

FORWARD IN CHRIST

December 2001

The Word from the WELS

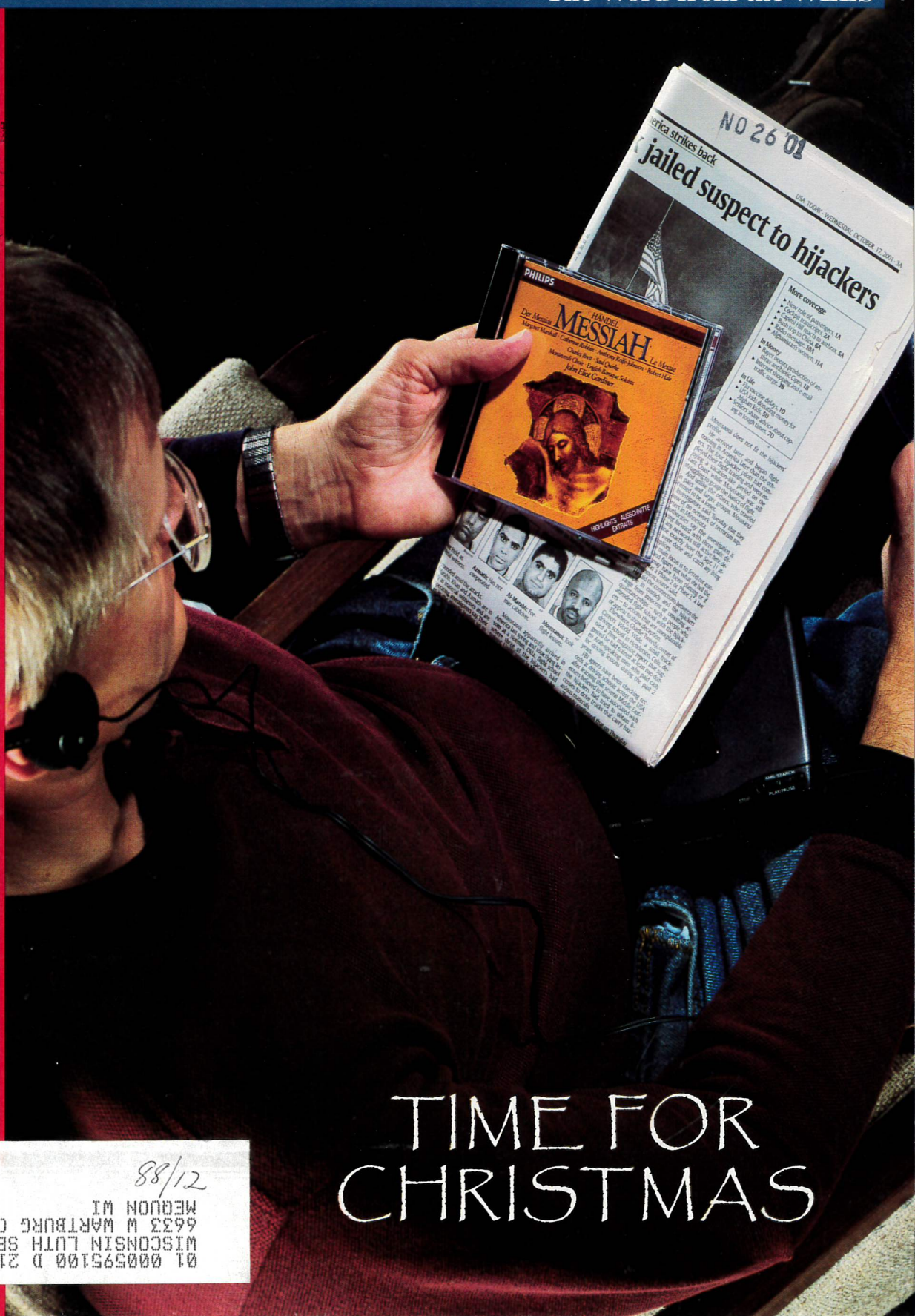
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Christmas
around the
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Eating with sinners

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Luke 15:2

Eric S. Hartzell

Good people don't typically like to besmirch themselves by rubbing up against bad people. Certainly they would not receive bad people over to their homes for dinner or get caught with them at a local restaurant. Imagine sitting at the same table with a known terrorist or mobster, even a reformed one.



Jesus ate with sinners

Jesus' social practices made Pharisees mutter. He was with known sinners all the time: a five-time divorcée at a well in Samaria, a short cheat of a tax collector named Zacchaeus in Jericho, a raving maniac in the region of the Gerasenes. He died between two crooks on the hill outside Jerusalem. Even his disciples were known sinners. Peter cursed and swore publicly. Matthew was a tax collector. John and James wished out loud to send heel-dragging Samaritans to hell.

The Pharisees were right about Jesus welcoming sinners. They were also right about his eating with them. He did it often. Some of these meals were gigantic events. Some were small and personal. Remember Easter evening and the Emmaus disciples? Later back in Jerusalem he asked dazed disciples in their evening cell, "Do you have anything here to eat?" And we hear, "They

gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence" (Luke 24:41-43).

This custom of eating with the disciples tipped them off that morning by the lake after Easter. "Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish" (John 21:12,13).

Jesus eats with those he loves

You eat with people you like. Jesus did too. He didn't just get caught in the company of sinners. He was glad to be there! Pharisees saw only people to be avoided at the dinner table. Jesus saw people he enjoyed being with. He saw sinners with bruised hearts and dirty lives. He loved them and saved them and proved it by eating with them.

With the terror of death leering in his face, Jesus said at his last supper

with the disciples, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:15,16).

Something special happens at our dinner tables. We see this demonstrated at our church potlucks. Our acceptance of each other at shared meals

can be a reflection of the love the early Christian church enjoyed too. "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46). This eating together must be a good thing. Jesus did it too.

And every time we go to the Lord's Supper we remember what it is we are doing. We are coming to the meal Jesus prepared for us and to which he invited us. We come as his guests. We come where he is truly present. We come thinking of the time when we will sit down knee to knee and elbow to elbow with him in heaven.

"Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And truly blessed are those who get to spend eternity with the one who welcomes sinners and eats with them.

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



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Terrorists and shootings still echoed in my mind, but all I could think of was Christmas. All I could picture was Christ.

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bits & pieces



Merry Christmas! 'Tis the season to be jolly. But not always. Sometimes earthly problems drag our Christmas spirit down. David Hein writes about his experience with this, using snippets from Christmas hymns to show that the true Christmas spirit does not depend on the month of a calendar (p. 8).



Travel around the world and into different cultures this Christmas through pictures from our missionaries showing how they celebrate Christmas (p. 20). "*c rozhdistvom Khristoviy*" (Russian for "[Congratulations] with the birth of Christ").



Our evangelism series continues with Bob Hartman writing about locating prospects (p. 10). After reading his article, turn to p. 12 and check out how a church jumped into active outreach using cotton candy, snow cones, and Bible storybooks.



How healthy is your soul? This year, Randy Hunter offered Bible studies so you could do a monthly check-up. We hope your faith has been strengthened by this "Soul Care." His last article is on p. 22. Next year, look for a new interactive Bible study series called "Jesus' miracles: Portraits of redemption."



We added an extra page with your comments on the roles of church and state (p. 19). President Gurgel also talks about the government—and how it can be considered God's servant (p. 31).



Every December issue, we print an index of the year's articles. But don't forget. Your favorite articles are also on-line. Check out the searchable index at <www.wels.net/sab/frm-nl.html>.

—JKW

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• WHATEVER

The real world and a real Christmas

Life is about having **faith** and **sharing** your faith with those who need to hear it.

Steve Kroiss

I spent last Christmas discovering the real world on a little island called Grenada. I didn't go to sightsee or take a vacation. I went as a missionary along with five other people. Together, we spent one week in a country surrounded by the densest jungle, the bluest ocean, and the most wonderful people.

Rolling hills, jungles, rivers, and waterfalls cover the island, making the landscape unreal. The warm atmosphere, the evening breeze off the ocean, the sound of the waves, and the salty air are just some of the things that I will never forget.

The people, though, impressed me the most. They measure life with enjoyment and happiness, not money. Dollars are supplemented with smiles. Their houses are simple, food can be scarce, money is always short, and shoes and good clothes are often a luxury.

Despite all this, they're still happy.

My group flew to Grenada because we wanted to bring people Christmas and God's Word. The people of Grenada welcomed us with open arms. We arrived late on Christmas Day, and the next morning we had kids at our door who wanted to play and talk with us. The children's faith was so inspiring. They often asked us to read to them from the children's Bible instead of playing cricket or football. I've never felt so needed. I knew God's Word, and they needed to hear it.

As I look back, I realize how my expectations of being a missionary were met, but also reversed. They became my teachers, and I became the student. I learned more from those people than I ever could have imagined. I learned that there's more to life than just a job or college. Life is about having faith and sharing it with those who need to hear it.

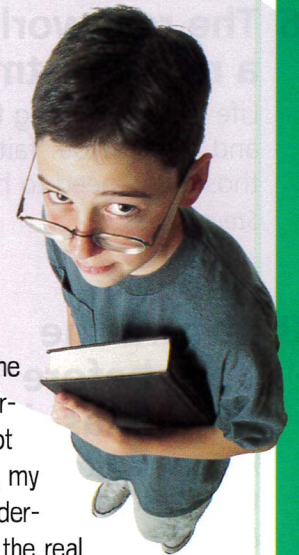
I have been taught all my life that the only thing important is having and sharing faith. Until last Christmas, I had not put my beliefs into practice. Last year, my beliefs became real, and I actually understood them. My eyes were opened to the real world, and I saw so many possibilities to share my faith. My trip to Grenada reemphasized to me just how important it is to give back to the church and the community.

I can't help but want to go back to Grenada. I was able to share my faith with people that I hardly knew, and it was the most awesome experience of my life. I've realized how much faith meant to those people and how much faith means to all Christians. Faith gives more than just hope. It gives a promise of a better life in heaven. A life where no one will go hungry or be deprived.

Sharing faith is especially fitting now. On Sept. 11, so many people who didn't know God died in the terrorist attacks. I would like to help out in some big way, but I can't take any active role in sharing my faith with the survivors or the families of the victims. Now I need to do what I can to witness where I can. I know this because I've been taught it all my life, and I witnessed it in Grenada.

To us, just reading the Bible might not seem so important, but to the people of Grenada, it made all the difference. Sitting down and reading to them from the Bible was the biggest gift that they could receive. I helped them to understand God's Word, and they helped me to understand why God gives us his Word. It's all because life is about having faith and sharing your faith with those who need to hear it.

Steve Kroiss, a senior at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wisconsin, is a member at Emanuel, New London, Wisconsin.



A tie that binds

Armin J. Panning

Support groups have become a common phenomenon in our society. People band together to combat all sorts of problems. Whether it be people trying to lose weight, break an addiction, or cope with some trauma in their lives, all find that there is strength in numbers. In the wake of the tragic destruction of the World Trade Center and the damage to the Pentagon, our nation is in the process of forming a worldwide support system against terrorism.

The general principle of strength in numbers has an application also in church life. The faith of an individual Christian standing alone is likely to burn low or go out entirely. There's a reason for that. We have powerful and crafty enemies. St. Paul says, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).

In the spiritual realm Satan is as much a terrorist against our souls as earthly enemies are in the secular realm. There is great benefit in jointly resisting him in the company of fellow believers. That is true not only on the congregational level, but nationally and internationally as well.

It may not be well known, but there is in place among us an international support group of confessional Lutherans. It's the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

Founded in 1993, the CELC is a direct successor to the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, which dissolved in 1961. Like its predecessor, this conference is an organization of *confessional* Lutheran church bodies. Unlike its predecessor, which was limited to North America, the CELC is an international body of 16 confessional Lutheran churches located on six continents.

As its constitution states, a major pur-

pose of this organization is "to provide a forum for the members' mutual encouragement, spiritual growth, and strengthening in faith and confession" (Constitution III.2).

On Apr. 23-25, 2002, this Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference plans to meet in Gothenburg, Sweden, for its fourth triennial meeting. In keeping with its stated purpose of providing spiritual edification, five essays treating the person and work of Christ are being prepared. The conference theme is "Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever."

Each of the 16 member churches can send two voting delegates, plus up to four advisory delegates. In addition, guests and observers have attended previous meetings and are welcome at the April meeting.

Although the initiative for founding the CELC lay with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and WELS, it is intended that all member churches participate equally. For example, at the first three triennial meetings, theologians from our sister churches in such diverse areas as Sweden and Germany, Zambia and Malawi, Australia and Japan, Mexico and Peru, presented fine essays.

