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July 2002

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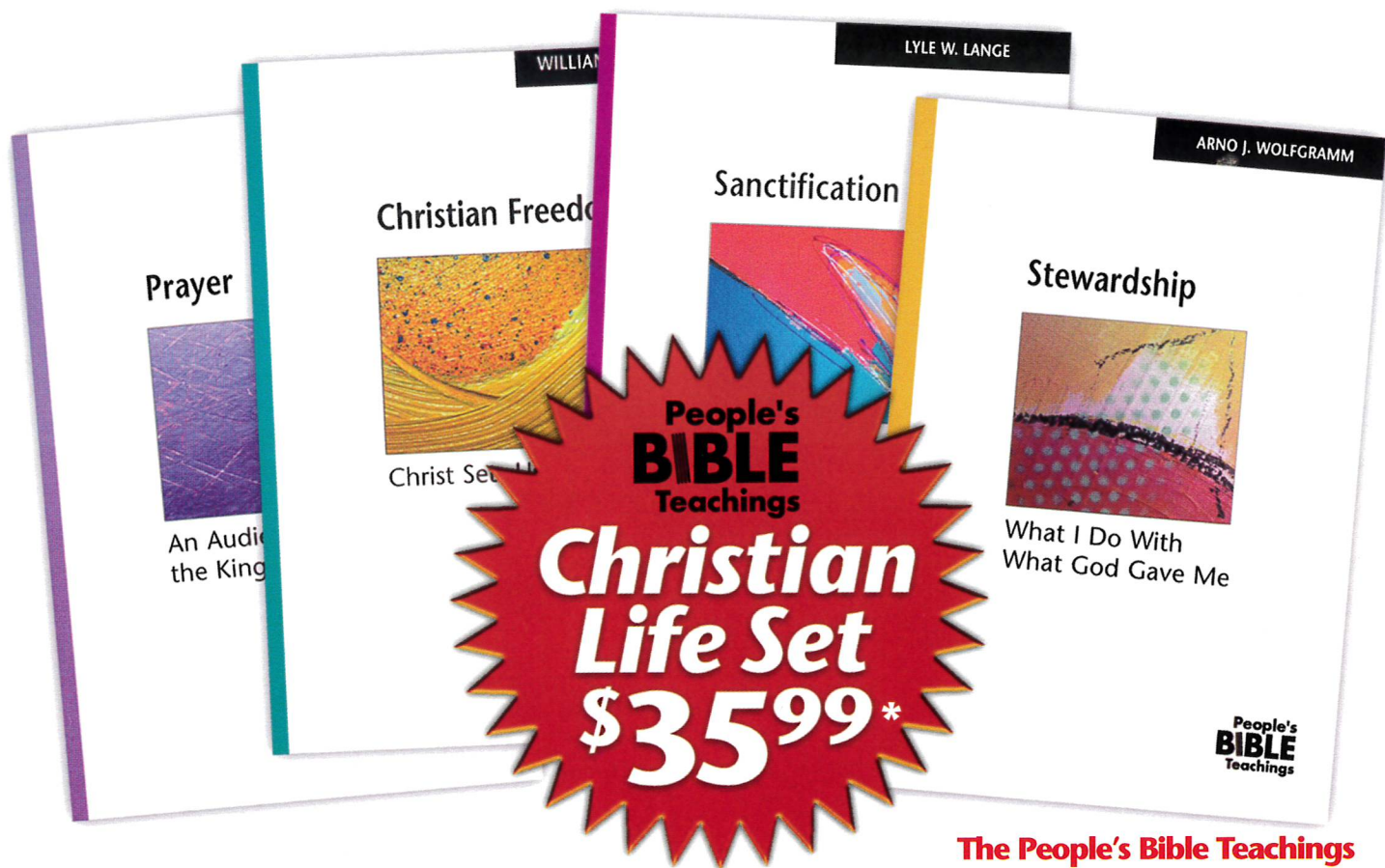
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God's Word to husbands

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Ephesians 5:25

Paul M. Janke

A dictionary entry for the word "husband" reads: "The male head of a household; one who directs the economy of a family." Following the entry is an abbreviation: "obs." It stands for obsolete.

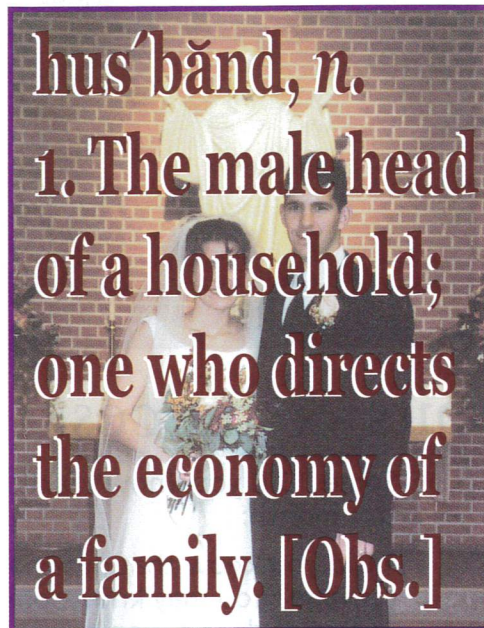
One wonders just what in that definition has become obsolete. Is it the concept of the male as head of the household? Or is it the idea that the husband directs the economy of the family? It seems that, though the word "husband" is also a verb meaning "to manage prudently," modern sensibilities are uncomfortable with the idea of the husband as the head of the household. Husband has come to mean simply "the male partner in a marriage." The implication is clear: headship is out.

God's Word has something different to say. Here the husband is called to be neither domineering nor passive. He is by God's design the head of his wife. But the apostle Paul shows us where that headship begins when he writes, "Husbands, love your wives."

Christ and his bride

Love can be a challenge to define. In this case, however, Christian husbands have a clear example of what it means to love their wives. "Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Jesus gave himself up for his bride, the church. He thought first of her needs, not his own. His first impulse was to serve not himself, but her. To meet the needs of his church he res-



olutely endured as people ignored, opposed, or abused him. He told his disciples, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Then he displayed that no-greater love and laid down his life for his bride.

A solid marriage—an intimate, enduring relationship characterized by mutual love—only begins to approximate the kind of relationship that exists between Christ and his church. Christ was not drawn to his bride by her loveliness. It was his love that made her lovely and radiant. His love never failed, never drew back. It stopped at nothing, not even the horror of death on a cross.

A Christian man and his bride

The world hears "head" as applied to a husband and immediately envisions a tinhorn, domestic tyrant who

holds his wife and children in joyless servitude. But that model for headship is not drawn from Christ or his apostles. A Christian husband loves his wife, exercising his headship first by sacrificing himself for her.

Television's depictions of husbands in recent years have run predominantly to two types: the husband who is crudely self-indulgent and the husband who is passive and inept, nearly unnecessary to the functioning of the family. In other words, the selfish head and the non-head.

By contrast, a Christian husband is conscious that he has a God-given leadership role to exercise for the temporal and eternal good of his wife and children. This is a high and difficult calling. It requires placing his wife's interests ahead of his own. It may call for him to ignore his fatigue or overcome his native lack of interest. Surely, if it could call for him to lay down his life for his wife, it calls for him to make those lesser sacrifices that are so much a part of daily life in a marriage.

It is due to Christ's selfless headship that Christian husbands and wives can stand holy and blameless before their Lord. His self-sacrificing love inspires Christian husbands to give themselves for their wives. ✨

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

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I was supposed to be having heartbeat checks and bringing home prenatal health pamphlets. Instead I was bringing home literature on miscarriage.

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bits & pieces



Some "Did you know" facts from *Forward in Christ* magazine this month:

- Did you know that over half of all pregnancies end in miscarriage? You may know someone who has had one, or several. But what does a woman really go through when she has a miscarriage? Here is one woman's journey and how she came to grips with God's plan for her and her family. Read "I will never forget you" (p. 8).
- Did you know that 140 people from 19 sister churches attended the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in Sweden this past April? Editor Gary Baumler was among those numbers. Read about our international relations in "We are not alone" (p. 18). Then tune in monthly to learn about each of our sister churches in the CELC.
- Did you know that to help cover costs, we are raising our prices? A yearly individual subscription in the United States will now cost \$12. That's still only \$1 a month for a magazine jam-packed with devotions, Bible studies, news, and inspirational articles. For more price information, check out <www.nph.net/html/periodicals.html>.



Two long-running series end this month.

- Wayne Mueller finishes taking a closer look at Lutheranism by examining our view on the hereafter (p. 12). We thank him for his insights into the attributes that make a Lutheran unique.
- We also are concluding our series on WELS high schools with a look at our two preparatory schools (p. 10). We hope that these articles have raised your awareness and knowledge of the important ministries of our Lutheran high schools.

