe, Wis., held an open house after an extensive renovation project to the nave and sanctuary.

Southeastern Wisconsin



On May 13, Pastor Keith Tullberg, Siloah, Milwaukee, baptized 20 children from 12 different families. Seven of the children are students at Siloah's grade school. The others are from Siloah's prospect list. Tullberg says, "This unusual event places a special responsibility upon Siloah. We all know that the gift of baptismal faith can easily be lost if it is not nurtured by family and congregation."



August 2001

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 2 Thessalonians | 20. Job 39:13-42 |
| • Philemon | 21. 1 Chronicles 1 |
| 2. Colossians | • Ps. 73 |
| 3. Revelation 1-5 | 22. 1 Chron. 2 |
| 4. Rev. 6-11 | • Ps. 104 |
| 5. Rev. 12-16 | 23. 1 Chron. 3 & 4 |
| 6. Rev. 17-20 | • Ps. 19 |
| 7. Psalms 71 & 141 | 24. 1 Chron. 5-6:48 |
| • Rev. 21 & 22 | • Ps. 8 & 134 |
| 8. Ps. 47, 62, 94, | 25. 1 Chron. 6:49-7 |
| 108, & 109 | • Ps. 15 & 52 |
| 9. Job 1-5 | 26. 1 Chron. 8 • Ps. |
| 10. Job 6-8 | 76, 77, & 124 |
| 11. Job 9-11 | 27. 1 Chron. 9 |
| 12. Job 12-14 | • Ps. 82, 86, & 97 |
| 13. Job 15-18 | 28. 1 Chron. 10-12:22 |
| 14. Job 19-21 | 29. 1 Chron. |
| 15. Job 22-26 | 12:23-16:6 |
| 16. Job 27-30:15 | 30. 1 Chron. 16:7-18 |
| 17. Job 30:16-32 | 31. 1 Chron. 19-22:5 |
| 18. Job 33-36:16 | • Ps. 55 |
| 19. Job 36:17-39:12 | |

On Apr. 29, **Good Shepherd, Holmen, Wis.**, dedicated a 9,000-ft. addition to a 2,500-ft. facility. The new facility includes a sanctuary with seating for 250, doubling the previous capacity.

Happy Anniversary!

MN—On Apr. 22, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., held a service of praise and thanksgiving to God for Professors **Arlen Koestler** and **Robert Krueger's** 40 years of service in the teaching and pastoral ministries, respectively.

NW—On May 27, Hope, Toronto, Canada, celebrated **Thomas Haar's** 25th anniversary in the pastoral ministry.

WW—On June 17, members at St. John, Hill Point/Trinity, Lime Ridge, Wis., celebrated **Richard Agenten's** 25th anniversary in the pastoral ministry.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Kenneth Pasch; CA—Hermann John; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Michael Helwig; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Mark Haefner; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

Arizona



Jackie Chandler, a recent confirmand of Calvary, Chandler, Ariz., chose Martin Luther as her topic for a Frontier in History competition at Aprende Middle School. Chandler received a rating of excellent at a regional competition. She says, "By doing this topic I was able to answer a lot of questions regarding Luther's studies and my faith."

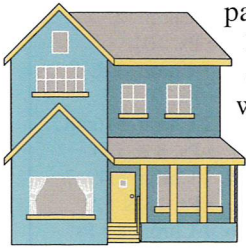


NCC, Habitat for Humanity launch partnership



The National Council of Churches (NCC) and Habitat for Humanity launched a new partnership in May.

The agreement hopes to partner the NCC's humanitarian arm, Church World Service, with Habitat crews to help build houses for poor families. They also want to increase participation by NCC member churches (of which WELS is not a member) on Habitat projects and join in collaborative ventures.



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Euthanasia legalized in the Netherlands

Once Queen Beatrix signs the measure, the Netherlands will become the first country to legalize euthanasia.

In April the Dutch Senate voted 46-28 to endorse this legislation. The Dutch House had already passed the measure 104-40 in November 2000.

According to the measure, each euthanasia case must undergo review by a commission that includes a doctor, a medical ethics expert, and a lawyer. Patients must also make clear that their decision is rational and have a second medical opinion agreeing that they have no hope of relief from unbearable suffering. Only legal residents of the Netherlands are eligible.

If passed, the law will legalize a practice that has been carried out by Dutch doctors for over two decades.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints constructing temples in California

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be constructing three new temples in California.