One area in which younger and smaller church bodies find themselves at a disadvantage, however, is in covering expenses for attending meetings. Hence, subsidy from the CELC treasury and other sources will be necessary for some time to enable them to attend.

Whether your participation in the CELC is to pray for its success, to attend its meetings, or to support it with your gifts, your involvement is helpful in strengthening a tie that binds confessional Lutherans throughout the world.

Armin Panning, a member at St. Matthew, Port Washington, Wisconsin, is a professor emeritus at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

There is in place among us an international support group of confessional Lutherans.

Information and registration materials for the 2002 Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference can be obtained from the CELC Planning Committee at 1833 Woodview Cir, Port Washington WI 53074; <panninga@wls.wels.net>.

I heard the bells before

After a hard day, a pastor rediscovers that the true Christmas spirit does not depend on the month of a calendar or the mood of a nation. It arises from the Word of a loving God.

David L. Hein

“Joy to the World”? I didn’t want to hear “Joy to the World”! It was only October! But as soon as Boston Store moved out some of their fall fashions and decorations, they moved in the trees and the ornaments, the snowmen and the Santas.

And the music started. They must figure that a few chestnuts roasted on an open fire by Frosty and Rudolph would get everyone in the mood to shop. I’ve never eaten a chestnut. I don’t like Frosty. And I wasn’t ready for Rudolph. For 25 years I have stood by the rule in my house that there will be no Christmas music played before Thanksgiving. So when the Muzak was about to “Deck the Halls,” I escaped to my car.

As I melded with homebound traffic, talk radio shared with me the latest news from “the war on terrorism.” More funerals were being conducted for more of the unfound Trade Center victims. One commentator reflected on the difficulties some of these families would face in the coming holidays. His partner agreed. I turned to the oldies station.

I stopped by the home of one of my board members who is a retired police officer. Twenty-four hours earlier six bullets had whizzed by him as some would-be car thieves abandoned their hopes of making off with the neighbor’s vehicle. He stepped

out of his house on their attempt, and the Lord’s angel worked overtime in getting him to the backyard swiftly and safely. Shaken but thankful, we spoke of God’s mercy, hugged, and I headed back to home and church.

As Christmas approaches, God’s people need to speak up, to bring some good out of tragedy.

My oldies station betrayed me as I was surrounded with a chorus of “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” A local dinner theater was advertising their “Biggest Christmas Ever” and cautioned listeners to get their tickets early. I parked the car and made my way to the office to write my Christmas article for *Forward in Christ* magazine.

A note was taped to my door to please print out several more copies of the funeral service from last week. The Lord had called one of our organists home. I took the note into the office with me and placed it onto my desk . . . right next to material for our Sunday School’s “Candy Cane Christmas” that I also had to get at tonight. Great. I didn’t exactly feel like working on Christmas materials right now. All I could

think of was terrorists and shootings and organists no longer here. How could I think of Christmas?

“And in despair I bowed my head.”

A line from a poem popped into my mind that mirrored my own mood. Where had I heard it before? Curiosity shifted my attitude as I fanned through a few books. Not there. “And in despair I bowed my head . . . ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said.” Not just a poem. A song!

“*And in despair I bowed my head, ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said, For hate is strong and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men.*”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow penned those words as part of a Christmas carol during another national tragedy: the Civil War. Perhaps you’ve heard the opening verse:

“*I heard the bells on Christmas day Their old familiar carols play, And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth, good will to men.*”

Even after the news that his son was seriously wounded in the conflict, Longfellow thought that focusing on Christmas in the midst of crisis was a natural thing to do. The true Christmas spirit does not depend on the month of a calendar

Christmas day!

or the mood of a nation. It arises from the Word of a loving God who promises hope and help for his people in time of need.

*“Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel That
mourns in lonely exile here Until
the Son of God appear.”*

In recent weeks this nation has talked more about “God” than at any other time in my memory. Stadium prayer services led by talk-show hosts strive to point people to “God,” but the cross-denominational, politically-correct efforts give no direction as to whom they are really addressing such prayers.

As Christmas approaches, God’s people need to speak up, to bring some good out of tragedy. We can point people to the living Lord who is well aware of the hardships of life and knows firsthand the challenge that is death. Many songs of Christmas draw our attention to sin’s reality, to sin’s consequence, to sin’s pain. And then they draw our eyes to a star, to a manger, to a baby. “What Child Is This?” we ask, and the answer resounds: “This? This is Christ the King!”¹ “He was born to save.”² “He is the Son of God, love’s pure light.”³

“Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till he appeared, and the soul felt its worth.”⁴ The Lord



gave our souls true worth when he sent Jesus to pay the price for your sinful soul and mine. How could the Son of God move so willingly, so lovingly from manger to cross?

“I wonder as I wander out under the sky, How Jesus the Savior did come for to die, For poor, ordn’ry people like you and like I. I wonder as I wander out under the sky.”

But this is the joy of Christmas: Jesus came for me! And I know he’ll come to take me home. There is no time of year when this message is not needed! My joy has its roots in that gracious gift of God and has its branches reaching into the eternal joy of heaven.

“Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay Close by me forever, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, And take us to heaven, to live with thee there.”⁵

For I am convinced that neither crisis nor tragedy, neither bombing nor shooting, neither disease nor funeral, neither death nor life, nor anything else in all creation can

separate us from the love of God that we have been shown in the gift of Christ Jesus our Lord (see Romans 8).

It was nearly midnight. Time to shut things down. Terrorists and shootings still echoed in my mind, but all I could think of was Christmas. All I could picture was Christ. I quietly entered my house, picked out a CD, put on my headphones, and sat back:

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King!”

Okay, it was October. So what!

“Do you hear what I hear?”

David Hein is pastor at Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 

¹What Child Is This? (*Christian Worship* 67)

²Good Christian Friends Rejoice

³Silent Night (CW 60)

⁴O Holy Night!

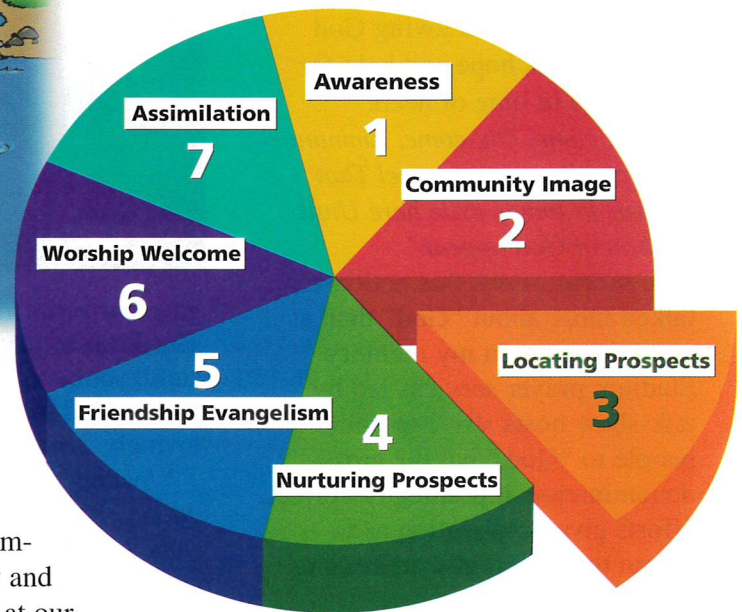
⁵Away in a Manger (CW 68)

FISHING FOR PROSPECTS



How do you go about locating the unchurched who live near your church so that you can add names to the church's prospect list?

Robert C. Hartman



“Hi, I’m Bob Hartman from St. Marcus Lutheran Church on the corner of Palmer and Garfield. We are in the neighborhood today to extend an invitation to our Holy Week and Easter worship services. Do you have a church where you regularly go to worship God?”

“One question we are asking everyone today as we think about the message of Easter is, ‘Do you believe in life after death?’ Would your answer be, ‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ or are you unsure about this?”

“We invite you to join us for our Easter breakfast between 8 and 9:30 AM and our festival worship service at 10 AM.”

Locating the unchurched

How do you go about locating the unchurched who live near your church so that you can add names to the church's prospect list?

Some would answer, “We emphasize friendship evangelism, encouraging our members to invite family and friends to join them at our church.” No doubt, friendship evangelism is the most common way (and some would also say the most successful way) for a congregation to add names to the prospect list.

When a fisherman puts a line with bait on it into the water, he has the opportunity to catch one fish at a time. If, however, he puts several lines into the water, there is the opportunity to catch several fish at one time.

For this reason, when “fishing for prospects,” I encourage putting many lines into the water. Use a wide variety of methods for locating prospects in order to identify larger numbers of unchurched people.

Why include neighborhood surveys in person or by phone? There are several reasons. Today, many of our churches have become “islands” in their communities. Members no longer live close to the church, and the new neighbors may not be acquainted with the congregation, nor understand that they have an open invitation to attend. A neighborhood survey says, “We care about the people who live near our church.” A neighborhood survey will uncover prospects that will not surface by other methods.

When conducting a neighborhood survey, I find it valuable to connect

it to an upcoming church event, as it provides a natural opportunity for an invitation to something that may just catch the interest of people.

I also find it important to include a question that can lead to witness. If, for example, you were to ask people about their belief in an afterlife, however they answer the question, you can say, "Tell me what makes you say that." This may give you the opportunity for a personal witness, by adding, "May I share with you how I would answer this question?" This may provide a natural transition to talk about the Savior Jesus, who has provided life and salvation for all people by his life, death, and resurrection. You could say, "When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, he opened the door to everlasting life for you, me, and everyone."

It really doesn't matter whether the person has a church or not when asking a question that can lead to personal witness. I look for an opportunity to witness to anyone and everyone, but it is only the unchurched to whom I would extend an invitation to attend my church.

Goings and comings

Who are those unchurched people? They include neighbors, friends, work associates, and schoolmates. They may include members of my family. They include those who do not understand and believe that Jesus is the one and only Savior. They include those who may have once had a church connection, but now are unsheltered people who have no one who is currently caring for their spiritual well-being.

Congregations can use both "go" and "come" strategies to identify the unchurched and add names to the prospect list.

Go strategies include conducting a door-to-door, telephone, or mail sur-

vey; hosting a booth at a fair, in the mall, or on the street during "sidewalk days;" reaching out to new parents and new residents; and making contacts with the unchurched in various institutions. Contacts with the institutionalized sometimes lead to networking contacts with family and friends. Congregations are also using their Web sites to make contact with area residents. A variation on the neighborhood survey is to ask members to "farm" their own street or subdivision, reaching out to new residents and current residents who are unchurched.

When "fishing for prospects," I encourage putting many lines into the water. Use a wide variety of methods for locating prospects in order to identify larger numbers of unchurched people.

Come strategies include hosting congregational events to which members can invite family and friends. The two most common events to which people are invited and often accept the invitation are Christmas Eve and Easter. Both are occasions when the unchurched often expect to be invited.

A Friendship or Open House Sunday are two other opportunities. Special children's events like vacation Bible school or a Christmas/Easter for Kids Saturday event will draw the interest of people. My congregation has an annual Juneteenth Day celebration with an outdoor

service, concert, and barbecue. Juneteenth Day is the recognition of the emancipation proclamation, which was first received by the slaves some six months after it was made. It is a great occasion to talk about our real freedom in Christ.

Congregations can also host Bible studies and seminars on topics that will catch the attention of the unchurched. Although the 16th Sunday after Pentecost won't catch their attention, a Sunday theme of "All about suffering" or "How do I get God to help me when I really need it?" may just do it.

Planning

When planning a church event, it is important to ask, "How can we promote this event in a way that will catch the attention of the unchurched?" Remember, unchurched people don't think like church people, nor do they respond in the same way believers do. Although believers respond to the gospel, the unchurched typically respond for personal reasons: because of a crisis, a need, a curiosity, or just because they were asked.

When Jesus says, "Go, make disciples," he is telling us to find all the unchurched in our area so that we may share with them the good news that he is the Savior of all. How many names are on your church's prospect list? How many names might you be able to add in the coming year? And, what will you do to find the unchurched in your church's community?



Bob Hartman, former administrator for the Commission on Evangelism, is serving as interim chaplain for Europe.



How an old church found a new way to accomplish God's ancient mission.

Nathan R. Pope

Miracles and cotton candy. What do the two have in common?

They attract people, that's what. And that's the thing to do when Christians want to tell people about the good news of Jesus.

Which means, if miracles are not an option, cotton candy might be something to add to your church's evangelism outreach. First Lutheran, Racine, Wis., did just that, combining sweet treats and a block party in a first-time event for the 152-year-old church.