—JKW

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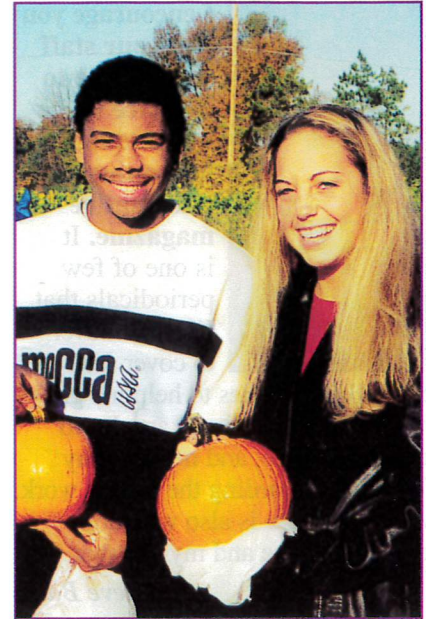
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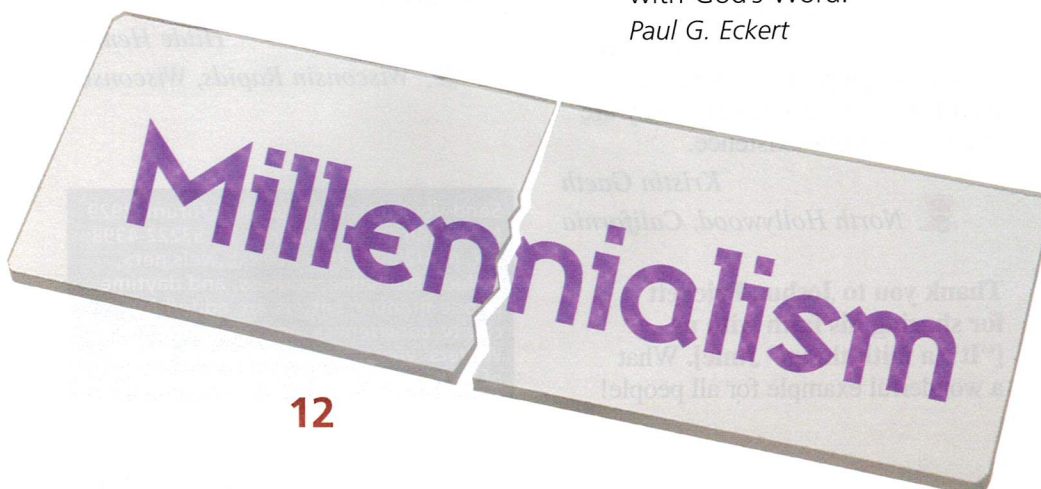
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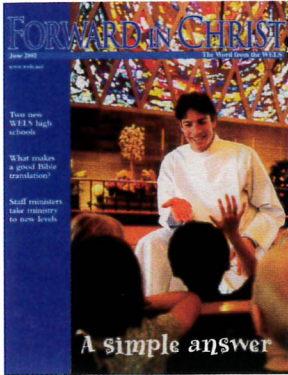
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I encourage you and your staff to continue to produce such a high-quality, interesting, and informative magazine. It is one of few periodicals that I'll read cover to cover. You

include Bible studies to help me grow in my faith, inspirational articles to stir me to service, and newsworthy information regarding the Lord's work. <www.wels.net> is also well done and a "hit" to me and my browser.

Steve Balza



Golden Valley, Minnesota

I had so much compassion when I read about the girl living with her fiancé [In the cross hairs, Apr.]. I, too, lived a life like that,

and I had no idea how I was hurting many others and myself. My heart was hard, and my need for love and acceptance was being met by this relationship (and I was blinded by the world and my sin). I was missing the one in my life who is love—Jesus! When the Holy Spirit reached out to me, I in short order saw how I'd hurt Jesus, my and her families, and, of course, both of us. She became a Christian recently, and we asked for forgiveness and forgave one another!

The point is that confrontation [by itself] rarely changes us—it's only by prayer and by the Holy Spirit convicting us of our sin (John 16:8) and showing us Jesus that we change. Then we have the power to live out a free life because of the one who set us free (John 8:36).

Chuck Krueger



Virginia Beach, Virginia

I agree that it is important to be sure to get names, facts, and quotations correct in our synod's official magazine. Yet I am trou-

bled that it appears that in addition to criticism regarding such matters, there is also an apparent defense of the television show *Crossing Over* [readers forum, Apr.]. Despite the error regarding the star's name and the alleged misquotation, Pastor Engelbrecht's point still stands: *Crossing Over* gives false comfort to those who mourn a death. Also, the issue is not whether the star is "for real or not," but what God's Word tells us. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 makes God's will clear, "Let no one be found among you . . . who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD. . . ."

Paul J. Henning
Echo, Minnesota

I would like to comment on "Welcome, new member!"

[Apr.]. There is such a great emphasis on involving new members in congregational activities, but I have yet to come across anything about the individuals in our congregations developing personal friendships in our churches. Members go to movies, concerts, or sporting events outside of congregational planned events. Why can't these opportunities also be extended to new members?

Laura V. Borchin
Flower Mound, Texas

I thought "Welcome, new member!" [Apr.] was well done. However, what about keeping current members active and involved? In a large congregation, if you are not well-known or prominent, many are unaware of your existence.

Kristin Gaeth



North Hollywood, California

Thank you to Joshua Prickett for sharing his faith with us ["It's a faith thing," June]. What a wonderful example for all people!

In this article, never once did Joshua ask, "Why me, Lord?" May your faith continue to sustain you, Joshua, in the coming days ahead, and may you hold on to the promise that one day we'll all be at home in heaven. The best is yet to be!

Sherry Mau



Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

Thank you for the excellent article "Lutherans live in two worlds"

[May]. I have long thought the reluctance of Lutherans and many other Christians to be active in the community and government was hiding one's talents. Finally an authoritative voice saying we should render more than obedience and taxes.

Christians need to serve within our church families and within our communities. We can be members of the election board, the zoning commission, committees on community health. We should attend local government meetings and let the Christian views be heard in our daily life. I know excellent Christians who would rather talk about anything but the idea that current problems in our country may have been caused by Christian reluctance to get involved in local government.

We need men and women with God's values to be out there helping direct our country. It might be a topic for discussion in our Christian day and high schools—how can I serve God in the community and local government?

Hilde Henkel



Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

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.



Be fruitful and multiply

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* was one of the most influential books of the late 20th century. Like Thomas Robert Malthus in the 19th century, Ehrlich predicted widespread starvation, misery, and environmental disaster if human populations continued to grow unchecked.

Ehrlich's ideas found a wide and receptive audience in the environmentally conscious 1970s. As a public-school kid back then, I remember being taught that the earth just couldn't sustain an infinite number of people and that, therefore, families who limited themselves to one or two children were doing a noble, heroic thing. They deserved our thanks for helping to avert the disaster soon to come upon us all.

Like Malthus's before him, however, Ehrlich's predictions proved fantastically wrong. Not only is population growth more complex than he imagined, but the relationship between population and prosperity is also more complex. But Ehrlich's ideas left their mark on my entire generation, and, through us, on an entire culture. Today the birthrate in many Western nations has fallen to the point where their populations are not even replacing themselves. In many places, birthrates began to shrink right around—you guessed it—the 1970s.

There may be other reasons for the low birthrate in the West besides the population doomsayers. Still, they ought to be held accountable for having been so completely wrong. Even more important is that the anti-people movement of the 20th century took a basic moral principle and stood it on its head.

"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it," God told us at our creation (Genesis 1:28). God loves people.

He wants his earth full of them, and it is an extraordinary act of his grace when he allows us to do the filling. The people of God whom we meet in Scripture are universally agreed that children are a blessing and that many children bring many blessings. It's one of the most notable features of the Bible's worldview—probably because it's one of the ways in which the Bible's worldview differs most sharply from the view of the modern West.

Bearing and raising children has always involved danger, sacrifice, and hard work. In fact, in agrarian societies like ancient Israel, the sacrifices and risks were greater, not less, than those faced by parents today. For instance, childbirth was a leading cause of death for women throughout much of human history. That is why, in the past, it was recognized that those who were taking the risks and making the sacrifices necessary to raise families were the "noble" and "heroic" ones. They were benefiting not just their own households, but their people as a whole.

So they were revered and their names immortalized. The elders of Bethlehem blessed Boaz with the words: "May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel" (Ruth 4:11).

May God bless those who are "building up" his people today, and may we give them all the help and support that we can. The world certainly isn't going to.

Ken Cherney is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

God loves
people. He
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I will never

A mom talks about finding peace after miscarriage.

Amy M. Schultz

Although sources may differ on the exact statistic, it is commonly accepted that over half of all pregnancies end in miscarriage. This means that over half of all fertilized eggs will not result in a live birth.

My first miscarriage happened over three years ago. I still remember what I was wearing and the sterile, medicinal smell of the exam room. I remember seeing the tiny sac, barely the size of a quarter. It was more than “fetal tissue” or a “product of conception,” as it was referred to that day—to me it was a life created by God. Not only had my husband and I chosen names and nursery themes, but in those short weeks, we had chosen a future for this child.

The doctor was reassuring me about how common miscarriage is, especially with first pregnancies. “Yes, of course it’s common,” I remember thinking. “Death itself is common. It happens all the time. But it happens to each person only once. And in this case it just happened way too soon.” I knew what the doctor meant. Yet, no matter what the statistics were, since it had happened to me, they meant nothing. For me, the statistics had been a 100 percent miscarriage rate.

I was supposed to be having heart-beat checks and bringing home prenatal health pamphlets. Instead I was bringing home literature on miscarriage and my empty womb. It was

ironic that it was a sunny afternoon because I drove home in a complete fog, trying to find a way to tell my husband that our baby was gone.

Since that day I have learned that life doesn’t always make sense. I learned that sometimes God creates a life, actually knits it together in a mother’s womb, only to end it a short time later. I learned not to

question why anymore, but to somehow find a way to entrust the intricate balance of life to God’s hands.