The temples, which are used for sacred ceremonies such as marriage and baptism, will be in Sacramento, Newport Beach, and Redlands.

This brings the total number of temples in California to seven, making it the state with the second-highest number of temples after Utah, which has 11. Currently 104 temples are operating around the world.

The ELCA may "partner" with Churches Uniting in Christ

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) will decide at its Churchwide Assembly this August whether to become a "partner in mission and dialogue" with Churches Uniting in Christ, a coalition of nine Protestant churches.

"This partnership does not represent regular membership or a declaration of full communion with CUIC but provides an opportunity for strengthening mission," said a resolution passed by the ELCA's Church Council.

As a partner, the ELCA would send a delegation to CUIC's inaugural celebration next January, work to combat racism, and join dialogues on ministry.

The nine member churches of the CUIC include the African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the International Council of Community Churches.

[ELCA News Service, Apr. 12, 2001]

Religious experiences on the Internet on the rise

About eight percent of adults and 12 percent of teenagers use the Internet for religious or spiritual experiences, according to a recent Barna Research Group survey, but only one percent of adults and two percent of teens use the Internet rather than going to church.

These numbers, however, are on the rise. When people were asked about their future use of the Internet for religious experiences, more than

two-thirds said they were more likely to use the Internet for this reason over the next decade.

Survey takers rated listening to archived religious teaching, reading devotions, and buying religious products as appealing on-line activities.

The research is based on three surveys taken in 2000. A random sample of 1,017 adults in November had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Two others, one of 605 teens in September and another of 604 Protestant pastors in late 2000, had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

[Barna Research Group, Ltd., news release, May 23, 2001]

Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood announce merger

In late June, Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) and Lutheran Brotherhood (LB) announced a plan to merge the two fraternal benefit societies by year's end.

"It [the merger] will combine the strength and potential of two leaders in the financial products industry and extend the Christian framework of our organization," says Bruce Nicholson, president and CEO of LB.

John Gilbert, president and CEO of AAL, echoed Nicholson's thoughts. "The merger is an outstanding opportunity for us to build a fraternal benefit society unlike any yet seen," he said.

The merged organization, whose new name hasn't been selected yet, will have almost three million members. The new organization's corporate center will be based in Minneapolis, Minn., and its operations center will be in Appleton, Wis.

Several government agencies still need to approve the merger. In addition, about 300 LB member delegates will vote on the merger later this year, and the AAL board must grant final approval.

Most news reported in this section is derived from Religion News Service. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or *Forward in Christ* magazine.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Albrecht, Joel D., to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.
Behnke, Thomas H., to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
Habeck, Daniel E., to retirement
Koelpin, Arnold J., to retirement
Laitinen, Wayne A., to St. John, New Ulm, Minn.
Manthey, Paul A., to retirement
McKenney, Bruce A., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.
Melke, John T., to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Ochsankehl, Mark D., to Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.
Raddatz, Darvin H., to retirement
Schultz, Kevin K., to Immanuel exploratory, Maple Valley, Wash.
Wolfgang, Arno J., to St. Matthew, Milwaukee

Teachers

Albrecht, Heather A., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Bloomquist, Brent D., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Buege, Ruth J., to St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.
Busse, Tanya J., to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio
Corlett, Sandra L., to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Fillner, Sarah E., to Cross of Glory, Washington, Mich.
Groth, Kristin M., to Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee
Hagedorn, Elizabeth M., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
Hermanson, Rebecca A., to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Hilgendorf, Bethany E., to Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.
Hopfsperger, Christopher, to St. Lucas, Milwaukee
Kieselhorst, Nathan, to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
Kirk, Daniel B., to retirement
Klockziem, Virgene E., to retirement
Krieger, Christine E., to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.
Lecker, Penny J., to Trinity, Bay City, Mich.
Luckinbill, Susanne M., to Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.
Luehring, Rachel E., to St. Paul, Riverside, Calif.
Martin-Geiman, Ruth M., to Grace, Alma, Mich.
McDonald, Margaret S., to St. James, Milwaukee
Mitchell, Laura, to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Prange, Leanne M., to St. Luke, Saginaw, Mich.
Ross, David W., to St. John, Milwaukee
Schneider, Susan P., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
Schoeneck, Mary L., to Holy Word, Austin, Tex.
Seelhoff, Wendy L., to St. Peter-St. Paul, Hopkins, Mich.
Uecker, Scott E., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Underwood, Denise L., to Living Hope, Omaha, Neb.
Wilsmann, Rebecca E., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Zander, Lois M., to St. Peter, Balaton, Minn.