First Lutheran in downtown Racine is one of the oldest churches from the original Wisconsin Synod.

It is as typical or as stereotypical as any WELS parish, right down to its

parochial school and white majority membership.

Oh, and it's typical also in its frustrated desire to share the gospel with the unchurched.

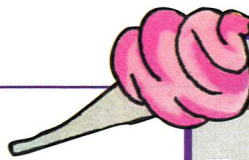
Although First Lutheran's Christian day school attracts many outsiders, they are mainly churched—Lutherans from other synods, Protestants, and Roman Catholics. So, how does a Lutheran parish reach the unchurched who live within the sound of its colossal church bell, but won't answer its call to worship? This question nagged the Racine congregation.

In the past, First Lutheran answered largely with the traditional vacation Bible school. The neighborhood was canvassed. Invitations were sent out. But only a few

non-member children ever came, and none returned. Year after year.

Then circumstances challenged the way the church did things.

A Racine police officer, Julia Burney, announced her intention to open a reading center for the community's inner-city children. Already made famous by Oprah Winfrey's Angel Network and NBC's *Today Show* for delivering books to children in her patrol car, Burney enlisted the financial support of big-name corporations to build her center, called Cops 'N Kids. This would be a place where children could feel safe to come and learn to read with books and computers. Burney announced that her organization was moving into a



vacant office building two houses down from First Lutheran.

Then came an invitation to the church from Burney. Would First Lutheran be interested in celebrating the grand opening of her Cops 'N Kids Reading Center by co-hosting a block party? You bet.

The church's evangelism committee went to work. Months of planning, the involvement of more than two dozen volunteers, and the donation of many dollars paid off on June 9, 2001, when First Lutheran closed off the streets, rolled out the welcome wagon, and treated the children of the neighborhood to cotton candy and Bible storybooks.

"We felt we could open doors by giving Bible storybooks to children and Bibles to teenagers, parents, and adults," explains Jay Gottschalk, chairman of the church's evangelism committee. "We also offered an open house for our church and crafts in our gym."

And the children came.

"Kids, kids, and more kids," answers Tom Sieker with a huge smile, when asked to give his impression of the block party.

Tom; his wife, Kitty; and their two daughters ran a real welcome wagon—a fully-equipped concession stand on wheels that they operate as a family business. A retired police officer himself, Sieker volunteered to have his "Wheel Tweet" on hand at the block party to dispense cotton candy, popcorn, and snow cones to the children free of charge. Church members donated the costs of the refreshments and the accompanying books.

How did the children get the treats and books? Volunteers inside the church were waiting to give them packets of goodies. Inside each packet was information about the church, a

children's Bible storybook, and a coupon for a free cotton candy, soda, or snow cone. About 300 packets were given away!

How did so many children find out about the free books and treats? And how did they know where to find them? "The kids just spread the word," says one church member. "There was no advance publicity. We just put the word out on the street through some kids where to get the books and coupons, and the word spread. The best part was, we didn't find one Bible storybook discarded on the street. They went home."

Arts and crafts in the church's gymnasium also proved a big draw. "At least 150 kids came in," says craft volunteer Joan Hill. "You lost count." Hill helped children make necklaces and refrigerator magnets in the shape of a cross. One boy made 18 necklaces to take home. So many children came that the supplies nearly gave out, and the volunteers were hard-pressed to keep up with the demand.

But volunteers didn't spend all their time crafting. One young woman told Hill, "We've never been in here before, but I'm really here for you to pray for me. I have six children, and I need someone to pray for me." Church members who staffed a small petting zoo, gave guided tours in the church, and handed out children's books, heard similar stories and found themselves telling strangers that, yes, you can be a member of this church if you would like.

The block party and open house lasted from 11 AM to 5 PM. Many people got their first inside look at a building they walk past every day. Many were impressed by its beauty



First Lutheran, Racine, Wis., co-hosted a block party in conjunction with the opening of a community reading center (above). Neighborhood children enjoyed arts & crafts in the church's gymnasium (below) and took home a Bible storybook.



and said so. Others expressed appreciation for the friendliness of the open house.

Was it successful? Consider one boy's story. Attracted by a line of children standing outside the church, he looked inside and asked, "What's going on?" He said that he had never been inside a church. He also said that he didn't know who Jesus was, but he listened attentively as the old story was explained to him. Nearly 300 other children also went home that day with storybooks that told them about God's love in Jesus.

So, yes, it was a successful day. The Word was sown, again and again, which is what Jesus commands us to do. And he will do the converting of souls, according to his good pleasure.



Nathan Pope is pastor at First Lutheran, Racine, Wisconsin.

David facing GOLIATH

Michigan and Northland Lutheran high schools may be small, but they have an all-powerful ally—God.

Betsy Lentz

Satan throws challenges and temptations in our path at every turn, perhaps never more than when our faith is young and vulnerable, our minds are eager to learn, and we are growing into a new realm called adulthood. Then especially, our children need the support of the Word, as taught through everyday living and Christian education at our WELS high schools.

These schools come in all shapes and sizes. Two of the smallest in student population include Michigan Lutheran High School and Northland Lutheran High School.

Changing to meet current needs

Michigan Lutheran High School (MLHS) in St. Joseph is currently facing some extreme hardships. MLHS is home to 104 students, a significant decline over the past several years. Enrollments at area grade schools have also dropped, feeding fewer students at the high school level.

Money is also a hurdle. Many of our schools are seeing declining



Michigan Lutheran High School students help with yard work.

congregational support, which places a greater burden on parents as tuition rates go up. As a result, Michigan Lutheran has made many cutbacks. Currently 85% of the MLHS budget is personnel, leaving little room for further reductions.

But Steve Zanto, principal at MLHS, views the small school as David facing Goliath.

For one, a small student body allows the faculty to genuinely know each student and his family. MLHS teacher Deneal Sperle says, "I know all of my students well, and I feel

that this is a distinct advantage in ministering to them."

Music director Joel Ungemach adds, "The same student who put in the winning basket on Saturday evening is very often singing as part of the choir the next morning in church. What a wonderful blessing to be allowed to use all of your talents to the glory of God."

Also, with the strength of the Lord at their side, those at Michigan Lutheran plan to make changes at their school. They realigned their staff to allow one teacher to take on the duties of development director. They expect to initiate a capital campaign within the next several months. They plan to expand their curriculum to include more course options, and they are hoping to allow students to earn credits through local technical schools and community colleges. The faculty, staff, teachers, and parents will stand as David did and face Goliath, strong in the knowledge that the Lord is with them.

Michigan Lutheran High School

Located in: St. Joseph, Mich.
Established: 1970
Size in 2001: 103
Web site: <www.remcl1.k12.mi.us/michluth>

Northland Lutheran High School

Located in: Mosinee, Wis.
Established: 1979
Size in 2001: 131
Web site: <www.nlhs.org>

Overcoming roadblocks

Across mighty Lake Michigan stands Northland Lutheran High School in Mosinee, Wis. Northland was established in the fall of 1979. Finances have been a constant concern, as they are in most schools. Building programs failed, and the school was near closure several times.

With God's help, though, this David school defeated its Goliath. Northland is blessed with a growing enrollment, currently at 131 students. The student body has increased 10 to 15 percent each year for the past six years. Those at Northland enjoy a new school building and have plans to expand that as well.

"This ministry would not be thriving today if so many dedicated Christian people had not stuck with it, persevered, and trusted God," explains Principal Rick Grundman. He thanks these people and reminds each of us that providing a Christian education is worth the price and the effort.

However, Grundman sees growth as a double-edged sword. Although adding more students eases financial concerns, Northland is trying to hold on to some of the attributes of a small school. "As we grow we struggle to keep hold of that small school/family atmosphere that is what makes our

ministry so special and effective," says Grundman.

Proving it's worthwhile

Proof that the costs and effort are indeed worthwhile can be seen in all of our WELS high schools. Students display their faith and love of the Lord every time they serve in our churches, whether as members of congregational choirs or bands or as Sunday school teachers.

Most students also feel comfortable showing and sharing their faith.

Last year Northland was touched by tragedy when a student and his parents were killed in a car accident. Northland's students showed that they learned the lesson of God's love from our Lord, Jesus. They extended a warm hand and shared their faith with the young man who was driving the car that hit their friends.

Likewise, the girls' basketball team at Michigan Lutheran was a powerful witness throughout the whole season last year. Before each game, they sang "Our God is An Awesome God," giving glory to God for bestowing them with athletic talents. After an

fourth of an 11-part series



Two members of Northland Lutheran High School's class of 2004, (from left) Alicia Glapinski and Marlana Moss.

outstanding season, they played their rivals for the district championship. The Michigan Lutheran girls lost, but displayed a strong Christian attitude.

Valuing the students

A resounding message can be heard from every teacher and faculty member in both of these tight-knit schools. The students are the reason they continue to work so hard. Seeing our children grow in faith is a generous reward for the efforts they put forth. They enjoy working among the families, the congregations, the boosters, and school supporters, but without a doubt the students are their favorites in serving the Lord.

Grundman sums it up well when he says, "God's young people need a place to be fed, to be nurtured, to be challenged, to see Christian examples living and breathing before them, to be given tools to continue to grow in faith, and to be excited about serving him." Our children find all of these things at our Lutheran high schools.

Betsy Lentz is a member at St. Martin, Watertown, South Dakota.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

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 are not legal

**With all legal compulsion removed,
Lutherans live life with a confidence based in the gospel.**

Wayne D. Mueller

When the Social Security deficit grows, Congress seeks new funding regulations. Kids are speeding down Main Street, so the city council passes an ordinance lowering the speed limit and raising fines. When drug trafficking increases, so do prosecutions and arrests.

As corporate profits tail off, management institutes a restructuring plan. Lagging sales prompt new procedures for the sales team. Sexual misbehavior hurts the workplace environment, so misconduct lawsuits start flying.

When grades fall at school, teachers initiate new homework guidelines. When campus behavior becomes unruly, the dean issues restrictions on activity, lock downs, or even expulsion. When discipline suffers at home, mom and dad put their foot down. Privileges are withheld, curfew hours are instated, and allowances reduced.

Are you getting the picture? Most of the world has a one-word solution for handling all problems: law. In government, business, school, and family, legal fixes are the rule. Got a problem? Pass a new law, post new guidelines, change the rules, increase the fines, toughen the punishment, offer incentives, threaten retribution, plan to restructure.

The law has limited powers

But law is severely limited in its ability to change conduct. Laws and tougher enforcement have not stopped speeding. Restructured corporations find themselves restructuring again in a few years. Parents soon learn that restrictions change children's conduct for a while but not their attitude.

When churches use law rather than gospel to motivate right action, they abuse the greater spiritual tool God has given to the church.

Although most of the world seeks to solve problems with legal carrots and sticks, Lutherans by contrast are not legal. By not legal, we do not mean that Lutherans seek to break the law or encourage others to do so. Rather, Lutherans aren't legal in the sense that they do not take a legal approach to solving their own or the world's problems. We do not rely on law to bring about real and lasting change in people's thoughts and actions.

The reason the law is powerless to bring about meaningful change, Paul explained, is that "it was weakened by the sinful nature" (Romans 8:3). While the world recites its work-righteous mantra, "There is a little good in all of us," Lutherans humbly join Paul's confession: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Romans 7:18).

Moralizing abuses the gospel

The tendency toward legal solutions is not confined to the unregenerate world. Regrettably, many Christian denominations use law to motivate right living. They emphasize legal recourse against abortion and homosexuality. Their pulpits prioritize Jesus as an example of morality over Jesus as the Savior from immorality.

Such churches share a denial of original sin and its impact on the human heart. In their minds, every person has a remnant of good that empowers right moral choices, even the decision to believe. But God's Word allows no wiggle room on the topic of inherited sin. Paul wrote, "We were by nature [the] objects of [God's] wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Original sin effectively makes us unresponsive to law. "We know that

the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” (Romans 7:14).

We can expect the government and other secular institutions to pursue legal solutions to their problems. The reasoned use of law is the only tool God gives them to carry out their work (Romans 13:4). But when churches use law rather than gospel to motivate right action, they abuse the greater spiritual tool God has given to the church. This wrong use of law by Christian teachers is called moralizing.

Happily not legal

To say Lutherans can be recognized by their non-legal approach to motivating morality is not to suggest that we don’t use the law. We teach God’s law, and we apply it at full strength. But Lutherans use law for the purpose God assigned it. Christians preach law, not to change people’s actions, but to point out their sin and their need for a Savior. “Through the law we become conscious of sin” (Romans 3:20).