This isn’t an easy lesson. So often women today assume control of their reproductive abilities. They use methods of birth control in order to wait until the right time to try to start a family. They use advanced methods of assisted reproduction to maximize their chances for conception when they are ready.

Then, women detect pregnancy at its earliest stages by using home pregnancy tests and advanced ultrasound technology. Although this knowledge is beneficial for the medical world, for women of reproductive age, the knowledge may do more harm than good, because it makes it more difficult to let God be God.

Through it all God finds ways of showing us that he alone can create life—and he alone can choose to end it.

In those weeks following my miscarriage, I remember feeling so alone. The tremendous hormonal changes that take place in a woman’s body immediately after conception had been building. As the pregnancy ended, the hormones came crashing down. My maternal instinct felt so painfully torn apart. No one could possibly feel as close to this child as I had. Even my husband, my strongest support during that time, hadn’t experienced the maternal bonding or felt the physical pain of miscarriage.

How to cope with miscarriage

1. Take time to grieve. Talk about it when you need to and don’t be afraid to share your emotions.
2. Open up to your spouse and other loved ones. Remember, grandparents, siblings, aunts, and uncles also feel your loss and shouldn’t be closed off from your grieving.
3. Name your child. Even if the gender wasn’t known, give this child a name because he/she is deserving of an identity.
4. Create a memory box. Keep ultrasound pictures, cards, and any mementos of your baby.
5. Become knowledgeable about your miscarriage. Ask questions of your doctor, and talk to other people about their experiences. Seek professional help, or see a specialist, if you feel it is necessary.
6. Pray for healing and strength. Trust all things—including this beloved child’s soul—to the hands of our all-knowing God.



forget you

I also didn't want to keep hearing, "It's okay, you can always try again," or "At least you know you can get pregnant," or "It's probably for the best. I am sure the baby would have been badly deformed." Although all these consolations were well-meaning, they didn't hit the heart of the matter—that I had lost a child with whom I had bonded, and that I needed to grieve, to have the right to grieve.

I went to lay flowers on my grandfather's grave. It seemed appropriate, since I had no gravestone to mark the passing of my child. Yet, I knew that the Lord had a place for this soul. He created it, and he would protect it. I realized that God loves this child even more than I do—if that could be possible! Perhaps it was not for me to wonder or worry about this child anymore. He (she) is in better hands.

I realized one more thing about why parents long to have children. Not only do parents long to watch their children grow up, to attend soccer games and piano recitals, but they long to attach to a soul that God has entrusted to them. It isn't so much the bringing of children into the world that matters, but it's the bringing them out of it. It is bonding to a soul that parents can give back to God. That's what really matters: to be a tool in the shaping of a life—for eternity.

Now over three years have passed since that first miscarriage. During that time I finally conceived again, only to have another miscarriage.

Again, my heart was broken. Even now I still wonder sometimes, "Have there been more losses that I don't even know about?" Only God knows. And I have found peace with that.

I have also learned that joy follows after sorrow. Through God's grace and wisdom, on July 1, 2001, I gave birth to a healthy baby boy. I have never felt so blessed in all my life! God taught me patience, and he answered my prayers. Now I pray also for those who have not been so blessed.

There is a picture in my son's room of Jesus blessing the little children. I hung it over the changing table where he can always look up at it. I like to sing to him: ". . . little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me . . ." In my heart, I am singing those words to all of my children.



Amy Schultz, development coordinator at Christian Life Resources, is a member at Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wisconsin.



Mike, Amy, and Brandon Schultz.

I didn't know that

Learn some facts about our two synodical preparatory schools.

Charlene H. Lauersdorf

Fact: Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., is the nation's

oldest Lutheran high school. LPS traces its continuing history back to 1865 when Northwestern University (later Northwestern College) was founded as a six-year school beginning with the ninth grade.

Since the amalgamation in 1995, the enrollment has ranged from a low of 497 to a high of 575. The school is approaching its facility's top enrollment of 600, a cap set by the governing board.

President Mark Schroeder says, "One challenge for me and for the entire faculty is to maintain a truly personal relationship with students as the enrollment grows. Knowing students, their backgrounds, and their personalities is extremely important if we are to provide them the guidance they need not only for their lives on campus now, but also for the future."

Other challenges include helping them develop from young people to mature Christians able to live in our hostile world, helping them to make God-pleasing decisions about their futures, and instilling in them the desire for reaching lost souls.

Fact: This year over 70 percent of the senior class of Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., plan to attend Martin Luther

College (MLC) to become pastors and teachers. At one time in its history, MLS had a "general" course for students not training for the ministry. Today every student is training for MLC. Since 1910, about 45 percent of the graduates have gone on to ministerial education colleges. In the 1990s, that became 55 percent and this year 70 percent! The Lord indeed is blessing our efforts.

And did you know that the reason it's called "Seminary" goes back into its history? The old Michigan Synod used this site as its pastor-training seminary, and later when it became the prep school they hung onto the name for sentimental reasons. Today the school still functions as a "seed bed" of the gospel, preparing young people for the ministry.

Changes around the campus include many things to help students ready themselves for the ministry—managing study time, encouraging personal daily devotions, changing the curriculum to keep up with the changing needs of our population, bringing students up to speed with our electronic world and how it can be used in the ministry, plus working with people in local churches and beyond.

Fact: Two-thirds of the graduates of LPS come from homes of lay families.

"My father is a retired federal agent."

Similarly at MLS:

"My father works maintenance at MLS, and my mother is self-employed."

These quotes show a little of the diversity of the students in these synod schools. They were convinced to come to the prep schools by friends, cousins, siblings, a judge at a fine arts fair, teachers, and pastors. You never know when just the right word "rings a bell" with someone, no matter what their background.

Fact: Since 1985, MLS has instructed students from 23 countries, including

Albania, Antigua, Canada, Colombia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Mexico, Russia, Switzerland, Taiwan, Ukraine, and Zambia. Many participate in a full English as a Second Language program. Some continue their studies at MLC, and some return to their own countries to study in the ministerial education systems of the churches in our fellowship. The presence of these young people as fellow "Semers" broadens the horizons of all, taking them beyond hometown thinking.

At LPS a student of another culture was asked how many minorities were members of the student body. His answer was, "There are not many minorities overall, but the interesting thing is that when you come to LPS as a member of a minority group,

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 expect heaven in heaven

The teaching of millennialism—a prominent threat to the Bible’s teaching of heaven and hell—is making a comeback. But with our hands set to the work at hand, the eyes of our hope are intently focused on future glory.

Wayne D. Mueller

Faith in God means trusting him for the long term. Faithlessness focuses on the here and now.

Short-term thinking led Israel to demand a king so they could be more like the nations around them and also led Israel’s kings to seek allies among the heathen countries instead of trusting that God would preserve their nation. It prompted the Jews of Jesus’ day to look for a Messiah that would deliver them from the Romans. It tempted Peter to tell Jesus not to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. It led the disciples at the Ascension to ask Jesus when he would establish his earthly kingdom.

Today’s world is still filled with that faithless, short-sighted view of God. The premise of a social gospel focuses on the here and now instead of eternity’s then and there. American materialism deflects attention from God by setting its sights on instant gratification. Even mainline Christianity has been infected by the short-range thinking of millennialism.

A farsighted view

With clear and loving words, God delivers Lutherans from these

shortsighted views. “Set your minds on things above,” Paul urges, “not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2). Lutherans don’t expect heaven on earth. Jesus told us, “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). We look for heaven in heaven, for the same Savior promised us, “I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

Faith’s clear focus on distant glory does not distract us from the work in front of us.

Luther shared Scripture’s farsighted worldview. He wrote, “For if we would be Christians, the ultimate objects of our quest should not be marrying, giving in marriage, buying, selling, planting—activities Christ says the wicked will be engaged in. But our ultimate quest should be something better and higher: the blessed inheritance of heaven that does not pass away” (*What Luther Says* 1891).

Faith’s clear focus on distant glory, however, does not distract us from the work in front of us. Because we are not taken in by the “second chances”

offered in the teachings of purgatory and millennialism, Lutherans have a keen sense of the nature and urgency of today’s task. The future holds either heaven or hell—no second chances, no alternatives. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

For that reason the Savior himself urged us to focus on the task before us. Trusting in heaven does not mean spending our time on earth standing around with our eyes in the sky (Acts 1:11). “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me,” Jesus said. “Night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4). Since faith comes by hearing the Word, our immediate calling is to get the Word out or moving up quickly to as many as possible.

A formidable threat

The devil is busy distracting us from our gospel task. He tries to take the edge off our sense of urgency by watering down the Bible’s straightforward teaching about the impending judgment.

Most devious are his circumventions of hell. Satan plays on mankind’s

natural aversion to giving a final account to God. Many denominations follow his lead. Mormons teach that no one suffers eternally in hell. Instead, after death, people work themselves through levels of heaven. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists teach that the wicked will not suffer eternally but will be annihilated. Roman Catholicism offers an alternative to hell with a contrived purgatory where people can earn their way to heaven after death.

Because of mainline Christianity's influence in our country, many of these hell dodges are not prominently advertised. Even though officially taught, false churches put these teachings on the back burner in hopes of proselytizing Christians. But the teaching of millennialism—a prominent threat to the Bible's teaching of heaven and hell—is making a comeback within the ranks of Christian churches.