STAFF MINISTER

Maurice, Mark E., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee

ANNIVERSARIES

Martin, S.D.—Our Redeemer (75). Aug. 19. Service, 4 PM. Potluck and program to follow. 605/685-6494.
Lutheran Pioneers—(50). Sept. 8. Service, 1:30 PM. St. John, Burlington, Wis. 888/214-8225.
Manitowoc, Wis.—St. John, Newtonburg (150). Sept. 9. Services, 8 & 10 AM. Sept. 23. Services, 8 & 10 AM. Potluck dinner to follow. 920/758-2625.
Grass Lake, Mich.—St. Jacob (160). Sept. 9. Service, 10:15 AM. Dinner to follow.
Cottonwood, Ariz.—Peace (25). Sept. 15. Reunion celebration, 6:30-9 PM. Sept. 16.

Service of thanksgiving, 9 AM. Dedication of newly enlarged facilities, 3 PM.
Saginaw, Mich.—St. Paul (150). Sept. 16. Thanksgiving for schools. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM.
New Hope, Minn.—Holy Trinity (50). Sept. 16. Service, 2:30 PM. Meal, 4 PM. \$7.50/person. RSVP by Aug. 28, 763/560-8975.
Oshkosh, Wis.—Bethlehem (100). Sept. 16. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 920/235-5390.
Helenville, Wis.—St. Peter Lutheran School (150). Sept. 23. Services, 8 & 10:15 AM. Meal and program to follow. Craig Winkler, 920/674-3245.
Jefferson, Wis.—St. John (150). Sept. 30. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Confirmation reunion with catered dinner at Lakeside LHS. RSVP, 920/674-4922.
North Fond du Lac, Wis.—St. Paul (100). Sept. 30. Service, 10 AM at Winnebago Lutheran Academy. Dinner to follow.
Beatrice, Neb.—Christ (50). Oct. 7. Service, 10:15 AM. Dinner and program to follow. RSVP, 402/223-4250.
Penryn, Calif.—Hope (25). Oct. 7. Service, 3 PM. Dinner to follow. 916/652-4273.

COMING EVENTS

Christian Educators for Special Education conference—Aug. 14, 8:30 AM-12:30 PM, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Kimberly Warning, 414/423-5769.
DMLC retired alumni get-together—Aug. 14. Luther Haven, 8949 N 97 St, Milwaukee. Assembly, 11 AM. Noon potluck to follow. Meat and beverage provided. RSVP, Donald Zimmerman, 414/355-9595 or Richard Grunze, 414/423-0118.
WELS Labor Day retreat—Sept. 1-3. Berkshire Mountains, Mass. Philip Becker, 603/472-5551.
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.
WELS Home Education retreat—sponsored by Zion, Cambria, Wis. Sept. 14-16. Camp Philip, Wautoma, Wis. Debbie Thompson, 920/348-6482.
LWMS Women of WELS (WOW) retreats—Sept. 21 & 22, Escanaba, Mich., Betty Warning, 715/484-4405.
 Sept. 21 & 22, Perrysburg, Ohio, Ruth Kemerley, 419/365-5503.
 Sept. TBA, Larkspur, Colo., Tiphonie Figurski, 719/534-9697.
 Oct. 5 & 6, Trego, Wis., Betty Ruffledt, 715/568-1248.
 Oct. 12 & 13, Davenport, Iowa, Deonne Titus, 815/273-2780.
 Nov. 2 & 3, Norcross, Ga., Tiffany Ausdemore, 770/736-4686.
 Nov. 9 & 10, Milwaukee, Wis., Danica Krueger, 414/817-0820.
Church Librarians' Organization meeting—Sept. 22. St. John, Baraboo, Wis. 414/256-3222.
Home Improvers conference—Sept. 22 & 23. Radisson, Kalamazoo, Mich. Pava Leyrer, 616/538-1122.
Symposium on Christian Freedom—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Sept. 24, 1 PM-Sept. 25, 12:30 PM. \$40 registration fee. Register before Sept. 5, 262/242-8100.
WELS Youth Leaders' Workshop 2001—Sept. 28-30. Lutherdale Retreat Center, Elkhorn, Wis. Commission on Youth Discipleship, 414/256-3274.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary auxiliary—annual meeting, Oct. 6. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
Christian Growth Seminar—Oct. 13, 6:15 AM-1:30 PM. Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. Linda Williams, 888/378-2182.
Fourth annual Run for the Prize: 5K Run & Walk—sponsored by Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. Oct. 20, 10 AM. Dave Braun, 419/365-5770.
Capital area Christian women's retreat—Nov. 2-4. Devils Head Resort, Baraboo, Wis. Joy Strutz, 920/623-5516.
Exodus tour—to Egypt, Sinai, & Jordan. High school students and family members welcome. Dec. 26, 2001-Jan. 5, 2002. Cost, \$2,495-\$2,970. Led by Pastors David Putz (Winnebago Lutheran Academy) and Leon Ehler (Fox Valley LHS). Register by Sept. 16 to avoid late fees. 920/921-4105 or 920/735-6034.
National Conference for Worship, Music, & the Arts—July 21-24, 2002. Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis. <www.wels.net/sab/frm-cow/html>.
Western Wisconsin District Regional Youth Rally—Wisconsin Dells. July 25-27, 2002. Paul Steinberg, <stpaul@mwt.net>. <www.welsyouth.com>.