When the law is used for God’s purpose of convicting the sinner and crushing the old Adam, the Holy Spirit uses the good news of Jesus to motivate right moral action. In the gospel, Lutherans are moved to do the right thing, not out of a sense of obligation or fear of punishment, but for the sake of Christ. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13).

With our sins forgiven and the threats of the law removed, Lutherans are motivated toward right living. “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weak-

ened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering” (Romans 8:3). With all legal compulsion removed, Lutherans live life with a confidence based in the gospel: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

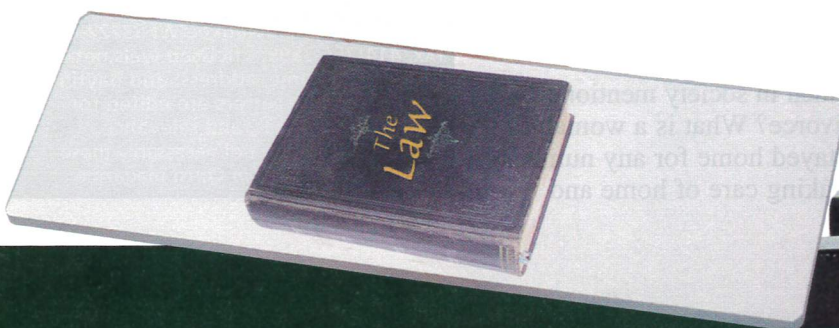
To be sure, we Lutherans have to struggle against moralizing like all other Christians. Trying to get quick results by laying down the law is an attractive shortcut. Parents, teachers, pastors—we all fall into this trap. We scold and nag instead of seeking repentance. We seek shortcuts to moral improvement by threatening punishment instead of proclaiming forgiveness. We try to correct wrongs by causing shame rather than removing guilt. Whenever we talk about sin without supplying the words or context of Jesus’ forgiveness, we are moralizing.

But the permanent cure for our moralizing is the same as the cure for all human shortcomings. We have to stop using God’s law as a quickie solution to improve our worldly life. The law’s main purpose is to mirror my sin and make me hunger for eternal salvation. It reflects my inborn sinful tendencies as well as my actual immoralities. It convinces me that my best efforts offer no access to God or everlasting life.

When my heart is on its knees, Jesus knocks at its

door. With full and free forgiveness through the blood of his Son, God moves me to happy and willing obedience. Without guilt or threat of punishment, I make my life’s pledge: “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free” (Psalm 119:32). Paul called for this willing response to the gospel: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

Wayne Mueller is first vice president of WELS.





Your recent issue [Oct.] featuring coverage of the WELS synod convention, outreach emphasis, interesting items and anecdotes relating to home and world mission work, and especially articles reflecting our sound Christ-centered message, was truly outstanding. As a former contributor to the *Northwestern Lutheran* it was great to see how all can now be effectively presented in one monthly issue. Keep up the mission spirit! We've got what it takes—and it's worth sharing!

*Ernst H. Wendland
Two Rivers, Wisconsin*

"They sing because they are afraid" [Oct.] was a powerful article that moved me to tears. Heartfelt thanks to a gracious God who also enables me to sing because I'm not afraid, and to Luke Werre for sharing his father's beautiful—and timely—article.

*Ginny Bryer
North Fort Myers, Florida*

I am responding to the article "Dear teachers . . ." written by Laurie Biedenbender [Aug.]

These thoughts and feelings are many I have also had, but have not often expressed to our dedicated, unselfish, loving Christian day school teachers.

I read the article to my daughter and son who are pursuing the teaching and preaching ministries. I made a copy for my daughter [when she left] for Martin Luther College, to serve as a constant reminder of the importance of the mission field she has chosen.

Thank you, Laurie, for saying it all!

*Linda Nottling
Watertown, Wisconsin*

I would like to add a comment to the issue of marketing the church ["Marketing in evangelism," Aug.]

The word "marketing" is a contemporary way of saying outreach. We have been instructed by Jesus himself to "go into all the world."

We are to take the Word to the unbelieving world, and that is plain and simple marketing. So it would behoove us all to market the church by making each and every congregation more visible in the community—whether it be door-to-door witnessing, newspaper and TV advertising, or whatever it takes. God has given us the tools to market his church. How disappointed he must be to see all of us not using them.

*Ken Eppler
Carlsbad, California*

I am writing in reference to Pastor Westendorf's "Less is still less" [Sept.]

From personal experience I know that many families require both parents to work in order to meet their family's basic needs. And I know both men and women who support their families on less than \$15,000 a year. Likewise, many of these people, both husband and wife, are holding down second and third jobs just to make ends meet. . . .

Also on women: If women are healthier by choosing not to smoke, what about men? Why weren't smoking men in society mentioned?

And divorce? What is a woman to do who stayed home for any number of years taking care of home and

children only to find out one day that the husband has decided to file for a divorce? She now has to find a job that is most likely guaranteed to be a minimum-wage paying job because she stayed home to care for family. . . .

If you are going to stigmatize women on any issue, you better be correcting the men! If men are to be held responsible as the head of the family and women, as Christ is the head of the church, men need to be held accountable!

I work in a customer-based job and agree with your observations on our "stuff"-oriented American culture. People need to check to see where their priorities are. If it is not with their Lord, then some major life changes need to be made in that family.

*Laura V. Borchin
Flower Mound, Texas*

We just completed reading Professor Armin Panning's editorial comment "All these things . . ." [Sept.] What a breath of fresh air!

Having recently perused the pages of the 2001 *Book of Reports and Memorials*, we were disconcerted and alarmed by what appeared to be an inordinate amount of ink given to the issue of called workers' salaries.

The scriptural references that we called workers, both active and retired, should keep in mind are those cited by Panning.

*Arthur L. Hackbarth
Lake City, Minnesota*

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.

The September “editor’s pen” asked for your thoughts on the subject of church and state. Here’s what you wrote:

When our forefathers established this country, the intent was to keep government out of the churches, NOT churches/religion out of government and public institutions. What disturbs me more than the fact that this concept has been deliberately twisted by some, is that we as a (Christian) society refuse to stand up for the truth.

*Rick Ewert
Medford, Wisconsin*

As an orthodox Lutheran with 13 years of experience as an elected councilman, mayor, county commissioner, and state senator, I’ll offer an observation.

Many voters have a superficial knowledge as to how church and state are to be separated. They, even some Christians, want to insist that a candidate avoid biblical references and couch what he believes to be moral imperatives in humanistic phraseology.

Footnote: I declined and lost a 1976 race for Congress. The incumbent got less than .5% more votes than I. Pundits said my open opposition to abortion caused the loss.

*Ed Scott
Denver, Colorado*

Jesus taught that his kingdom was entirely different from human kingdoms with their armies, borders, seats of government, and monarchies, dictators, presidents, prime ministers, congresses, and parliaments, which come and go and rise and fall. His kingdom is described as spiritual, borderless, and eternal. He is the only ruling authority. We are his grateful subjects and ministers, who use the Word and sacraments he has given us as our only means of strengthening and extending his kingdom.

To reinforce and apply this principle, Jesus did a number of things. He

upheld earthly rulers and governments and demonstrated that they had a useful role to play in society. He encouraged his fellow Jews to pay the taxes they owed to Rome. He himself paid his Roman taxes. He dealt in a kind and loving manner with Roman soldiers and officials. He refused to be dragged into a condemnation of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, even when Pilate killed Jews from his part of the country in the temple area (Luke 13). Never once is a criticism of Rome on the part of Jesus recorded in Scripture. He forbade his followers to use physical force. He upheld the God-given right of the rulers of the kingdoms of this world to use force, even the force of the death penalty upon himself. He made a big distinction between the nature and the operation of human, earthly kingdoms and his divine and spiritual kingdom. Religions reject Jesus’ wisdom at their peril.

*Thomas Haar
Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

Is it not dangerous that the authority behind “separation of church and state”—a phrase not found in the Constitution, but merely uttered by some judge—is that self-same state, now increasingly run by those hostile to Christianity?

*Gary Stevensen
Shakopee, Minnesota*

Many United States judges are interpreting the meaning of laws according to personal ideology. The U.S. Constitution might as well be declared obsolete in light of some of the decisions by our judicial system. Society attacks anything that resembles church-supported ideas or moral values, and many in the judicial system take its side. Rulings are being made that declare “separation from religion.” I see the decisions being handed down in many of our civil and moral judicial cases tending to favor those who abhor those things that are decent and morally right.

Will this be reversed? Only if people’s hearts are changed. Morality and faith cannot be forced on people by laws. It takes the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of people to effect a change.

*Dave Dahlke
Port Orchard, Washington*

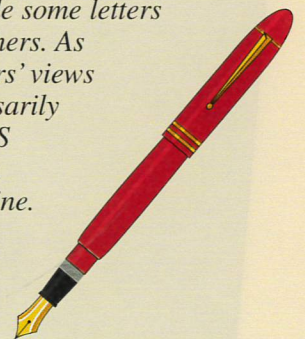
I am surprised that the question of the separation of church and state appears to be so difficult for many. I think the answer is simple—let’s look at ourselves in the mirror and remember the priorities our Savior taught. We need to put Christ first and earthly matters second. To that end we must keep a distance from the state and ensure the complete and unadulterated freedom to keep Christ number one. . . .

We enjoy tremendous religious freedoms in the United States. These religious freedoms are easier to maintain, in part, because in America, the church and the state have traditionally kept to their biblically assigned roles. Once these roles become crossed, there is little to keep the state from regulating how a church does its business as it operates outside of its biblically assigned role. The more duties we take on from the state, the more the state will be able to regulate the church.

Church bodies can’t be citizens and should not try to influence government any more than government influences church bodies.

*Daniel Juffernbruch
Barrington, Illinois*

Due to space constraints we did not include some letters and edited others. As always, writers’ views are not necessarily those of WELS or Forward in Christ magazine.





Christmas around the world

WELS members spreading the gospel in our world missions know that giving glory to God comes in all languages, at Christmas and throughout the year.

RUSSIA

In Russia, we have a Christmas Eve children's service just like most churches in America. However, in Russia, Christmas is celebrated on Jan. 7, not Dec. 25. Last year after the service, the children sang a special song (composed by a member of our church). The song highlighted how Jesus is the Savior of every nation on earth. Children dressed in costumes to represent different nationalities (right).



The week of Christmas was one of the coldest of the year. Despite temperatures around 45 degrees below zero, more than 80 children participated in the services. Here children are gathered in front of the church after the service (left).

—Michael Ewart,
missionary in Iskitim, Russia

MALAWI

In Malawi, Christmas comes at the time of the hot season and when daylight is the longest, so our Sunday school children are often dressed in shorts.

We do have a Sunday school Christmas service, but not at night because night services are difficult for our people to attend. And we don't always have it on Christmas Eve.

We do have a Christmas tree in our Epiphany church in Blantyre, though Christmas trees are not common in Malawi. Our service is a joint English-Chichewa service, and the Christmas gospel from St. Luke is read or recited in both languages. We sing our traditional Christmas songs in English, but the Chichewa language has fewer well-known Christmas songs. One that the people do love is "Taonani, M'kholamo" ("See in the manger").

The picture shows our Sunday school children telling by word and drama the Christmas gospel. The weather may be hot, the traditions very low key by U.S. standards, and the service not well attended because many of our city people are in their home villages with relatives, but the good news of Jesus Christ our Savior is always the same.



—Ron Uhlhorn,
urban missionary in Blantyre, Malawi

BRAZIL

Although Brazil is known for its musical rhythms, not many Christmas songs are particular to their culture. Most of the songs we sing at Christmas are carols familiar to our American ears, with the lyrics translated into Portuguese. Naturally, though, we don't sing songs such as "White Christmas," with the holiday season coming in the Southern Hemisphere's summer. In this picture, a small choir is singing for our Christmas Eve service at Monte Belo Lutheran Church in Gravatai.

—Guy Marquardt,
missionary in Gravatai, Brazil

JAPAN

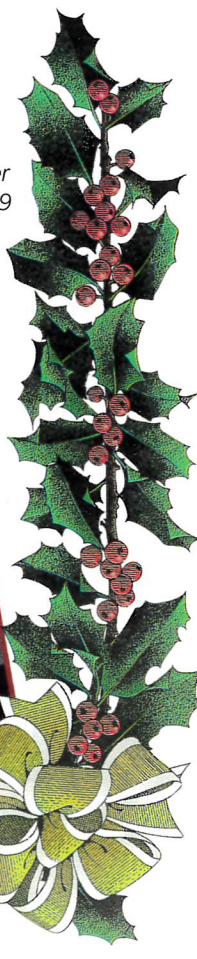


Did you ever have one of those moments when you wished you could stop time? Mine happened on Christmas Eve 1998. Julie Majerus (a fellow English as a Foreign Language teacher) and I sat in the back of the tiny, eight-pewed church in Ashikaga, Japan, watching members, students, friends, and even new faces join in celebrating the true meaning of Christmas.