Millenarians, as millennialists are properly called, have roots dating back before Christ. Although the Old Testament never mentions a millennium, Jewish fables imagined a 400-year messianic kingdom based on an apocryphal reference (2 Esdras 7:28). After Christ, Revelation 20:1-7 was misinterpreted by a number of false teachers to expand on the old Jewish notion of an earthly reign of peace.

Millenarians are divided into two camps. The premillenarians believe that Christ will return at the beginning of a 1,000-year period prior to the final judgment. During this time the whole world will be won over

by the gospel. At the end of this age, the devil will try to reestablish himself, but will be defeated and confined to a lake of fire.

Postmillenarians say that Christ will return at the end of a 1,000-year age. During that time there will be a mass conversion of Jews and eventually of all people on earth. Toward the end there will be a brief apostasy linked with Satan's attempt to reassert himself. After Satan's final defeat, Christ will return in glory, destroy the earth, and take believers to glory in heaven.

The light of Scripture

The teaching of a millennium is mentioned only once in Scripture, in Revelation 20:1-7. The word literally means "a thousand years." Yet, no doubt, in its Revelation context it is to be understood figuratively. Everything leading up to the mention of the millennium (1,2) is clearly figurative. Jesus is pictured as an angel. A key and chain represent Christ's power over Satan. Hell is pictured as an abyss. Satan is called a dragon. Figuratively, the millennium is the whole New Testament age.

Yet contrary to the immediate context and against all testimony in the rest of Scripture, millenarians demand that the thousand years in Revelation 20 be understood as a literal 1,000 years. However, Jesus spoke against every notion of an earthly "Christian kingdom." The last days, Jesus said, would not be characterized by peace and mass conversions. Rather there will be "wars and rumors of war" (Matthew 24:6). There will be "many

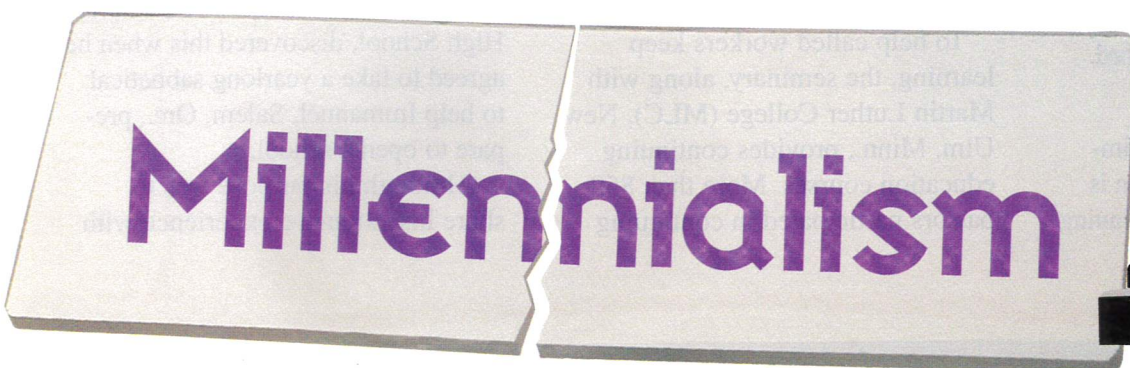
false prophets" and "the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:11,12).

Millennialism poses grave dangers to the Christian faith. It pretends to be Bible based, but operates with a twisted interpretation of a single passage. It opposes clear Bible witness. It gives false comfort to those who want to hold on to their worldly lifestyles by offering them a second chance for conversion. It is rooted in an earthly kingdom concept that our Savior warned us against. For that reason, Lutherans, along with their founding fathers, reject millennialism in the 17th article of the Augsburg Confession.

Forward in Christ

Since heaven is the only alternative to hell and there will be no second chances at conversion, Lutherans intently focus on their earthly mission. But with our hands set to the work at hand, the eyes of our hope are intently focused on future glory. "In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). Instead of the vain pursuit of heaven on earth, we have the sure hope of heaven in heaven.

Wayne Mueller is first vice president of WELS.



Growing to serve

Helping our called workers keep up with the changing times through continuing education is important so that we don't hamper our true mission—going out and spreading the Word.

Julie K. Wietzke

Scene: A church council meeting.
Situation: Not enough money in the budget to fund all the necessary programs.

Answer: "Our called workers are so busy. They're not going to have any time to go to any classes or seminars this year. Let's just take the money we need from the professional development fund."

Good answer? Not really. The world is changing daily, and if our called workers don't continue their education, they are eventually preaching and teaching with 10-year-old technologies to a world they don't recognize.

"It's not the message that is changing. The message is still the truth of God's Word," says Dan Schmeling, former administrator for the Commission on Parish Schools. "But the understanding of the audience and how to communicate with that audience—that's what's changing."

Helping our called workers keep up with the changing times through continuing education is important so that we don't hamper our true mission—going out and spreading the Word.

Why go back to school?

One way WELS stresses the importance of continuing education is through its Committee for Continuing

Education of Called Workers (CECW).

The committee especially concentrates on continued growth in the Word. "We as individual Christians, as public ministers of the Word, need to grow personally in the Word because that's the means by which the Holy Spirit causes our faith to grow," says Jon Mahnke, CECW chairman.

The committee also stresses how called workers need to keep growing in their understanding of the fast changing world and how to work in that world.

This is not a new concept. Businesses all over the world recognize how important it is for their employees to keep up with changing times. Professionals can't go to school for four, or even eight, years and expect to know it all.

"There is no way in an educational program that we can touch on everything available," says James Korthals, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. "We provide a foundation and the tools that students need so that they can learn for the rest of their lives."

To help called workers keep learning, the seminary, along with Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., provides continuing education courses. More than 850 pastors participated in continuing

education through the seminary in 2001—115 in a summer session on campus and more than 750 in off-campus locations. In 2001, more than 600 people took MLC courses to continue their education in staff ministry, administration, early childhood, or elementary or secondary school teaching.

What is continuing education?

But professional growth is more than just going "back to school" for more credits.

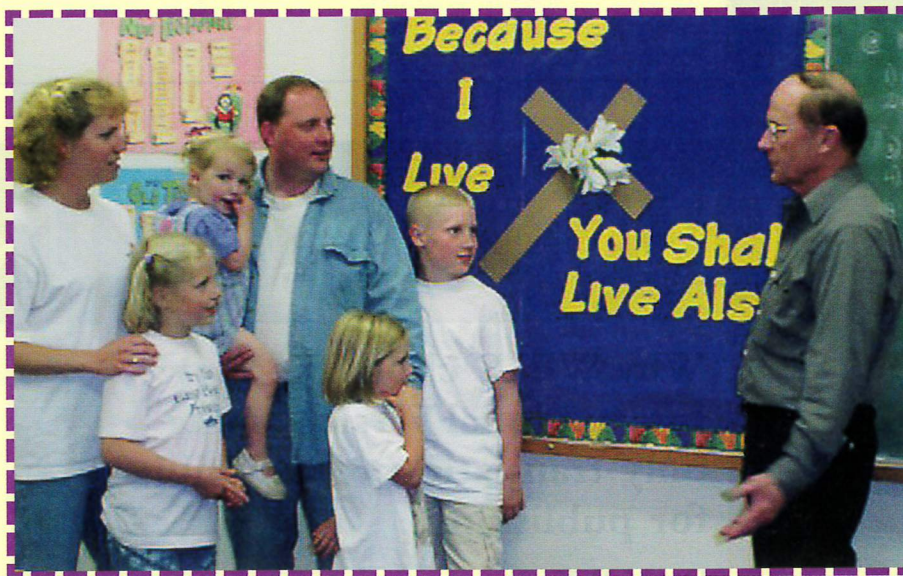
"The goal is to intentionalize education so that you're always growing," says Peter Kruschel, administrator for the Board for Ministerial Education and CECW member.

This means that you're always looking for ways, either publicly or privately, to grow in your knowledge—whether it's the books you read, a conference you attend, or a trip you take (see sidebar).

Sometimes even in serving others, you gain a new perspective.

Dr. George LaGrow, former assistant principal at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, discovered this when he agreed to take a yearlong sabbatical to help Immanuel, Salem, Ore., prepare to open a school.

Although his purpose was to share his extensive experience with



George LaGrow (right) discusses the new Immanuel Lutheran School in Salem, Ore., with the Wasser family.

Immanuel, he also “went back to school” on this trip.

“I have a deeper understanding of how congregations function today,” says LaGrow. “I’ve been away [in education] for the last 24 years and not involved in a congregation other than as a member. I forgot how a congregation struggles with decision making.”

He continues, “It reminded me of what a people business we’re in.”

LaGrow says this “education” has rejuvenated his ministry. “[A sabbatical] is a wonderful way to gain different insights and to remember the people that we’re serving.”

How can we help?

Cooperation and encouragement from schools and congregations play an important part in our called workers’ continued education. Without the support of Manitowoc Lutheran High School, LaGrow couldn’t have taken the time to help, and to grow, in Oregon.


A WELS survey in 2000 revealed that 83 percent of the 4,488 WELS members who were surveyed believe that called workers need continuing education. The problem, the survey showed, is that WELS congregations and members either don’t provide

enough aid or don’t know how to help. Schmeling offers a few suggestions:

- Expect your called workers to continue their education, and let them know your expectation. Have them share their professional growth plan with you.
- Give your called workers paid time off to pursue continuing education.
- Include money for continuing education in the budget
- Explore the idea of basing salary changes on continuing education.