AVAILABLE

The Lutheran Hymnal—50 free for the cost of shipping. <schemms@yahoo.com>.

NEEDED

Shipping leads—for secure methods of shipping goods to Calabar or Port Harcourt, Nigeria. <papencharl7@naspa.net> or <calwels@foxinternet.com>.
Volunteers—for a Forward in Christ project. Mentors/trainers in either the Arizona region of the Arizona-California District or the Michigan District to help congregations start Jesus Cares Bible classes for individuals who are developmentally disabled. Knowledge of developmental disabilities desirable. Travel and administrative expenses covered. Training to be provided. Bruce Cuppan, 920/922-8672.
Children's ministry resources—Christian videos, cassette or CD music, and computer software for ages 2-grade 12. <jayntamziegler@aol.com>.
Pen pals—for prisoners. You will receive a kit containing a name of a prisoner, stationery, and suggestions of what to write and what not to write. All letters go through a PO Box in Minn. Must be high school senior or older. Harold Runke, 520 S German St, New Ulm MN 56073; 507/354-1784, or David Nack <welspm@newulmtel.net>.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Child care providers—Grace, Charlotte, N.C., is seeking WELS/ELS individuals to work at Lambs of Grace Child Development Center (ages six weeks to five years) opening this fall. Experience a plus but not necessary. Patti Fellers, 704/366-9309.

NAMES WANTED

Sheridan, Wyo.—Pete Zietlow, 307/672-7599.
West Point/Hyde Park, N.Y.—Donald Tollefson, 908/876-5429.
Lusby, Md.—Bruce Wietzke, 301/373-3299.

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

The right time, the right person

God sent his Son as our substitute.

Jon D. Buchholz

At the climax of the ages, God was ready to clothe himself with human flesh.

Setting the stage

“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son” (Galatians 4:4). With meticulous precision God set the stage for the incarnation of his Only-begotten. A common Greek language dominated the world of culture and commerce. Roman power brought peace and stability to the empire. All roads led to Rome; travel and communication were easier than ever before.

At the center of the Mediterranean world, an emperor decreed that a census should be taken. Caesar Augustus—revered as a god—didn’t know that he was only a pawn in the true God’s hands. His ego didn’t understand that by his decree, the Savior’s mother would return to Bethlehem and there fulfill Micah’s prophecy. But God knew.

In Nazareth of Galilee, far from any seat of power, the word of the Lord came to a virgin. An angel told Mary the bombshell news: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

In another house, Joseph tossed and turned as he anguished over how to deal with an unexpected pregnancy. His apprehensions were

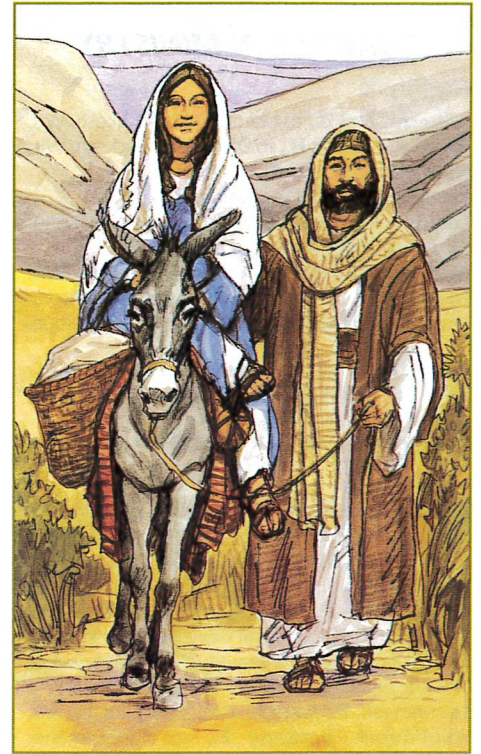
put to rest in a dream. “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20,21).