All December shopping malls throughout Japan were filled with garland, ribbons, and familiar Christmas tunes. But no Jesus could be found! Not this night! The church was packed with nearly 60 people, all gathered to hear the wondrous story of Jesus' birth, some for the first time. Joy filled my heart, and tears filled my eyes. The service ended with the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight. It was the most beautiful sound I ever heard. Giving glory to God comes in all languages!

Pictured above (from left) are Etsuko, Mari, and Hideo, first-time visitors to our church, who enjoyed food and fellowship after the service.

—Marcie Tillema,
WELS English as a Foreign Language teacher
in Ashikaga, Japan, from May 1998-May 1999





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

Jack Swigert, Congressman-elect from Colorado and former Apollo 13 pilot, lay critically ill. Cancer was waging its final assault on his body. With him was one of the busiest and most powerful men in Washington, Senator Bill Armstrong. Every night he came as a committed Christian friend, doing what he would not delegate, much as he disliked hospitals.

One night Armstrong leaned over and spoke to his friend, "Jack, you're going to be all right. God loves you. I love you. You are surrounded by friends who are praying for you. You're going to be all right." But Jack couldn't respond.

Armstrong pulled his chair closer to the bed and opened his Bible. "Psalm 23," he began to read in a steady voice. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . ." By the time he finished a few more psalms, Jack's ragged breathing had stopped. Armstrong called for help, but his friend was dead.

Why would a busy senator spend so much time at a hospital? He was a friend doing what he could—loving another as Jesus loved us. That's fellowship. And it's another factor of spiritual health.

Health factor—Fellowship

God's Word

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).

1. Luke, the author of Acts, described the early Christians as "devoted." The word he used could also be translated, "to wait on," "to busy yourself with," "to continue in," or "to spend much time on." What insights into the word "devoted" do you find in each of these phrases?
2. In what ways might believers today demonstrate devotion to: The apostle's teaching? The fellowship? The breaking of bread? Prayer?
3. Fellowship is a "close relationship" or a "fellow-feeling." It's sharing a faith in God and a love for one another. It led these people to sell "their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:45,46). Underline the ways they demonstrated fellowship.
4. In his letters, Paul describes believers 11 times as "one body." How does that picture help you value fellowship?

My soul for personal check-up

1. The wedding liturgy in *Christian Worship* summarizes God's love for us and our love for one another. It concludes, "Marriage furnishes a unique opportunity to put this love into practice." From your experience or your observation, why is that true?
2. Someone defined fellowship as knowing and being known, loving and being loved, serving and being served, celebrating and being celebrated. Name the people who know you, love you, serve you, and celebrate what you do. Name the people you are seeking to know, love, serve, and celebrate.

My church for group check-up

1. "Doctrinal unity defines who we are as a church—what we believe. Personal unity demonstrates who we are—how we live and love." Do you agree or disagree and why?
2. What are we doing in our congregation to help build loving relationships among members?
3. Take turns telling each other when you felt closest to members of your congregation. Look for recurring themes.
4. What do you learn from answers to the previous question about the future needs of your church?

Web-med

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

To understand fellowship, study the book of Philemon at <http://www.wels.net/sab/listen/bs-phil-00.html>.
Need ideas for fellowship events? Go to <http://www.wels.net/sab/cad/adult-ideas.html>.

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

Tree-mendous testimony

Known as the white church with the blue roof, Christ, Baxter, Minn., distinguishes itself even more at Christmastime. The interior is adorned with the creative decor of members Greg and Margaret Rosenberg.

The couple volunteered to decorate the church's tree in 1999. Themed "Silent Night," trees bore 30 porcelain angels, crafted by Margaret. The German and English words to "Silent Night" were visible through the shimmering glass ornaments.

Gracing the front page of the area's daily newspaper, the three trees of 2000 served as a witnessing tool. "What Greg said in that article really laid out the plan of salvation nicely," says Arthur Frenz, pastor at Christ.

The trees portrayed Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. Each member of the congregation was eager to find the star bearing his or her name interspersed amongst the names of Abraham's descendants up to Jesus. On the second tree, red lights and thorns were vivid reminders of Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of the whole world. The resurrection tree displayed lilies, daisies, and stained

glass butterflies, radiating the joy of Easter morning.

This Christmas, the church hopes to host an open house to draw even more members of the community through its doors. Greg and Margaret have been brainstorming ideas over morning coffee all year. Curious church members begged for a glimpse of this year's plan, but the secret was securely buried in the poinsettias filling the Rosenberg's living room.

But now the secret is out in all its splendor. The theme comes from Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." As worshipers enter the narthex this year, bold red poinsettias, garland, and lights remind them of their sins. Entering the sanctuary, though, they are enveloped in white and reassured of their forgiveness through Jesus Christ. The three



The three trees of 2000 displayed at Christ, Baxter, Minn.

trees from 2000 will remain each year to represent Jesus' life.

Greg Rosenberg says that this has been a good way to get youth and other members involved in the congregation. He adds that helping out other congregations who may want to start a project like this "would be a real kick."

To contact the Rosenbergs, call 218/829-5095.

Laura Warmuth

Tech round two

In 1996 WELS began a five-year program to harness God's gifts of telecommunications and technology for the church's ministry. That effort has produced an active Internet site, <www.wels.net>; video conferencing capabilities; private Web networks; a central Web clearinghouse, <www.shopWELS.net>; the beginnings of Web-based distance education; and free e-mail service available to all.

On Sept. 8-9, a new two-year initiative was launched with a task force designed to lead the way until a permanent structure is in place to do the job.

Subcommittees were established to probe infrastructure and distance-

learning issues. Four areas were targeted for special attention: congregation- and district-level technology development and support; extensive use of private Web (intranet) at all levels—synod, district, and congregation; distance-learning implementation via Web and teleconferencing through Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; and Webcasting.

Already, \$50,000 in matching funds for each of the next two years has been set aside in the WELS budget for developing distance-learning courses.



Telecommunications/Technology Director Wayne Borgwardt (left) and Distance-Learning Committee Chairman Daniel Schmeling take notes at the September meeting in Milwaukee. The original Telecommunications/Technology Task Force, the new task force, and the two sub-committees all met to discuss goals and strategies for the new initiative.



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:

A stroll down memory lane

Julie (nee Tessmer) Wietzke, senior communications assistant for WELS Communication Services since August 1995, writes, edits, and coordinates production of *Forward in Christ* magazine. She also works on *Mission Connection* (a quarterly newsletter), WELS Web site content, and a variety of other communication projects.

Q: What is your favorite part of your job?

A: I enjoy talking to so many WELS pastors, teachers, and laymembers. It’s inspiring to hear their excitement as they talk about their involvement in God’s kingdom.

Q: What is your favorite story that you have written?

A: One of my favorites was “We have a different Alex” [June 1996, about a little boy who was hit by a car and sustained brain injuries]. I also really enjoyed writing part of the sin-

gles series in 1997. It was a good time to examine being single and to look at what God says about that subject.

Q: If you could choose any career, what would it be?

A: I really like what I do now. One thing I always wanted to be was a concert pianist—but all that practicing would kill me in the end.

Q: Where did you go to college?

A: I went to Carroll College in Waukesha, Wis. I have a bachelor’s degree in communication and minors in business and music.

Q: Where is your favorite place that you have traveled?

A: I really enjoyed Venice, Italy, because it’s so different from anything I’ve ever seen. I also loved London, partly because that’s where I started dating my husband.

Q: What took you to Venice and London?

A: I was in Venice the first time I went to Europe with a group from college. My second trip to Europe was through Martin Luther College. Two MLC pro-



Tom and Julie Wietzke enjoying New Orleans.

fessors took a choir to England and Germany in 1998. We spent a week learning music at MLC and then two weeks touring and singing in Europe. It was a great opportunity to meet wonderful people and to sing in some incredible cathedrals.

Q: What have you sentimentally saved that would surprise people?

A: Well, I’m a pack rat so I save everything. To my good friends, nothing I save would be a surprise. I save most movie and concert stubs. I also have a hard time getting rid of pictures that my niece and nephew draw. It’s all just memories of things you’ve done or experienced, and even the smallest things make the memories come back.

A new use for clothespins

From the time she was a little girl, Marcie Hagen, a member of Abiding Word, Somers, Wis., knew she wanted to be an artist.

What she didn’t know then was that clothespins would be her canvas.

“I started by tracing around a wooden walking duck, and I went on in later years to draw people, dogs, and horses,” says Hagen. “As the mother of six children, I began to paint portraits of them and others and went on from there to make apple dolls and eventually clothespin dolls.”

Although she started by making ballet dancers and nutcrackers out of clothespins, soon she wanted to become more involved in Christian artwork.

“One day I was asked to make Bible dolls to be used to tell Bible stories to handicapped people. This worked out so well that I continued to add other dolls until now I make over 75 different ones,” says Hagen.

Bible characters made by Hagen include a 15-piece nativity set, Adam and Eve, a giant Goliath (pictured), and Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Her favorites include Moses with the Ten Commandments (pictured) and the old Adam/new spirit, a doll with a different expression on both sides.

It takes at least two hours to create each doll. Her mentally-disabled son, Paul, helps her with the sanding.

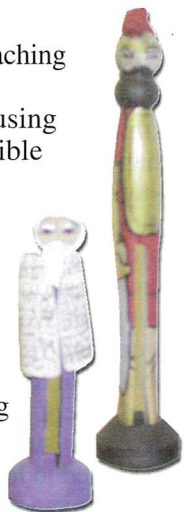
The dolls can just be decorative,

or they can be used in teaching situations.

“For some students, using the dolls cements the Bible story in,” says Mary Micheel, who uses the dolls for one-on-one confirmation instruction to mentally-disabled students.

In the future, Hagen is thinking about making kits with instructions for people to create their own dolls.

For more information, contact Hagen at 8205 Gina Dr, Racine WI 53406.



They came from the east and from the west

From July 29-Aug. 2, a unique assortment of people from the east and from the west met at the Schwan Retreat Center in Trego, Wis. From the Far East came 62 Hmong, 51 Chinese, eight Laotians, three Vietnamese, and one Korean. From the west were 21 Anglo-Americans involved in Asian mission work in WELS.

This international group spent their week on spiritual matters—worshiping together, studying the Word of God, praying to the Lord of the Church, developing plans for mission work in the kingdom, and sharing their faith with unbelieving friends who attended. They also enjoyed the fun that comes from swimming, fishing, hiking, basketball, riding horses, and singing around the campfire. One evening we enjoyed a culture show in which individuals and groups from each nationality shared songs in their native language and exhibited ceremonial clothes.

What did the Lord work in the hearts of the people who attended this conference?

One Chinese attendee wrote: “It reminds me of the goodness of God—he brought many Asians from their homes that were ruined by wars and prospered them in this new country.

Even more, God saved them all. God sent his faithful servants to reach out to these wounded souls, save them, heal them, and let them rebuild their home in this land of opportunity and worship him freely. I enjoyed this conference because it humbles me. I met people who are from Vietnam—a country that was once at war with China—but we became friends. We are equal in the Lord’s house.”

A non-Christian wrote, “I liked this conference. Maybe it can become for me the first step into a new world. I know I want to learn more about the Bible and read it.”

There were many powerful moments during the course of the conference. One came when an Asian woman was baptized outside by the lake, rejoicing in the blessings she knows she has in Christ.

Another moment came in the closing service, when this diverse group, representing six countries, sang together:

“Lord, the light of your love is shining,

In the midst of the darkness shining.

Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;

Set us free by the truth you now bring us.

Shine on me. Shine on me.

Shine, Jesus shine! Fill this land with the Father’s glory.

Blaze, Spirit, blaze! Set our hearts on fire.

Flow, river, flow! Flood the nations with grace and mercy.

Send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light!”

(*Let All the People Praise You*, p. 270).

Leon Piepenbrink

DEFINING RELIGION

Deism: a movement arising out of the Enlightenment in 17th- and 18th-century Europe that emphasizes the importance of human reason and morality. Deists believe that a personal, rational god created the universe, but then stepped back from it. He allows it to continue to function according to the laws of nature without any interference from him.

East Fork Lutheran High School stays open

Although faced with the possibility earlier this year of closing due to lack of funds, East Fork Lutheran High School (EFLHS) will stay open with the aid of Forward in Christ (FIC) grant money.