All these methods will encourage called workers to look beyond time constraints and the work they have now to see how they can improve their ability to share Christ in the future.

“Whether it is a teacher taking a class in cooperative learning or effective methods in teaching science or a pastor taking a class in counseling or a certain book of the Bible, we are growing in our ability to profess Christ to the world,” says Schmeling.

And that’s what it’s all about. 

Julie Wietzke is senior communications assistant for Forward in Christ magazine and WELS Communication Services.

Continue to learn

Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking:

- Attend national WELS conferences such as the National Conference on Worship, Music & the Arts (pictured), WELS Tech, and various teacher conferences. Check out the WELS Web site, <www.wels.net>, for times and places.



Mary Prange (left) directs a choral reading workshop at the 1999 Worship Conference.

- Take courses from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary or Martin Luther College. Courses can be held on- or off-campus. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, <www.wls.wels.net/conted/ceindex.htm> or contact James Korthals, 414/242-8160; <korthalj@wls.wels.net>. Martin Luther College, <www.mlc-wels.edu/SpecialServices/Default.html> or contact John Paulsen, 507/354-8221; <paulsejw@mlc-wels.edu>.
 - Borrow books, essays, articles, audio- and videotapes from the seminary or MLC libraries.
 - Set up small group study sessions with area teachers and pastors.
 - Contact a local university or college for information about continuing education courses.
 - Consider taking a sabbatical in ministry to share your talents and to gain valuable insights into different types of ministry.
 - Subscribe to magazines in your field. The seminary and Martin Luther College have professional journals—*Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* and *Lutheran Educator*. To subscribe, contact Northwestern Publishing House Subscription Services, 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8 (Milwaukee area 414/615-5785) or go on-line at <www.wels.net/nph/html/periodicals.html>.
 - Take a trip. Many vacation spots are steeped in history and culture. Learn while you relax, and share your photos and knowledge when you return.
 - Don’t forget about individual and group Bible study. Always stay rooted in the Word.



A SUITABLE TRANSLATION

Why WELS chose the New International Version as its only translation of the Bible for publishing.

David P. Kuske

A growing number of English-speaking people are using the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible. A recent *USA Today* article (3/27/02) estimated that 150 million copies of the NIV are in circulation, second only to the King James Version (KJV). Most WELS congregations use the NIV in worship. Our synod uses it in publications such as the catechism, *Meditations*, and Sunday school and Bible class materials. How did it happen that this particular translation came to be the one used most widely among us?

The need to use one translation

To answer that question we need to go back to the 1970s. In the preceding decade, instead of the King James Version, a number of our congregations began to use one of the newer translations available at the time such as Dr. William Beck's An American Translation. Others favored the New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version, or Today's English Version. A few preferred the Berkeley Version or the Living Bible. All of these Bibles had been published in an original or a revised edition in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

In 1974 the WELS Commission on Christian Literature called a meeting of pastors and teachers who were responsible for or involved in writing and publishing literature in our synod. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss Bible translations. Should WELS produce a translation of its own? Should our synod begin using a translation other than the King James Version in its publications? If so, which translation should it be? Or would it be good to use a number of translations instead of only one? The purpose of the meeting was to make recommendations to the next synod convention.

Early on the general consensus was that one translation should be chosen rather than a number of translations. If one translation was used in children's publications such as the catechism, it would be inadvisable to use a different

translation in adult materials such as *Meditations*. This might discourage the memorization of portions of the Bible. Knowing Bible passages from memory is important in the life of the Christian—for one's own encouragement or comfort or strengthening, or for sharing the gospel with others. Using several translations in our publications would not promote this.

Another factor that favored choosing one translation was the confusion that might result from the use of several translations. Writers might use selected portions of one translation in Sunday school and worship materials (even though this translation was not always doctrinally accurate) simply because it was easy to understand. Other writers might use another translation in catechism class and Bible class materials (even though it was not always easy to understand) because this translation was doctrinally accurate. But would people understand why some writers used one translation for one reason and other writers another translation for a different reason? For example, would everyone understand that one translation was doctrinally accurate and the other wasn't?

Deciding which translation to use

The decision was made to try to settle on one translation. But which one? A number of essayists presented evaluations of the translations under consideration.

- The Living Bible was a paraphrase, and so its words were too far removed from the original languages.
- The Revised Standard Version was easier to understand than the KJV, but its translation of Old Testament passages foretelling the coming of Christ left much to be desired.
- Today's English Version was easy to understand, but it failed

to translate all the doctrinal passages with acceptable accuracy.

- An American Translation was easy to understand, but its style did not make it easy to read aloud in worship, and the translation of the Old Testament was not as accurate as the New Testament.
- The New American Standard Bible was fairly accurate, but the royalty it charged for quoting passages would have made the cost of publishing a book like the catechism prohibitive.

By the time the three-day meeting ended, the group had reached consensus on two more points. One was that our synod should undertake the translation and publication of our own translation. In the meantime, the only translation that held some promise was the New International Version.

All things considered, the NIV is not a perfect translation, but it is useable.

Qualities of the NIV translation

It was impossible to recommend this translation to the next synod convention for use in WELS publications. The translators had not yet completed the NIV Old Testament. Also, the NIV New Testament had not been available far enough in advance of the meeting for everyone present to examine it as closely as the other translations.

So the meeting closed with the resolution that the faculty of our seminary should carefully study the NIV New Testament and report its findings to the synod. Interested pastors, teachers, and laypeople were encouraged to share their study of the NIV with the seminary faculty. The seminary faculty reported to the 1975 synod convention that the NIV New Testament was the

best translation available at the time, but that a study of the Old Testament still needed to be done.

When Zondervan published the complete NIV Bible in 1978, most WELS pastors and teachers had worked with the NIV enough to know more about it. There was general agreement with the seminary faculty's report on the NIV.

The subsequent synod convention approved the NIV for Northwestern Publishing House to use in the materials it published. But the convention resolution carefully avoided saying that our synod was adopting the NIV as its official Bible.

All things considered, the NIV is not a perfect translation, but it is useable. It retains the dignity of language that had made the KJV the favorite English translation in WELS for a half century. It uses words that are common to 20th-century English and so is easier to understand than the KJV. It has no serious doctrinal inaccuracies. Like the KJV, it does have some passages that could be translated better. It also has some long, complicated sentences, especially in the New Testament epistles, that are a bit hard to understand. But overall it makes the NIV easier for us to read much of the Bible with understanding. It is a translation that we could use to teach doctrine. It allows us to use one Bible instead of several in our publications.

Most WELS members will agree that the NIV is serving us well. Most likely, we will continue to use it in the foreseeable future—unless the changing English language makes the NIV outdated and a new translation appears that is superior to the NIV.

David Kuske is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

“We are not alone”

Member churches of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference share one confession, one fellowship, one faith.

Gary P. Baumler

Lars Larsson was not talking about alien creatures from outer space. He was talking about confessional Lutherans from other countries that share his faith in Christ. “We are not alone” was his emphatic response to the question: “What does it mean to have this conference here in Sweden?”

It was the fourth triennial meeting of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) held April 23-25 in Kungälv, a suburb of Gothenburg, Sweden. Lars, who took three days off from work to attend, is a layman of the Lutheran Confessional Church of Sweden and Norway. In all, 140 people of 19 sister churches from 18 different countries, plus observers, attended under the theme “Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever.”

The CELC is a group of Lutheran church bodies together with WELS that share a common confession. The purpose of the CELC is to give expression to our unity of faith; to encourage sharing of the gospel with others; to give a clear, firm, and united testimony to the world; and to prepare and publish confessional statements on issues that confront the church today. At this conference, members of the CELC adopted seven confessional essays on justification and

heard five essays on the person and work of Christ.

As Larsson also said, “We build up our faith.”

A shared challenge

Given that many of the churches are small, struggling groups, in some cases isolated from liberal state churches, Larsson spoke for many. In the words of Pastor Julius Njume of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon: “I thought we were small. We have much to do. We just have to keep going.”

“This conference is very important,” echoes Reinaldo Cruz, president of his church in Puerto Rico. “We think we are the only ones, but there are others like us. And they have the same problems. We can adjust our perspective, and we get hints and information to help us approach sinners with the gospel.”

Nikolay Pribytko of Russia found it particularly helpful to talk with others about the problems in their countries. He remarked, for example, how the influence of the shamans (witch doctors) over the people in Africa is not unlike that of some Orthodox priests over the people in Russia.

Several of the CELC member churches are in their infancy, and the way ahead often appears threatening. “We have a challenge,” says Pastor Egil Edvardsen of the

Lutheran Confessional Church of Sweden and Norway. “We must be faithful and not give up.”

A shared confidence

And God provides. The Lutheran Confessional Church of Sweden and Norway, for example, had five students who were training for the ministry attend the conference. Peter Ohman, with four years of study ahead of him, shares his perspective: “It is good to meet so many people from different cultures and to learn of the challenges in each country. We are a struggling church, a small church. We get encouragement here, and we see how the Word has spread. We hear the Word, and we know from God that we are able to do this.”