True man and true God

In such a humble way, God came to his people! Jesus was born of royal lineage, but to humble parents. He emptied himself of his divine majesty and permitted himself to be confined by time and space. He grew within the womb of a woman and uttered his first human cry in a stable. No linen or silk awaited his birth; he laid his head in a feed trough. It was the beginning of a lifetime of humility and poverty, sorrow and suffering.

Even so, God would not let the greatest event in human history pass without celebration. The fields and hills of Judea reflected heaven’s glory when Jesus was born. A chorus of countless angels shouted praises, and all heaven rejoiced: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

Some people try to take away Jesus’ divinity. They declare him to be only a great teacher or self-sacrificing martyr. Others diminish his humanity. In either case, Jesus is reduced to something less than the Savior of the world.



The Bible’s story is simple: God became a man, yet remained fully God. Jesus entered this world to walk in your footsteps. He experienced your hurts. He knew rejection and abandonment. Jesus died your death. No one can say, “God doesn’t understand.” He does. He’s been in your shoes.

Jesus was born and lived under God’s law—and he obeyed it perfectly. Jesus died under God’s justice—but it was not only his human nature that died. It was God himself who died on Calvary. It was God’s blood that was spilled for sinners. Only as true God and true man could Jesus offer an acceptable sacrifice to make blood atonement for this world’s billions of souls.



Jon Buchholz is pastor at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington.

Supper time!

Supper time! Even if isn't a special meal, it takes willpower to resist the dinner bell. When it is a special invitation to supper, it's all the more palatable.

Invitations are given and received all the time. Some are expected, some even deserved. But what takes us by surprise is an invitation totally unexpected and just as completely undeserved. None is any more undeserved than the Savior's invitation extended to you and me in the Lord's Supper: "Take eat. Take drink."

In accepting dinner invitations, our concern may be dressing appropriately, that is, unless we have received an invitation to a "come-as-you-are" party. I remember receiving such an invitation while dressed in my paint clothes. I didn't feel comfortable all evening.

But here, invited to the Lord's Supper, that's exactly how the invitation reads. "Come as you are." The hymn writer said it well. "Just as I am without one plea But that thy blood was shed for me And that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come" (*Christian Worship* 397:1).

We come as we are to the Lord's Supper, hereditary sinners, habitually sinning. Our only plea is, "Lord, have mercy." Unless we want to add insult to injury, claiming innocence, we come acknowledging our sinful condition. Trusting "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), in faith we approach the Lord's Supper.

In any meal there is something you can see and taste. Also, in almost any meal, there is something you can only sense. It's the intention and the effort of the host.

It's no different in the Lord's Supper. Bread and wine is what you see, what you taste, too. What you cannot see is the Lord's intention, his divine effort. He intends, with the bread and wine, to give you his body and blood. And his

effort succeeds. "This is my body, this is my blood. Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

It's obvious that this is no regular meal, no ordinary invitation. After being an invited guest at an ordinary meal, common courtesy requires at least a word of thanks, if not a thank-you note. Here, after receiving the body and blood of Christ and, with them, his forgiveness, words of thanks hardly seem sufficient. Actions ought to follow. Thankfulness for blessings received in the Lord's Supper, leads us, willingly, to serve our God, guided by the Ten Commandments.

That leads us back to where we started a year ago, reviewing the six chief parts of Christian teaching. Faith in the promise of the Lord's Supper is no different than the confidence of faith that trusts all that the Apostles' Creed summarizes about our Triune God. God's unconditional acceptance in the Lord's Supper makes us confident that we can approach our heavenly Father in prayer. The Lord's Prayer shows us how. As we daily remember our baptism, the same undeserved love revealed in the Lord's Supper is underscored. His gracious gifts to us, the keys that open heaven, are ours to enjoy and share with others as the Ministry of the Keys teaches us.

Supper time! It's no ordinary meal and not the usual invitation. By God's grace, one day, we'll sit down with the Lamb of God, enjoying the heavenly feast. Until then, let us, at the Savior's invitation, come often to the Lord's Supper. Come as you are, receiving no ordinary meal, for with the bread and wine, the Savior's body and blood are yours as well as his forgiveness. And, rise from the table, thanking him with lips and lives.