The FIC thank offering will provide \$150,000 toward the \$488,000 EFLHS operating budget for the 2001-02 school year and \$100,000 for the 2002-03 school year. The rest of the money will come from Apache congregational support, tuition fees, and private donations. Private donations from WELS members will remain a significant source of needed income for the foreseeable future.

“We consider the FIC money to be

funds to bridge us across to total private funding,” says Jeff Gunn, chairman of the Native American Administrative Committee of the Board for World Missions.

Helping keep the high school open fits well into the Forward in Christ goal of promoting outreach.

“We need to have a place like the high school to reach out to Apache young people with the gospel,” says Gunn. This is especially true because Apache youth are dealing with rampant social problems including suicide, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, family violence, and teenage pregnancy.

Programs held at the high school, including a recent seminar on sui-

cide, also reach out to the entire Apache community.

“But we also need the high school to train Apache young people to reach out to others with the gospel and to become leaders in their church,” adds Gunn. The high school does this by encouraging young volunteers to teach Sunday school and vacation Bible school classes, including helping with ministry to the Navajos. Plus, six students from EFLHS are attending Martin Luther College to train to be called workers.

“We’re training our students for today, but we’re also training them for tomorrow,” says Gunn.

With our increasing cross-cultural opportunities, that training is important.

District news

North Atlantic

At the end of October, **King of Kings, Suffolk, Va.**, hosted an information and bake sale booth at the Driver Days Fair. Each year King of Kings receives about 100 names of prospects from the event.

Divine Word, Nepean, Ontario, hosted a July 1st Canada Day “Lost and Found” booth. Members told people who were “lost” in sin about the joys of being “found” by Jesus.

Children at **Abiding Word, Orleans, Ontario**, prepared “Bedtime Bible Kits” to send to children in Grenada. The kits included basic toiletries for children, along with a Bible story lesson.

Active Christian Teens (A.C.T.S.), the youth group of **Abiding Word, Orleans, Ontario**, held a “Survivor Weekend” in August. The theme, “There’s No Surviving Without Jesus,” was carried out by challenges that were similar to those done on the TV show and daily “Tribal Councils” where participants shared experiences from the day and time in God’s Word.

Michigan



St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich., celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2001. St. Paul has a rich history that is reflected in the richness of its facility, which was recently refurbished. The current church building was dedicated in 1921 after a fire burned the old building.

Northern Wisconsin



Last spring, Grace, Oshkosh, Wis., recognized Lorraine “Pinky” Behlendorf for singing in Grace’s senior choir for 50 years. Pictured with Pinky are Grace’s pastors, Greg Schoeneck (left) and Daniel Krause (right).

South Atlantic

In August, a group of teachers and WLC students ran a science camp for children at **Trinity, Castries, St. Lucia**. The camp, “Exploring God’s Creation,” was attended by 65 children.

Western Wisconsin

St. John, Pardeeville, Wis., opened an elementary school on Aug. 22. The 106-year-old congregation is running preschool, kindergarten, and first and second grades, with the intent of adding one grade per year through the eighth grade.

Happy Anniversary!

MN—On Oct. 28, members of **Christ, Eden Prairie, Minn.**, celebrated the congregation’s 25th anniversary.

NE—**Audra Piel**, organist at St. Paul, Batesland, S.D., has served as a church organist for 50 years.

SEW—On Sept. 8, over 100 leaders and boys gathered at St. John, Burlington, Wis., to thank the Lord for the 50th anniversary of the **Lutheran Pioneers**.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MI—Geoffrey Kieta; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Kevin Schultz; NE—Michael Helwig; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Mark Haefner; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

Southeastern Wisconsin



On Sept. 10, students at Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis., were visited by Buzz Bee of Honey Nut Cheerios and other General Mills and Jewel-Osco personnel. Good Shepherd, the grand-prize winner of the Box Tops for Education contest, collected more box tops per student than any other school, which earned them the \$10,000 grand prize. Each student also received a bowl of General Mills cereal as part of their prize.

North Atlantic



Vacation Bible school at Hope, Toronto, Ontario, had a multicultural flair. Children who attended had backgrounds from Sri Lanka, Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, the Philippines, Mexico, China, and several European countries.

Leaving home

Imagine leaving your home of eight years with three days notice. You can only pack what will fit in a suitcase. You know you will never be able to live there again. You are not only leaving your belongings. You are also leaving your friends, your work, and your church family.

That is the situation that Indonesian missionary Pieter Reid and his family faced on Sept. 26. Missionary Reid; his wife, Marlys; and their two school-aged children, Matthew and Michelle, had to evacuate their home in Jakarta, Indonesia, because of the growing anti-American sentiment held by radicals in this primarily Islamic country.

More than 30 people accompanied the Reids to the airport, including two armed Indonesian Christian Marines, several national pastors and their families, and a number of the Indonesian teaching staff from the International School where Marlys taught. "Having our dear friends there made it such a special time," remembers Marlys.

The Reids arrived in Indonesia in June 1993. Missionary Reid spent his time educating national seminary students and pastors of the Indonesian Lutheran Church (*Gereja Lutheran Indonesia* or GLI) and helping the church become organized so that Indonesian men could one day run

the church body. The Reids were evacuated from Indonesia at other times during their years there because of the political and religious unrest. Yet, the threat became even more dangerous after Sept. 11.

As Missionary Reid explains, "It gradually went from bad to worse. Even before Sept. 11 it was getting worse, mostly because of the Israeli/Palestinian war. Some Indonesian Muslims thought that Israel was merely being a puppet of the United States, and that the United States, through Israel, was attacking an Islamic nation. After Sept. 11, when we were talking about the United States actually attacking an Islamic nation, it just became worse."

Marlys adds, "We could feel it almost immediately. The climate on the streets changed. Their attitude toward any Caucasian changed. They just assumed that if you were Caucasian, you were American."

Some Americans were followed, taunted, and harassed. Through Muslim friends, the Reids knew that violence against Americans could break out at any moment, so WELS' Southeast Asian Administrative Committee decided to bring the Reids back to the United States immediately.

Missionary Reid will still work with *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia* for two more years, advising and teaching national pastors and seminary students from his home in Sun Prairie, Wis. Every three to four months Reid will travel to Indonesia for face-to-face meetings to measure the church's progress and encourage its workers.

"As they are given additional

responsibilities, the leaders of GLI are accepting these responsibilities and doing a good job. They are spiritually strong, thankful for the foundation they have in Christ, thankful for all WELS has done, and want to share Jesus Christ with others. . . . The Lord has now made it clear that the time has come for the national church to stand on its own without a WELS missionary/advisor living among them. The timing is just right for moving into the next stage of having a WELS missionary/advisor serve *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia* from a distance," says Reid.



(From left) Missionary Pieter Reid, five graduating vicars, and Marlys Reid celebrate a landmark event for the Indonesian Lutheran Church—this is the first graduating class trained by national pastors at the seminary in Indonesia.



FROM BEGINNING TO END
Through the Bible in one year

December 2001

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Psalm 18 | 16. Ps. 92 & 132 |
| • Romans 15:30-16 | • Jn. 2:12-3 |
| 2. Ps. 36 | 17. Jn. 4 & 5 |
| • 1 Corinthians 1-3 | 18. Ps. 111 • Jn. 6 |
| 3. 1 Cor. 4-7 | 19. Ps. 61 & 64 |
| 4. 1 Cor. 8-10 | • Jn. 7-8:11 |
| 5. 1 Cor. 11-13 | 20. Jn. 8:12-9 |
| 6. 1 Cor. 14 & 15 | 21. Jn. 10-11:46 |
| 7. 1 Cor. 16 | 22. Ps. 49 |
| • 2 Corinthians 1-3 | • Jn. 11:47-12 |
| 8. Ps. 98 | 23. Ps. 26 |
| • 2 Cor. 4-7 | • Jn. 13 & 14 |
| 9. Ps. 123 • 2 Cor. | 24. Jn. 15-17 |
| 10. Ps. 139 | 25. Ps. 41 |
| • 2 Cor. 11:16-13 | • Jn. 18-19:30 |
| 11. 1 Timothy | 26. Ps. 34 |
| 1-5:16 | • Jn. 19:31-21 |
| 12. 1 Tm. 5:17-6 | 27. Philippians |
| • 2 Timothy 1-3 | 28. Peter 1-3 |
| 13. Ps. 23 • 2 Tm. 4 | 29. Ps. 70, 87, |
| • James 1 & 2 | 101, & 131 |
| 14. Ps. 100 & 147 | 30. 1 Pet. 4 & 5 |
| • Jas. 3-5 | • 1 John 1-2:17 |
| 15. Ps. 20 | 31. Ps. 150 |
| • John 1-2:11 | • 1 Jn. 2:18-5 |

Congratulations! You now have read the Bible—from beginning to end.

Next year, we're trying something a little bit different for your Bible readings. We will give you readings on different topics throughout the year. Look for your first reading next month.

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Six Months Ended June 30, 2001

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received			Percent of Sbscrptn	Annld Ave Per Commun
	Communicants 12/31/00	2001	Year to Date Projected	June Offerings	Six Months Offerings		
Arizona-California	17,998	\$1,097,663	\$499,162	\$99,509	\$526,277	105.4%	\$58.48
Dakota-Montana	9,051	458,255	187,214	22,168	172,950	92.4	38.22
Michigan	36,294	2,224,331	971,045	158,482	916,257	94.4	50.49
Minnesota	43,362	2,502,475	1,021,395	149,701	990,679	97.0	45.69
Nebraska	10,429	642,715	272,004	50,870	284,078	104.4	54.48
North Atlantic	4,305	370,944	177,641	21,587	171,014	96.3	79.45
Northern Wisconsin	60,962	2,709,300	1,164,410	158,139	1,037,599	89.1	34.04
Pacific Northwest	5,178	310,331	130,779	21,539	144,988	110.9	56.00
South Atlantic	7,322	589,766	274,189	34,925	252,353	92.0	68.93
South Central	4,835	518,829	238,175	43,213	260,846	109.5	107.90
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,156	3,516,785	1,418,552	218,350	1,278,058	90.1	44.72
Western Wisconsin	59,494	3,241,371	1,429,642	272,395	1,412,687	98.8	47.49
Total—This Year	316,386	18,182,765	7,784,208	1,250,878	7,447,786	95.7%	47.08
Total—Last Year	315,637	17,810,601	7,566,492	1,219,466	7,606,685	100.5%	48.20

CURRENT OPERATING FUND

Statement of activities

Year ended June 30

	2001 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$17,331,704	\$17,581,715	\$18,181,000
Gifts and memorials	7,713,683	5,064,015	6,031,000
Bequest/planned giving	1,269,766	1,158,676	1,357,000
Tuition and fees	11,669,452	10,330,179	11,825,400
Other	204,430	156,239	172,000
Transfers—endowment earnings	169,201	327,568	289,000
Transfers—gift funds	11,466,280	11,133,422	12,995,300
Transfers—continuing programs	3,083,691	3,698,585	4,176,100
<i>Total revenues</i>	<u>52,908,207</u>	<u>49,450,399</u>	<u>55,026,800</u>
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	10,606,637	9,842,276	10,051,500
World Missions	9,101,841	8,877,607	9,565,900
Ministerial Education	25,416,794	22,635,646	25,601,400
Parish Services	2,166,460	2,153,214	2,302,000
Administrative Services	5,730,997	5,373,730	6,805,100
System Wide	587,781	581,304	700,900
<i>Total expenditures</i>	<u>53,610,510</u>	<u>49,463,777</u>	<u>55,026,800</u>
<i>Changes in unrestricted net assets</i>	<u>(702,303)</u>	<u>(13,378)</u>	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	33,000	143,000	
Bequest/planned giving	2,000	6,000	
Change in value of trust agreements	21,300	44,800	
<i>Change in temp restricted net assets</i>	<u>56,300</u>	<u>193,800</u>	
<i>Net assets—beginning of year</i>	<u>4,350,503</u>	<u>4,170,081</u>	
<i>Net assets—end of period</i>	<u>3,704,500</u>	<u>4,350,503</u>	

Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 2001	June 30, 2000
Assets:		
Due from other funds	(822,553)	369,986
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	124,250	124,250
Other accounts receivable	256,025	89,160
Cash advances-schools	572,338	274,139
Contributions receivable	3,704,500	3,648,200
Mortgage note receivable	9,499	11,764
Allowance for doubtful accts	(45,100)	(45,100)
Prepaid expenses	79,393	3,700
<i>Total assets</i>	<u>3,878,352</u>	<u>4,476,099</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Accrued Expenses	118,020	-
Accounts payable	55,832	125,596
<i>Total liabilities</i>	<u>173,852</u>	<u>125,596</u>
Unrestricted	-	702,303
Temp restricted	3,704,500	3,948,200
<i>Total net assets</i>	<u>3,704,500</u>	<u>4,650,503</u>
<i>Total liab. and net assets</i>	<u>3,878,352</u>	<u>4,476,099</u>

Mark Meissner, director of finance

World news

Below is a prayer from the Ukrainian Lutheran Church after the Attack on America. WELS declared fellowship with this church at the 2001 synod convention.