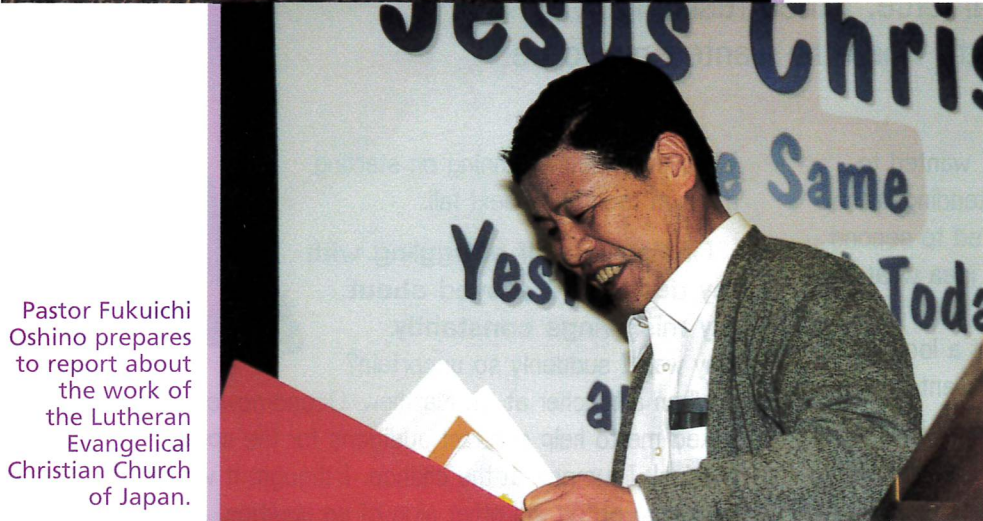
Yes, small churches, challenged churches from all parts of the world, sharing one confession, one fellowship, one faith. What makes them confident? A single remark by a companion during a break sums it up. We were looking across the river valley at the ancient, never-conquered Bohus Fortress. “A Mighty Fortress!” he said.



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



The nearly 700-year-old Bohus Fortress stood just across the river valley from the conference site in Kungälv, Sweden. Never conquered, the fortress provided a fitting symbol for the conference theme, "Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever."



Pastor Fukuichi Oshino prepares to report about the work of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church of Japan.



ELS missionary Timothy Erickson (left) points out the location of some mission work in Peru. Erickson translated for Pastor Segundo Gutierrez (right) at the conference.

Lars Larsson (right) of the Lutheran Confessional Church of Sweden and Norway exchanges thoughts with Pastor Akim Daile of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Malawi Conference.



first of a 10-part series

History of the CELC

The Synodical Conference, for years a forum for confessional Lutheranism, was split by doctrinal controversy and then disbanded in 1967. After that time, interest grew to establish a new organization similar to the Synodical Conference.

That hope became reality when 13 constituting church bodies met in Oberwesel, Germany, on Apr. 27-29, 1993. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) of North America joined with church bodies from South America, Germany, Norway and Sweden, Finland, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Japan, Africa, and Australia in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). The word "confessional" in the name was key.

Since then, six more church bodies have joined the CELC, and others are showing interest. At this year's conference, the members established a set of guidelines for membership, including the category of associate (non-voting) membership for those wanting closer organizational ties with the CELC but who aren't ready for full voting membership.

The story of the CELC is best told by the stories of each of its member churches. In the next several months, *Forward in Christ* magazine will bring you those stories. Meanwhile, be sure to pray that the gospel of Jesus Christ might fill your brothers and sisters around the world with strength and hope.

WHATEVER

A powerful force

The will of God is a powerful force. I tried resisting it, and he pulled me right back to where he wanted me to be.

Joshua J. Wendt

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher. When I started attending Luther Preparatory School (LPS), I started to second guess that choice. However, I had no idea what else I wanted to do with my life.

In October 2000 I began working at a local bank. I loved what I did and decided that I wanted to study business. I was accepted at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and thought that I had my life figured out.

Meanwhile, my pastors, teachers, family, and friends were stunned. They assumed that I was planning on attending Martin Luther College (MLC) and expressed their disappointment. They told me that they had always thought I would make a terrific teacher. I pushed these things out of my mind and concentrated on my new aspirations.

Slowly things began to change. During my senior year, I met with MLC recruiters several times. The meetings made me uncomfortable. Whenever professors spoke about attending MLC, I tensed up and tried to reassure myself that I was making the right decision. Something didn't seem right with that. Why did I need to keep reassuring myself?

Every senior at LPS travels to an area WELS grade school and spends two days observing in a classroom. I tried to get out of it, but the professor who coordinated it strongly encouraged me to participate. I spent two days at St. James, Milwaukee. I assumed that I was going to hate it, but I enjoyed it immensely. The students and the teacher were great. When I got home, it made me think again.

My mentor at church has given me many opportunities to explore one of my greatest interests—parish music. She often lets me direct different choirs in my church.

I had even been planning on starting my own teen choir next fall.

Finding myself struggling with my decision, I prayed about my misgivings constantly.

Why was I suddenly so uncertain?

When a teacher at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., asked me to help conduct auditions for the spring musical, I jumped at the chance. I thought it would be fun to be on the other side of an audition.

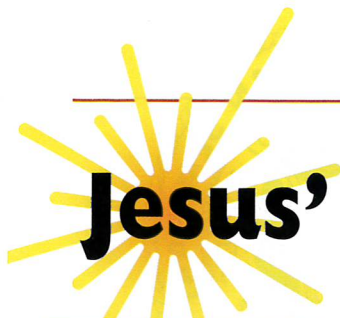
This experience affected me more powerfully than I could have imagined. Watching those kids audition made me think about my future. I didn't want to spend my life behind a desk. I wanted to spend it teaching kids. I wanted to share the love of their heavenly Father with them. I wanted to inspire them to follow their dreams. After the auditions concluded, I talked to faculty members about my concerns and fears. They helped me realize that I had just been afraid to put my future in God's hands.

I didn't sleep that night. I was thinking and praying until dawn. When I got to school the next morning, I picked up an MLC application. I mailed it out the following day, knowing that my heavenly Father had led me to do his will.

Our past, present, and future are in the Lord's hands. The will of God is a powerful force. I tried resisting it, and he pulled me right back to where he wanted me to be. Don't resist him. Put your trust in the Father. "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:21).

Joshua Wendt, a member at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, will be a freshman at Martin Luther College this fall.





Jesus' miracles: PORTRAITS OF REDEMPTION

Mark J. Lenz

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever gotten lost while on a trip? Did you ask for directions, or did you try to find your way on your own? Have you ever been at your wit's end in life? Why is asking for directions when we're lost the last thing we want to do? Why is seeking God's help in life often the last thing we think of?

TEXT—MARK 5:25-34

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." ²⁹Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

³¹"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

³²But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

³³Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

QUESTIONS

1. What were this woman's physical and financial conditions?
2. Why did the Jews of Jesus' day shun people such as this woman (Leviticus 15:25-33)?
3. What do the woman's thoughts and actions suggest about what she had heard about Jesus?
4. What happened the moment the woman touched Jesus' clothes?
5. Why did Jesus ask who touched his clothes? Why did the disciples find Jesus' question puzzling?
6. What three things did the woman do after she knew she was healed? What is the significance of each?
7. Some believe that if their faith is strong enough they will be healed. Was it this woman's faith that resulted in her healing? Explain.

QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

8. The Greek word translated as "healed" actually means "saved." With that in mind, what did Jesus mean when he told the woman to "Go in peace"?

APPLICATIONS

1. How does this woman typify the hopelessness of sinners without Christ?
2. People sometimes consult a variety of doctors to find a cure for their plague of sin. What advice do the following doctors give: Dr. Resolution? Dr. Character? Dr. Example? What is the fatal flaw of each?
3. Concerning this woman, St. Augustine said, "Many thronged him, but one touched him." What do you suppose he meant? St. Augustine also said, "God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love." What comfort does this give you?
4. Women had an inferior status in the Hebrew culture of Jesus' day. They were excluded from public life and could be divorced for merely talking to a man on the street. How does Jesus show that he is not concerned about such social taboos? Think of other times when Jesus ignored social taboos concerning women.
5. Why do we sometimes rely on God only as a last resort? How can we overcome this tendency?

PRAYER

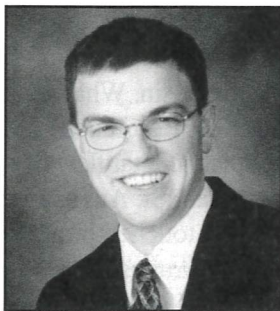
Lord Jesus, I confess that by nature I am polluted with sin and alienated from you. Try as I might I can find no cure from the spiritual doctors of this world who prescribe such medicines as new resolutions, lofty ideals, and fine examples. You alone are my hope and my salvation. You alone have cleansed me and made me whole. Thank you for paying the price for my redemption on Calvary's cross. Fill my heart with peace and cause this peace to be revealed in my words and reflected in my actions so that others might discover that you alone are the great Physician of souls. Hear me for your mercy's sake. Amen.

Mequon, Wis.

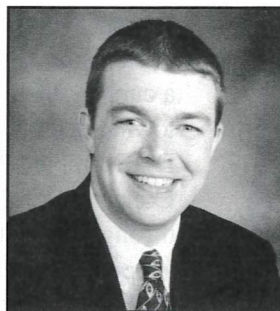
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY



At the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation service on May 22, 34 graduates received their Master of Divinity degrees.