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

Bread and wine
is what you see,
what you taste,
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cannot see is
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intention . . .
to give you his
body and blood.



“Who’s the greatest?”

Jesus said that the greatest person of all is the servant of all.

Thomas H. Trapp

“Who’s the greatest of us all?”

Although the Bible never records the disciples asking Jesus this question, we know from Luke 9:46 that they argued it.

The mother of James and John did not argue over the question. She was convinced that her two sons were the greatest. She personally requested from Jesus that one of them sit at his right hand and the other sit at his left hand in the kingdom of God (Matthew 20).

The 10 other disciples were indignant with this request. After all, they were the greatest disciples, not James and John.

What doesn’t make a person great

So who’s the greatest?

It’s a question people still ask today.

Who’s the greatest intellect in the world? Who’s the greatest basketball player? Who’s the greatest songwriter? Albert Einstein? Michael Jordan? Paul McCartney?

In 1964 heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali proclaimed, “I’m the greatest!”

By 1978 he was the greatest boxer. Ali became the first boxer to win the world heavyweight championship title three different times. He was so puffed up that when an airline flight attendant asked him to buckle up for “take off,” he looked at her and

bragged, “Superman does not need a seatbelt.” She quickly responded, “Superman does not need an airplane either!” In a split second Ali was reminded that he was not the greatest person in the world. He had shortcomings, which apparently included arrogance.

The sacrificial, substitutionary life and death of Jesus Christ . . . is the ultimate example of greatness.

What makes Jesus great

So who is the greatest? What makes a person great?

Jesus stood a little child next to him and informed his disciples, “He who is least among you all—he is the greatest” (Luke 9:48).

When he spoke to James and John (Mark 10) and their mother, Jesus said that the greatest person of all is the servant of all.

John the Baptist understood this teaching well. He said of Jesus, “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30). Yet, it was of John that Jesus said, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:28).

Who is the least in God’s kingdom? The one who demonstrates complete humility and willingness to serve.

No one demonstrated this better than Jesus himself who said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

Paul the apostle describes the greatness of Jesus in these words: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8).

The sacrificial, substitutionary life and death of Jesus Christ, which made satisfaction for our sins, is the ultimate example of greatness. Jesus himself said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Do you want to be great in God’s kingdom? Have the same attitude “as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Why? It’s simple. He is the greatest.



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



This northern Michigan sunset in early spring typifies the words of the psalmist: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (19:1).

Submitted by Willis Cooper

Send pictures to *Picture this*, Forward in Christ magazine, 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.

What goes into making an ideal husband?

Prayers like this one from a Christian wife will help (could your wife have written it?):

Dear Lord,
 please watch over my husband and keep him safe today. Stay with him as he travels the open roads, trying to find the peace that he so badly needs in his life. Help him to realize that this peace only comes from you. Please help him to recognize the important things in life and give him the strength and eagerness to pursue these things. Please give him the gentleness that he needs to pull his family closer to him and the will to keep them there. Help him to be a loving husband and father, and give him wisdom for the young ones who need him so. Please give him patience and endurance for the tough times ahead as there will most certainly be tough times. But, most of all, Lord, equip him with a forgiving, compassionate spirit and an unselfish love for others that will be apparent to all. It is in your name that I ask these things.

Amen.



God's wisdom for today

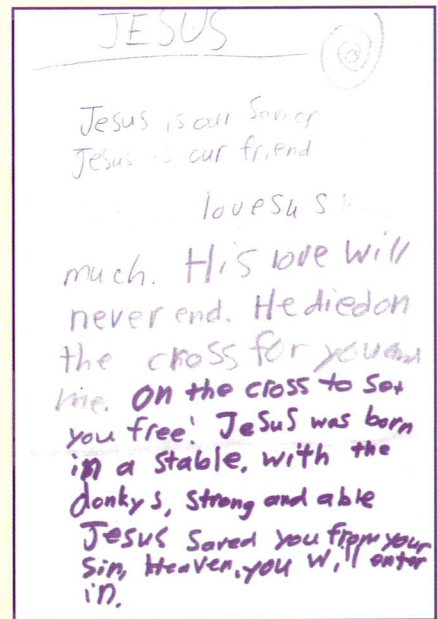
"Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor."
 Proverbs 18:12