Dear Christian brothers and sisters,

We deeply sorrow for all victims of terrorism who died through terrible terroristic acts few days ago. Please accept our deep condolences because of that horrible tragedy. The hearts of all God's people in the world are full of pain and sorrow.

May a fellowship we share in Christ make us stronger in our callings. May our dear Lord strengthen all of you in his love, hope and promises of his Word: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

With love in Christ and praying,
 Pastor Taras Kokovsky,
 Ukrainian Lutheran Church

Note: As of Oct. 30, WELS members have donated over \$204,791 to the WELS Committee on Relief for aid to New York and Washington, D.C. after the attack on America. WELS Kingdom Workers and Sure Foundation in New York City are leading the charge in helping us deliver these dollars to those in need.

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

Andrus, Eugene R., to Mt. Olive, Graceville/Trinity, Johnson, Minn.
Froehlich, Richard A., to Emanuel, Denmark, Wis.
Hildebrant, John R., to India as friendly counselor
Riedel, Roger G., to Christ, Beatrice, Neb.

ANNIVERSARIES

Fort Atkinson, Wis.—St. Paul (140). Dec. 9. Service, 8 & 10:30 AM.
New Hope, Minn.—Holy Trinity (50). Dec. 16. Service, 10 AM. Refreshments to follow.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Mt. Lebanon (75). Jan. 20, 2002. Service, 9:30 AM. Dinner to follow.
Fort Myers, Fla.—Crown of Life (25). March 3, 2002. Service, 4 PM. Dinner to follow.
Sarasota, Fla.—Ascension (25). April 7, 2002. Service, 3 PM. Catered meal and program to follow.

COMING EVENTS

Lutheran Chorale concert—Nov. 25, 3 & 7 PM. Atonement, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.
Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale Christmas Concerts—Dec. 1, 7:30 PM, St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.
 Dec. 2, 3:30 & 6:30 PM, Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.
 Matt Manthe or Alan Ross, 920/684-5833.
Synodical school Christmas concerts
 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.—Dec. 9, 3 & 7 PM.
 Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.—Dec. 16, 3 PM.
 Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.—Dec. 16, 3 PM; Dec. 20, 10 AM.
 Michigan Lutheran Seminary—Dec. 20, 7 PM.
Minnesota District Sunday school conference—Feb. 23, 2002, Bloomington, Minn. 414/256-3274.
Pathways to Christ women's retreat—Mar. 15-17, 2002. Hawthorne Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.
International Girl Pioneers Convention—Apr. 5 & 6, 2002. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Diane Jabs, 952/492-2540.
Special Ministries In Lutheran Education (SMILE) conference—June 28-30; 2002. Ramada Inn-Airport, Bloomington, Minn. Goal is to promote and strengthen the partnership of those involved in the spiritual training of people with developmental disabilities. Includes parents, caregivers, teachers, pastors, and volunteers. Bruce Cuppan, 920/922-8672.
2002 Northern Wisconsin District Regional Youth Rally—June 30-July 3, 2002. Chilton, Wis. \$150/person. <Survivor2002@nwdcyd.org>.
"Tap the WELS" Music/Outreach/Spiritual Growth Family & Community Event—July 18-20, 2002. Red Wing, Minn. 414/256-3274.
National Conference for Worship, Music, & the Arts—July 21-24, 2002. Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis. 414/256-3226; <worship@sab.wels.net>.
Regional youth rally—Western Wisconsin District, July 25-27, 2002. Wisconsin Dells, Wis. 414/256-3274.
Sunday school workshops—Wisconsin area. Sept. 14, 2002, 8:30-11:45 AM. A nominal fee

will be charged. Workshop will be held at four locations:

Wausau, Wis.—Preparing & teaching a Sunday school lesson
 La Crosse, Wis.—Classroom management
 Watertown, Wis.—Memory work, mission, and music
 Eau Claire, Wis.—Reaching families through the Sunday school
 Plan ahead—workshops will rotate every year and will be held the second Sat. after Labor Day in 2003, 2004, 2005. Debbie Rothe, 262/567-6375.

2003 WELS International Youth Rally—July 9-12, 2003. Estes Park, Colo. 414/256-3274.

CANCELLED

Mid-winter teen retreat—Feb. 1-2, 2002. Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

AVAILABLE

Paraments and brass candelabra—set of four paraments and pair of 25" brass candelabra with seven electric candles. Free for the cost of shipping. Wilbur Standfuss, 320/329-3369
Haworth desk units—including panels, work surfaces with drawers, shelves, and bins. Light brown. Free for the cost of shipping. Jim Purfuerst, Northwestern Publishing House, 414/615-5734.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Thrift shop manager—H.E.L.P. Foundation, Inc., Phoenix, Ariz., is seeking a WELS/ELS individual to manage and oversee the day-to-day operation of its secondhand retail shop. The proceeds from this shop benefit the ministry of Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix. Robert Adickes, 623/247-4482.

Teach English in a foreign country—Has the Lord ever laid on your heart a desire to share Jesus with people of a foreign country? If so, this may be the opportunity you are looking for. We have English language teaching positions open. Airfare, housing, health insurance, and an in-country livable wage will be paid. Main qualification is a desire to serve Jesus and share your faith. WELS people with teaching degrees and teaching experience preferred but not required. Husband/wife teams okay. One-year commitment minimum. <asia-usa@juno.com>.

Web site manager—Northwestern Publishing House needs a full-time individual to serve as Web site manager and assistant network administrator. For information, visit <www.nph.net>. Submit resume and salary history to Todd Rebillot, director of human resources, 2949 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <Rebillot@nph.wels.net>.

SERVICE TIMES

Safford, Ariz.—Grace, 225 E Main St. Worship, 10:30 AM. Bible class, 9:45 AM. Paul Schulz, 928/428-7620.

NAMES WANTED

McAllen/Harlingen/Brownsville/South Padre Island, Tex.—Joel Sauer, 956/968-5228.
Greater Dallas, Tex., area—including Allen, McKinney, Frisco, Celina, Denton, Flower Mound, North Richland Hills, Fort Worth, Arlington, Carrollton, Lewisville, Los Colinas, Sherman, Van Alstyne, Little Elm, Plano,

Dallas, Duncanville, Richardson, Garland, Rowlett, Rockwall, and Mesquite. Send names and addresses to William Gabb, <pastor@atonement.org>.

Manistique/Central Upper Peninsula, Mich.—Don Brandt, 906/644-2801.

Puyallup/Tacoma, Wash.—Tom Unke, 253/537-2919.

Commerce Township/Highland/Milford/Wixom, Mich.—Thomas Schroeder, 248/349-0565.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

St. John, Vacaville, Calif.—78 Peabody Rd, Vacaville, Calif. Sunday service, 10 AM. 707/455-7575.

Christ Our Rock, Rochester, Minn.—3040 Stonehedge Dr NE, Rochester, Minn. Sunday education hour, 9 AM. Sunday worship, 10:15 AM. 507/252-5088.

CORRECTION

An incorrect phone number for the Mission for the Visually Impaired was printed in the Nov. bulletin board. To contact the Mission for the Visually Impaired about receiving copies of the magazine on cassette tape, call 651/291-1536.

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

RATE INCREASE for Forward in Christ magazine

As of July 1, 2002, the price for a one-year individual subscription to *Forward in Christ* magazine will go up to \$12 a year. This still is only \$1 per each issue that is jam-packed with informative and inspirational articles.

A bundle of 25 or more magazines to a single address will cost \$8 per issue, while a blanket subscription mailed to every home in a congregation will be \$8.50 per issue.

Right now, the synodical budget helps pay production costs for the magazine. With this rate increase, we hope to cut down on the subsidy received, eventually eliminating it altogether.

The Lamb is slain

With Jesus' death, God's plan—begotten in eternity, conceived in the womb of a virgin, born in poverty, and laid in a manger—was complete.

Jon D. Buchholz

The mood among the disciples was somber. Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem, and his disciples feared trouble. A gloomy Thomas expressed the group's resignation, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16).

No glory without the cross

Things had been going so well. The crowds had raved about Jesus and acclaimed him as Messiah. But in private, Jesus taught of darker things to come. "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Luke 9:22).

Like so many Jews, the apostles wanted a political Christ, who would send the Romans packing and restore the glory of Israel. They fancied themselves sharing in the Messiah's power, positioned at Jesus' right and at his left in his kingdom. Peter couldn't imagine his Master going to the cross. " 'Never, Lord!' he said, 'This shall never happen to you!' " (Matthew 16:22).

But Peter's confusion earned Jesus' stinging rebuke, "Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23).

On the Mount of Transfiguration the glory was so amazing that Peter wanted to bask in the glow forever. But Jesus had work to do before sinners could share in his glory. On Palm Sunday, the crowds welcomed

Jesus as their Christ and King. But by the end of the week, "Hosanna!" had become "Crucify him!" There could be no glory without the cross.

The suffering servant

In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). When his betrayer came, the Son of God permitted himself to be arrested without a struggle.

High priests Annas and Caiaphas presided over the most disgraceful miscarriage of justice ever perpetrated. Their kangaroo court found Jesus guilty of blasphemy. The religious leaders of the Jews—thought to be examples of virtue—showed their true colors as they vented the bitterness in their hearts. They mocked their Savior, spitting in his face, cuffing his head and face. Jesus suffered in silence.

Pontius Pilate wanted nothing to do with the Jews' religious squabble, but he wanted to keep the peace. When Pilate found no basis for the charges, he sought sympathy for Jesus. He ordered that Jesus be flogged. After a crown of thorns had been ground onto Jesus' brow, Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd. The innocent victim, bruised and bleeding, said nothing. When the mob could not be quieted, Pilate gave the order for Jesus to die.

The condemned man was led outside the city. Seven-inch spikes were driven into his wrists and feet. The Word of Life was suspended between heaven and earth, lifted up as the



sacrifice for sinners. But Jesus prayed for his enemies.

Although the excruciating pain of crucifixion transcends our imagination, the real anguish Jesus suffered was not inflicted by the hands of men. Covered with the sins of the world, Jesus experienced God's indescribable wrath. In the depths of hell's torment Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Around 3 PM, Jesus' suffering came to an end. God's plan—begotten in eternity, conceived in the womb of a virgin, born in poverty, and laid in a manger—was complete. "It is finished," Jesus said (John 19:30). And he peacefully placed his soul into his Father's hands.

This was the price of glory: the torments of men, abandonment to God's wrath, the blood of the eternal covenant spilled for sinners. "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

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

The government is God's servant

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.” So the Christmas account begins. Compared to what comes next, the birth of our Savior, this verse hardly seems significant. Yet it is revealing how God uses even the involuntary cooperation of governments to carry out his saving plans.

Luther, in his Table of Duties, quotes Paul in reference to earthly governments. “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God” (Romans 13:1). Those who rebel against the government that God instituted, Paul adds, bring judgment on themselves. Having said it negatively, Paul then puts it positively. “For [the government] is God’s servant to do you good.”

In Old Testament days, the people of Judah went into exile in Babylon because of their rebellion against God, evident in their disobedience to the government God placed over them. But 70 years later, God used the Persian king Cyrus to free Judah from captivity, returning the people to the Land of Promise, anticipating Christ’s birth.

Though they had returned to the Promised Land, they did not long remain a free and independent people. The Roman legions subjugated Palestine, enforcing allegiance to the Roman Caesar. Still, a decree for a census from this powerful world ruler brought Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, fulfilling the ancient prophecy of the place of Christ’s birth.

Later, in his ministry, Jesus said of the Roman government, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21). It’s part of putting God

first when we obey the government in keeping with the Fourth Commandment, unless that puts us in conflict with obeying God. We honor God when we do our duty to the government: paying our taxes, observing the speed limit, and obeying the laws of the land.

A lawless society would be good for no one, and only two things make for law-abiding citizens: love for God or fear of punishment. We wish a gospel love for God were universal. Then, freely and willingly, people would obey the law. However, where love for God is absent, fear of punishment serves to restrain lawbreakers. That’s what Paul means when he says the government is God’s servant to do you good.