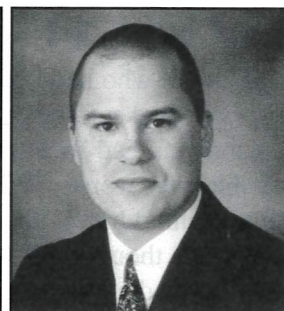
Nathan C. Buege
Canton, Mich.



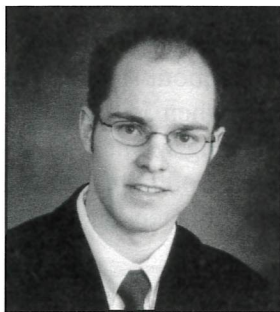
James G. Buske
Ixonia, Wis.



Christian J. Christenson
New Ulm, Minn.



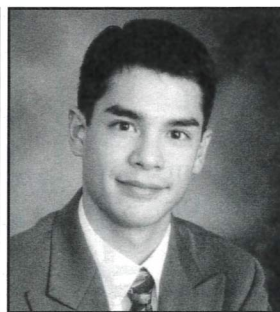
Joseph A. Christina
Grayslake, Ill.



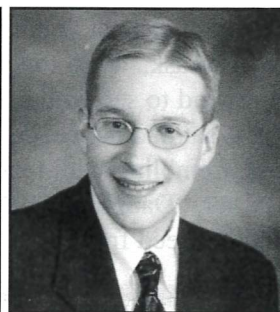
Justin C. Cloute
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



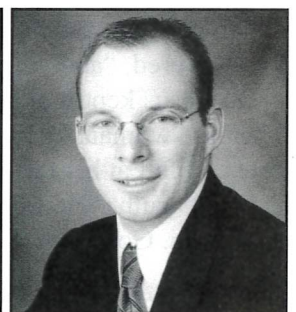
Joseph A. Crabtree
Phoenix, Ariz.



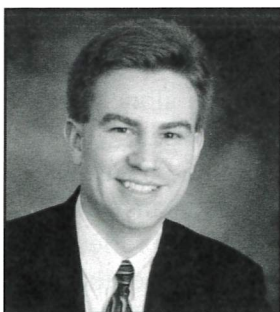
Hernandez L. Daylo Jr.
Tomah, Wis.



Thomas R. Ehnert
West Bend, Wis.



Jeffrey D. Enderle
Dix Hills, N.Y.



Nathan R. Ericson
Cannon Falls, Minn.



Timothy D. Gray
Camas, Wash.



Frederick J. Guldberg
Richfield, Minn.



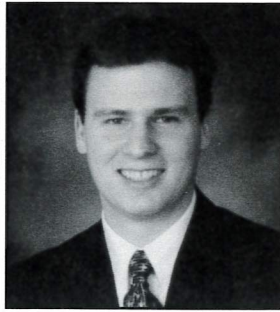
N. Wayne Halldorson
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



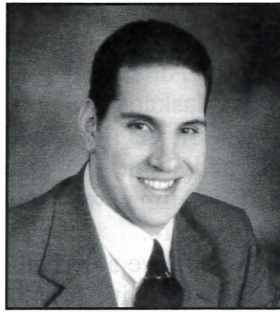
Ryan A. Heiman
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Joshua P. Hillmann
Sparta, Wis.



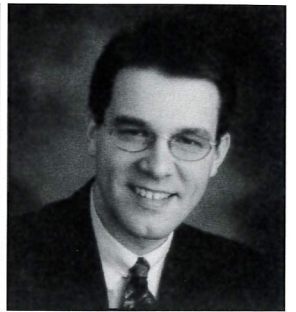
Steven M. Hillmer
Fond du Lac, Wis.



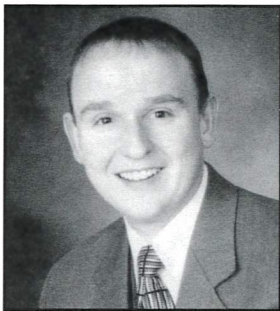
Darren A. Knoll
Appleton, Wis.



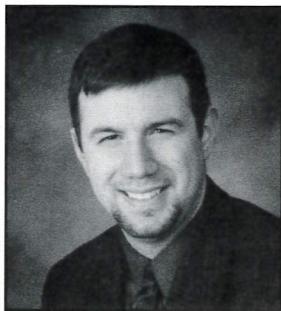
Timothy A. Kolb
Bay City, Mich.



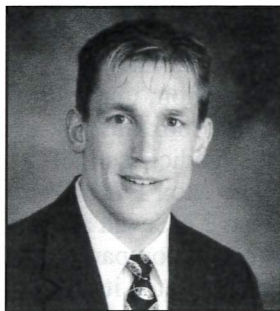
Jonathan T. Leach
Milwaukee, Wis.



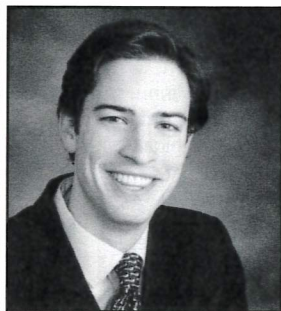
Lance R. McMorrow
South Saint Paul, Minn.



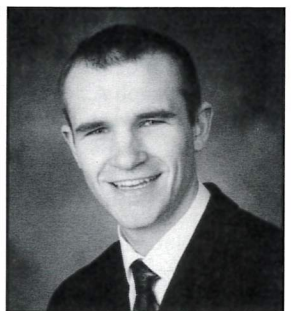
Paul S. Meitner
Milwaukee, Wis.



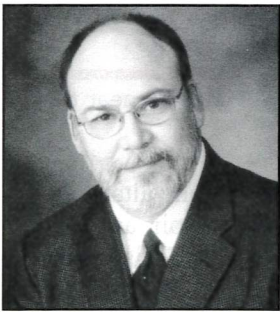
Stephen J. Meyer
Milwaukee, Wis.



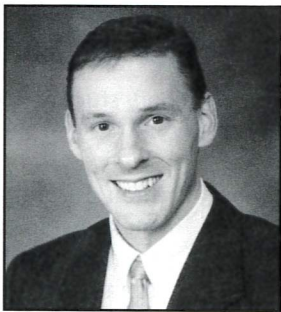
Jared J. Oldenburg
Appleton, Wis.



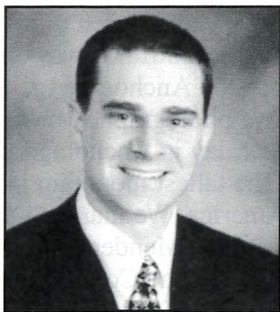
Benjy E. Pederson
Zumbrota, Minn.



Christopher L. Raiford
Hustisford, Wis.



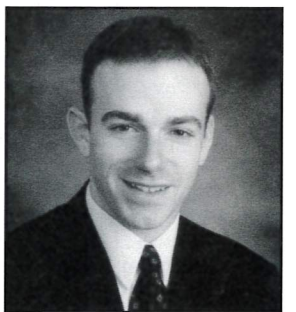
Allen M. Schleusener
Tomah, Wis.



Jason L. Schmidt
New Ulm, Minn.



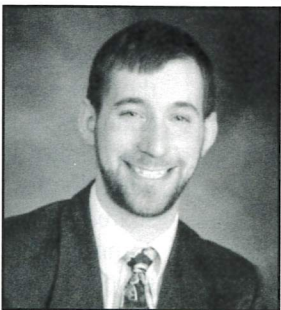
John E. Seelman
Milwaukee, Wis.



Jason J. Thiel
Oakley, Mich.



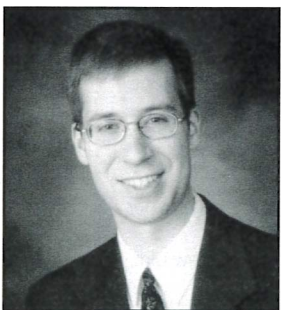
Newton K. Trimmer
Milwaukee, Wis.



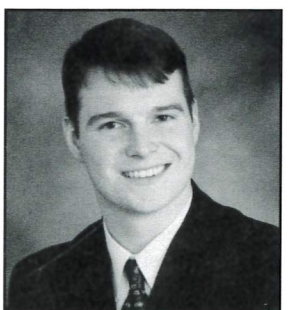
Michael J. Vogel
Kennewick, Wash.



Benjamin B. Wessel
Fond du Lac, Wis.



David H. Wietzke
York, Neb.



Matthew J. Zimpelmann
Eagle River, Wis.