"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out."
 Proverbs 18:15

"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him."
 Proverbs 18:17

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."
 Proverbs 18:24

From the mouths of children

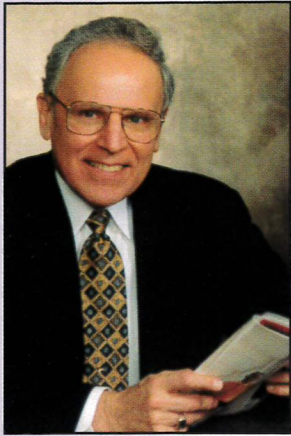


This poem was written by seven-year-old Rylee Grace Maxwell of De Pere, Wis.:

Jesus is our Savior,
 Jesus is our friend
 Jesus loves us very much.
 His love will never end.

He died on the cross for you and me.
 On the cross to set you free!
 Jesus was born in a stable,
 With the donkys [sic], strong and able

Jesus saved you from your sin,
 Heaven, you will enter in.



Gary P. Baumler is editor of *Forward in Christ* magazine and WELS Director of Communications.

What voices
is your child
listening to?
What voices
are you
listening to?

The conflicted society

This spring a new television series debuted—*Weakest Link*. What do you do with the weakest link? You get rid of it. You vote it out and dismiss it unceremoniously.

But, “it” is a person, not just some worn out piece of furniture.

You don’t stop there. You give the weakest links one last chance to say something nasty about the others. They often do.

We see more of the same in *Survivor*. So-called reality TV is full of such incivility.

Meanwhile, in the real world, the weakest links are suffering. Voted out of popular society, they suffer in silence. Sometimes they break the silence with a bang. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

And we wonder what went wrong.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12).

• • •

It’s all in fun—the talk about sex on prime-time TV. What kind of a prude would object? Surely real “Friends” talk about and engage in sexual activity at will. “I want you to have sex with my friend tonight,” a girl says to her boyfriend. “I think she’d really like that.” People laugh at that line. Besides, “Sex in the City” is just the way it is.

If you’re a college student in the spring, the Sirens are calling. You know what they say about spring break. Get yourself down to one of those warm-weather wonderlands and drink and party and. . . .

Meanwhile, in the real world, sensational court trials result from drinking and partying, and. . . . We’ve coined a new phrase in the last score of years—“date rape.” For some reason, the laughter has stopped. The fun has stopped, as a new wave washes down a trail of abortions and tears.

And we wonder what went wrong.

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, . . .

because [this is] improper for God’s holy people” (Ephesians 5:3).

• • •

They are only games, electronic games—popular among our youth, beyond the ken of most adults. You get to the end of the game by killing people. Some games are more realistic than others. You can kill and maim and watch the blood spurt.

The phenomenon is not lost on Hollywood. From *Halloween* to *Hannibal*, the horror mounts, and the killing gets more graphic. We pay money to watch it, and we call it entertainment.

Meanwhile, in the real world, irate drivers don’t get mad, they get even. If someone has a grievance at the workplace, he straps on a gun to go and settle the matter. When a man decides the government has acted evilly, he bombs innocent people and calls murdered children collateral damage.

And we wonder what went wrong.

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

• • •

On TV, children are in your face, and we count it funny. We do just fine with a brat called Bart or Butthead.

Meanwhile, in the real world, our children mimic that behavior, and we say, “Isn’t that cute?” Spoiled children increase their demands on harried parents, and respect is a forgotten ideal.

And we wonder what went wrong.

“Show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God . . .” (1 Peter 2:17).

• • •

Conflicting voices cry out for attention. Mixed messages shape our values.

What voices is your child listening to? What voices are you listening to?

Gary P. Baumler

Commission on Parish Schools

**Helping our schools fulfill their
mission to share the Savior!**

Serving the WELS School System

- 4th largest private/parochial school system in the United States
- 313 Early Childhood Ministries (ECM)
- 366 Lutheran Elementary Schools (LES)
- 22 Area Lutheran High Schools (ALHS)

Providing Counsel and Resources

- Facilitating the "Team Ministry Process"
- Mentoring beginning principals and teachers
- Guidelines for self-study for ECM and LES
- School promotion helps like "Come Meet Our Family" and "Preparing Children Now and Forever"
- School administration helps like "Making the Pieces Fit"
- CPS quarterly newsletter "Grow Together"
- National and district-wide seminars, workshops and conferences

Supporting WELS Districts

- Standing committees for special education, early childhood, and school leadership
- Maintaining teacher/principal service information
- Facilitating teacher/principal assessment
- Providing divine call candidate lists for District Presidents
- Directing the WELS national testing program