Luther was grateful that his prince, Frederick, protected him, keeping his enemies from taking his life. We’re grateful, too, that Luther, therefore, could actively restore the gospel message to the world. And Luther rightly included respect for government in his Table of Duties.

So today, obeying God and following Luther, we’re grateful for our government. It keeps us safe, protecting our lives and property. But especially we thank God for the religious freedom we enjoy. We’re grateful that we are able to freely proclaim the birth of Jesus Christ.

Unlike temporal government, God’s kingdom is eternal. The “Hallelujah Chorus” reminds us during the Christmas season: “And he shall reign forever and ever.” So shall we reign because of him. Meanwhile, however, obeying our government is more than our patriotic duty. Thanking God for the earthly blessings he gives us through government, especially religious freedom, we have every reason to “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.” It’s part of our Christian duty, a Christmas gift freely offered to God.



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

We honor
God when
we do our
duty to the
government.

The Table of Duties is a portion of Luther’s Small Catechism that contains “certain passages of Scripture for various classes and stations of men, whereby these are to be admonished of their respective offices and duties” (p. 18, Gausewitz edition). As Luther said, “Let each his lesson learn with care, And all the household well shall fare” (Luther’s Small Catechism, p. 21, Gausewitz edition).

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

Question: My daughters and I were given Bruce Wilkinson's book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, by a family member who seemed to think that it works. The book indicates that if you pray this prayer daily, you will have success beyond measure. What are your thoughts on this?

Answer: *The Prayer of Jabez* is a bestseller about a brief, fascinating reference to Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9,10. Bruce Wilkinson is convinced that praying Jabez's four-petition prayer every day has brought untold miracles into his life and will do the same for others.

There are two points to appreciate. Wilkinson fittingly reminds us that God delights in our prayers. God could bless us without our prayers, yet he draws us with his promise: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

The author also echoes Paul's words that God can "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). Luther's Large Catechism gives us a similar encouragement: "There is nothing greater that [God] desires of us than that we ask him for many and great things."

However, *The Prayer of Jabez's* most stunning shortcoming is its lack of references to Jesus. The

words "Jesus" or "Christ" appear only 11 times in 90 pages. It is perplexing how a Christian can write about prayer without mentioning that we are assured of being answered only because of God's grace in Jesus. Entirely absent is any clear reference to what Jesus has done for us.

For example, while mentioning that our sin hinders our prayers, instead of pointing us to Jesus' cross, he writes: "I urge you to rush back into God's presence and make things right, whatever it takes" (p. 85). Why does he point to what we must do instead of what Jesus has done?

Secondly, Jabez's prayer becomes the equivalent of a rosary—great things happen because of the believer's faithfulness in repeating these words in proper frequency. "The next morning, I prayed Jabez's prayer word for word. And the next. And the next. Thirty years later, I haven't stopped" (p. 11). Such emphasis on repeating certain biblical words easily becomes a superstitious use of Scripture. While Wilkinson almost ignores the Lord's Prayer, it is important to remember that the two times Jesus taught his disciples his prayer he didn't even use the same number of petitions—let alone exact words (Matthew 6:9ff, Luke 11:2ff).

Thirdly, the biblical reminder to expect great blessings from God often strays beyond the Bible. The

author claims specific blessings God intends to give in specific situations where Scripture has not spoken. "Let me tell you a guaranteed byproduct of sincerely seeking his blessing. Your life will become marked by miracles. How do I know? Because he promises it, and I've seen it happen on my own!" (pp. 24,25). No Scripture accompanies his statement. Could that be because no passage promises this outpouring of miracles into every Christian's life? Promises of answer to prayer? Absolutely! Assurances of God's perfect protection? Certainly! God's mercy providing everything we need? Totally! Unbounded miracles because we repeated 1 Chronicles 4:10? Hardly!

Finally, Wilkinson says much about the Spirit, but little about the means by which Scripture promises that the Spirit works. Prayer becomes a substitute for the means of grace. Feelings of being "filled with the Spirit" replace true filling of the Spirit through Word and sacraments.

While *The Prayer of Jabez* offers some thought-provoking insights, its handicaps far outweigh its helpfulness.

Richard Gurgel is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Have a question you want answered? Send it to 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>.



At a vacancy pastor's installation in Florida, two "relatively new" WELS members—Hannah Marie Scaramellina (left) and Jananine Rolle—were among the special guests.

Submitted by Ruth Pautz

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.

In case you weren't feeling particularly blessed today . . .

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following.

There would be:

- 57 Asians
- 21 Europeans
- 14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south
- 8 Africans

- 52 would be female
- 48 would be male

- 70 would be non-white
- 30 would be white

- 70 would be non-Christian
- 30 would be Christian

- 6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth, and all 6 would be from the United States
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death; 1 would be near birth
- 1 (yes, only 1) would have a college education
- 1 would own a computer

Used with permission, Hope Health, Kalamazoo, Michigan, (616) 343-0770.

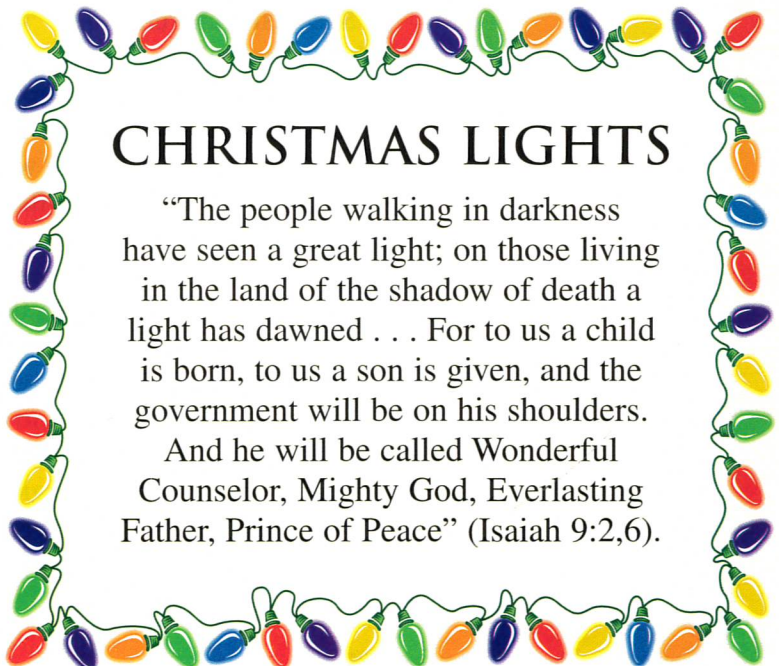
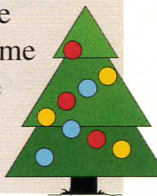


The legend of the candy cane

According to legend there was a candy maker who wanted to invent a candy that was a witness to Christ. First of all, he used a hard candy because Christ is the rock of ages. This hard candy was shaped so that it would resemble a "J" for Jesus or, turned upside down, a shepherd's staff. He made it white to represent the purity of Christ. A red stripe was added to represent the blood Christ shed for the sins of the world, and three thinner red stripes for the stripes he received on our behalf when the Roman soldiers whipped him.

The flavor of the cane is peppermint, which is similar to hyssop. Hyssop is in the mint family and was used in the Old Testament for purification and sacrifice. Jesus is the pure Lamb of God, come to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

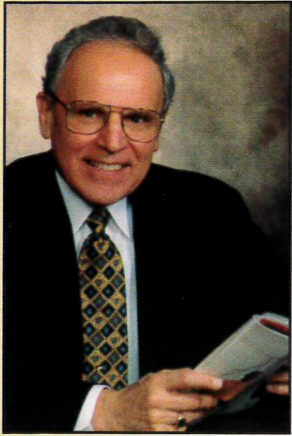
This story is only a legend, but the message packs a punch. So, every time you see a candy cane, remember the symbolism and its witness to Christ.



CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned . . . For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:2,6).



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

Except the
Lord build the
church, we
labor in vain
who build it.

The successful church

For five years Prof. Paul Wilkes of North Carolina crisscrossed the United States searching for “successful” churches. He found about 600 of them in all shapes and sizes.

I don’t know if any WELS churches are among his 600, but I am deeply interested in his criteria for success. He did not, for example, focus only on megachurches. Based on a Religion News Service report in February, I was able to glean several marks of successful churches according to Wilkes.

Do any of them fit your church? Do you want them to?

Here is what I gleaned, with brief commentary:

1. The most successful churches are willing to take risks. Any kind of change is risky, will probably result in conflict, and may, in the end, fail. Still, churches often find that “doing church” the way they’ve always done it doesn’t work as it once did. In a changing society and in an effort to reach non-churchgoers, we may want to try some new programs. We may need more contemporary means to involve contemporary people.

2. Successful churches are “‘welcoming,’ especially to newcomers who don’t look or act like themselves.” It only makes sense. If we are going to reach out to others, we need to welcome them. We need to exude the warmth of Christian love. Mission outreach (as always) begins at home, and the “nations” have been finding their way into our neighborhoods. Are we welcoming them into our churches?

3. Successful churches learn to shift more leadership to laypeople. Have we even begun to unleash the energies of our faithful members in our church’s ministry? Can we put all the body of

Christ to work in our congregations? Member ministry is growing among us.

4. Successful churches create group worship that is relevant and reverent. Closely related to number one above, this rubric, at the least, challenges us to show the relevance of what we are doing and to investigate other possibilities. How we define “reverent” will help dictate our choices.

5. Successful churches create a sense of community. Members have a sense of “ownership.” In real communities, there is always diversity. The burden is to keep unity in diversity while being wise to know what we can tolerate and what we can’t. Community at the expense of scriptural truth, however, is held together with frayed threads.

Wilkes, you may agree, has identified important elements that need attention in our churches. But, did he really identify some 600 successful churches? By now, I trust you may have your doubts, as do I.

Oh, I feel certain he identified churches that have an unusual vitality and demonstrate a high compliance with the above criteria. We might learn some good things from any one of them.

But in his search, he apparently left out the one thing needful, without which no church is successful. Except the Lord build the church, we labor in vain who build it. The Lord builds through the gospel in Word and sacraments. And the Lord builds on the Christ born in Bethlehem.

To mark churches as “successful” without looking for the real marks of the church is like judging a pie-baking contest merely by looking at the crusts. You don’t know whether you have any real substance there.

Gary P. Baumler

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Peace on EARTH

“Peace on earth” rings a little differently this year.

Jeffrey A. Bonack

The words “peace on earth” are going to ring a little differently in my ears this year.

The need for peace

The surreal images of the terrorist attacks this past fall are deeply embedded in my mind. Jets flying into high-rise buildings. An ugly, charred hole in our national defense headquarters. Heart-wrenching stories of individuals who telephoned loved ones knowing that there was no chance of survival. The sobering moment our president declared war on terrorism worldwide, vowing to use every means at his disposal. These are frightening times.

In contrast, above it all, in delightful symphonic tones, the angels sing their ancient carol: “Peace on earth!”

Thank God they do.

Life has changed in the past few months. Yet, that change has more to do with perspective than with anything else. The evil the terrorists perpetrated is not something new under the sun. It is a manifestation of the evil that has plagued human existence since the time of the fall. The sin-sick human heart is as evil as it always was. What’s changed is that, in his mysterious way of doing

things, God used the national crisis to make me more conscious of this truth.

The unchanging promise of peace

That’s why “peace on earth” rings a little differently this year.

I’ve always known that the world needs the baby Jesus. But that need has never seemed as real as it does this Advent season. In the manger we see the face of God, come in human flesh to pay the price for our sin, to heal our broken hearts, to curb our warring madness, to speak hope to our weary souls.

When I peer into the manger this year, my Savior’s face is so much more beautiful because my sin is before me, my heart has been broken, and my country is at war. Frightening as these times are, I realize that this, too, is from the hand of God. He knows me well. He knows that I need the words “peace on earth” to ring more forcefully in my life.

The sense of national security may be diminished, losses on Wall Street substantial, anxiety for our overseas armed forces high, yet the most crucial fact in my life remains



unchanged. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The peace he brings cannot change. God’s Son lay in a manger. The tomb is empty. The victory is won. His promises are assured.

As I contemplate my Savior’s first coming, I am reminded that Jesus still comes today, through Word and sacrament, speaking peace to my troubled heart. He is with me always with his forgiving love. Advent and Christmas remind me of my Savior’s promise that he is coming back, not as a baby, but as the Kings of Kings. He will rule in perfect justice and peace. He will wipe every tear from my eyes.

Yes, “peace on earth” rings a little differently this year. The angelic proclamation of peace rings sweeter than ever before!

Jeffrey Bonack is pastor at St. Paul, Muskego, Wisconsin.