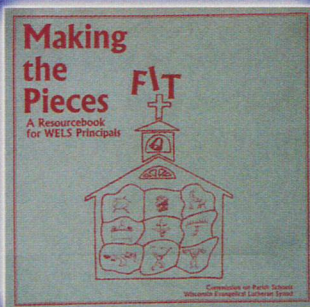
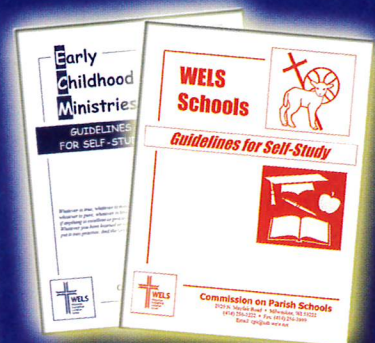
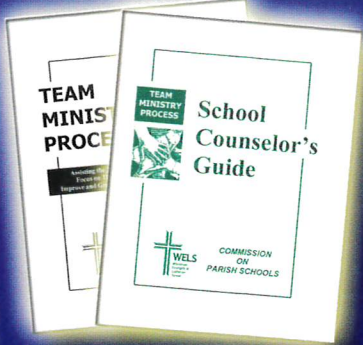
Praying for Success

- Teachers, parents, and students growing in the Word
- Schools reaching out to the lost and strengthening the family
- Ministry teams focusing on their mission
- Educators who are life-long learners
- Wise stewardship of God's gracious gifts



WELS Commission on Parish Schools
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Phone: 414-256-3222 FAX: 414-256-3899 E-mail: cps@sab.wels.net



Dear teachers . . .

A thank-you note from a grateful parent to hard-working teachers.

Laurie Biedenbender



On a balmy day like today you're probably not thinking about my kids. It's summer, time for you to reacquaint yourself with your own family, read a book with words bigger than two syllables, and recuperate for next year. But I want you to know that my kids are thinking about you. In fact, your name comes up almost every day.

And I'm thinking about you too. I'm thinking about the day my daughter said, "Mom, I heard a devotion today that changed my life."

We were on our way to her soccer practice, and I perked up, longing to know how her nine long years of life were now changed forever. She told me the devotion was about spreading the gospel. "When I was little, it was easy to talk about Jesus. It just came out without thinking," she explained. "But now that I'm growing up, it isn't so easy."

I'm not sure what you said in that devotion, but my daughter was

determined to strike up a conversation about Jesus at her practice that very night.

I'm thinking about those boisterous songs you chose for my

son's class to sing in church—songs with clapping and shouting, rock-the-house songs he's still singing to Jesus months later.

I'm thinking about the paradoxes you must have taught. The paradox of our sinfulness and our wonderfulness, the old self and the new creation in Christ. The paradox of the transcendent, infinite, "my thoughts are not your thoughts" God and the imminent, holding-our-hand, "I have called you friends" God. The paradox of the Divine dressing himself in human skin—and living still in that skin while filling the whole universe. These mysteries baffle the wisest among us, yet you taught them regularly to little wide-eyed souls.

I'm thinking about the time my daughter went to school crying because I'd been a beast that morning—for no better reason than low blood sugar and maybe the rain—and you said, "Moms have days like that sometimes," comforting her and tacitly tugging her to forgive me.

I'm thinking about the routines and rules, the stories and jokes you shared with my son in the class-

room—that whole other culture I wasn't privy to and that lost something in the translation: "You had to be there, Mom."

I'm thinking about the countless days the kids came in from recess, smelling of asphalt, sweat, and the tiny triumphs and drubbings a playground affords, and you helped them sort through it all, see it in proper perspective, and still learn that day's math fact.

I'm thinking about the smiles and pats you gave to spur them on and the raised eyebrows when they needed to rein it in.

I'm thinking about the times you just nodded and took it in stride when my kids told you Dad was never home, Mom never cooked, and we didn't use soap.

I'm thinking about how often I hear, "Well, Mr. So and So said . . ." and "Want to know what Miss So and So would've done?" I'm so grateful that I can trust what you said and did—that I know you led my kids along the same road I want them to go.

I'm thinking about all this and saying thanks to God for you. You gave my kids—and all the kids at school—gifts of various sizes every day of the school year. And these gifts haven't worn out with time.

So, thanks. And have a great summer.

Laurie Biedenbender is a member at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