Assignments

At the call service held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on May 21, 41 men received calls. Thirty-four of those men graduated in 2002. One was reassigned from the class of 2001. Six were reassigned from the class of 2000. The following calls were assigned:

Berger, Benjamin W., Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.
Buege, Nathan C., exploratory outreach, Katy, Tex.
Buske, James G., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Christenson, Christian J., Trinity, Rural Lake City/Trinity, Millville, Minn.
Christina, Joseph A., Good Shepherd, Holmen, Wis.
Cloute, Justin C., Mt. Zion, Missoula, Mont.
Crabtree, Joseph A., Grace, Ridgeway, Minn.
Daylo, Hernandez L. Jr., Grace, Glendale, Ariz.
Ehnert, Thomas R., assistant to the Michigan District president, Midland, Mich.
Enderle, Jeffrey D., Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Ericson, Nathan R., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Gray, Timothy D., Christ, Bison, S.D./Redeemer, Hettinger, N.D./St. Paul, Faith, S.D.
Guldberg, Frederick J., Star of Bethlehem, Winston Salem, N.C.
Halldorson, N. Wayne, Divine Word, Nepean, Ontario, Canada
Heiman, Ryan A., Divinity, St. Paul, Minn.
Hillmann, Joshua P., St. Paul, Broken Bow, Neb.
Hillmer, Steven M., Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga.
Knoll, Darren A., Lamb of God, Columbus, Ohio
Koehler, David E., St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.
Kolb, Timothy A., Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.
Leach, Jonathan T., Christ the Lord, Cottage Grove, Minn.
Learman, Paul J., Our Savior, Freeport, Ill.
McMorrow, Lance R., Salem, Owosso, Mich.
Meitner, Paul S., Mt. Olive, Iron Mountain, Mich.
Meyer, Stephen J., assistant to the Minnesota District president, Rochester, Minn.
Miller, Richard M., Our Savior, Hart, Mich.
Oldenburg, Jared J., exploratory outreach, Covington, Wash.
Pederson, Benjy E., Petra, Sauk Rapids, Minn.
Raiford, Christopher L., St. John, Wood Lake, Minn.
Schleusener, Allen M., exploratory outreach, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Schmidt, Jason L., assistant to the Pacific Northwest District president
Schroeder, Michael A., civilian chaplain, Europe
Seager, Paul M., Grace, Spring Hills, Fla.
Seelman, John E., Salem, Sturgeon Bay/Immanuel, Kolberg, Wis.
Thiel, Jason J., Zion, Valentine, Neb.
Trimmer, Newton K., St. Paul, Valley City/James Valley, Jamestown, N.D.
Vogel, Michael J., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Wessel, Benjamin B., Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis.
Westendorf, Timothy J., Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
Wietzke, David H., Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Zimpelmann, Matthew J., Grace, Geneva/Trinity, Grafton, Neb.

Seminary Chorus tours Alaska

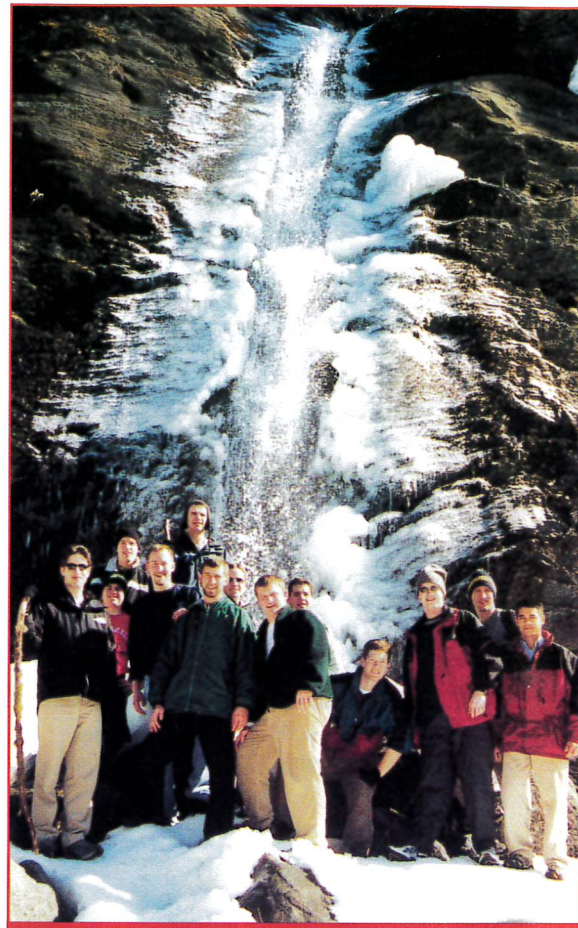
A poster in an Anchorage gift shop said: "Alaskans live up here and Americans live down there." I asked about it. A man told me, "Sometimes we forget you're down there."

Alaska does have a certain magnetism. Maybe it's the people or the mountains or the idea that the state is America's last frontier. If residents do leave, they seem to come back.

Forty-one members of the Seminary Chorus found out even more about that draw to Alaska. The choir, under Prof. James Tiefel, took the first-ever tour by a synodical school to Alaska. The choir left Milwaukee on Mar. 27. Seven air flights and four coach companies later, the choir completed its 2002 Easter tour to Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Alaska.

We watched men in yellow hip waders toss the catch of the day at Seattle's Pike Street Market. We experienced one of the most beautiful drives on earth between Anchorage to Kenai. We photographed moose. On a clear day in Anchorage we spotted the tallest mountain in North America. We marched to the base of the Mendenhall Glacier. We rode along the Columbia River Gorge, in awe of the wonders of God's creation.

But what really made the trip memorable were the things we did and the people we met. What we did was present the Word of God in song—from traditional Lutheran classics to contemporary songs for piano and saxophone—all under the theme "With High Delight." The people we met included 65 visitors at Grace, Kenai, Alaska, on Easter Sunday and a gymnasium filled with WELS members and their unchurched friends in Tacoma, Wash. The men of Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, moved



Seminary students by a waterfall near the Mendenhall Glacier.

their 1,000-pound stone altar to make room for our choir, and the members of Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho, gave us a feast in their spacious new building.

"Thanks for coming way out here." That's what people said. We had only one response, "The pleasure was all ours."

I wasn't in Alaska long enough to discover if that poster's attitude toward the "lower 48" extended to WELS churches or not. I did discover this: what unites us is much stronger than what divides us. Unity in Christ, a shared confession of his truth, and a commitment to work together for the gospel are not hindered by distance. The Spirit sees to that.

Jared Oldenburg

Finally, lambs of God

While Americans were scurrying to the post office on Apr. 15 to mail their income taxes, our Lord was gathering new lambs into his kingdom.

Gloria Grace, age 66; Robert Belinski, age 59; and Herman Kalisch, age 67, were baptized at Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis., by Pastor Thomas Kneser. Gloria, Robert, and Herman—all developmentally disabled—attend special Bible classes offered through Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM), a ministry of The Lutheran Home Association in Belle Plaine, Minn.

During Bible classes the students listen to devotions, learn Bible lessons, sing songs about Jesus, participate in crafts, and pray to Jesus. These special lambs of God have attended these Bible classes for more than 10 years. They also attend monthly JCM Worship at the Cross services that are adapted to the worshipers' cognitive abilities.

Mary Micheel, JCM's Southeastern Wisconsin District coordinator, contacted relatives and guardians to determine if these indi-

viduals had been baptized. With permission from their families, they were baptized during Woodlawn's Monday evening service. Tears of joy flowed from the volunteers' eyes.

Still today, as Gloria, Robert, and Herman step down from the special busses that bring them to Bible class, their eager, smiling faces meet those of the volunteer teachers and helpers. Gloria vocalizes sounds but is not able to speak. When she sees the volunteers she points her index finger toward heaven. Her sounds tell us she is anxious to learn more about Jesus.

Members of our class wear crosses or bring pictures of Jesus with them.



The newly baptized students and some of their volunteer teachers and helpers. From left: Teacher Tom Wiedenhoef, Helper Jill Windschittl, Gloria Grace, Teacher Mary Braun, Pastor Thomas Kneser, Herman Kalisch, Helper Dan Bachmann, and Robert Bielinski.

They love Jesus with all of their hearts. You can tell as they sing and play instruments with their favorite song: "Jesus loves me, He who died, heaven's gate to open wide; He has washed away my sin. Let his little child come in. Yes, Jesus loves me, The Bible tells me so."

Mary Braun

Reflecting the message that counts

A user-friendly marketing tool is now available to enhance WELS congregations' outreach efforts.

Bruce Tieves, WELS' marketing director for evangelism, explains, "We wanted to give churches a tool that they could use on their own without needing to be media savvy. Titled *Reflections*, this is a two-tiered campaign that covers newspaper and direct mail."

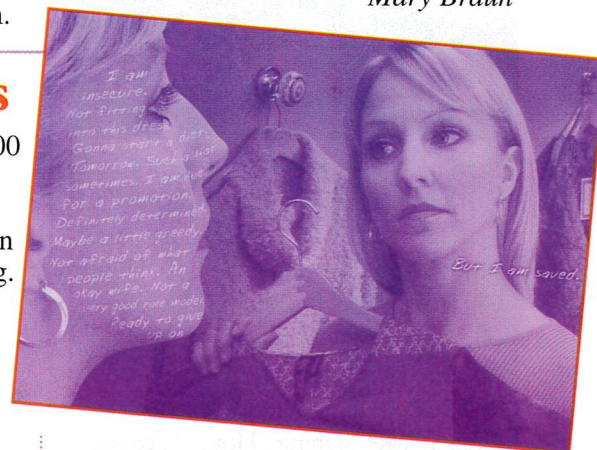
The campaign consists of 80 newspaper ads and 80 postcards that depict 13 different WELS members of various ages and ethnic backgrounds reflecting on life. Their profiles contain copy relating to life's realities, while their reflections contain copy relating to God's saving grace (see example to right). The bottom portion expresses an inspiring message and an invitation to attend the church being advertised.

Grace, Milwaukee, sent out 15,000 *Reflections* postcards as an Easter invitation to its neighbors. Grace's members observed guests walking in with the postcard on Easter morning.

Daron Lindemann, a pastor at Grace, found *Reflections* to be "a cost-effective, flexible, and relevant evangelism publicity campaign."

"One of the strengths of this campaign," says Lindemann, "is that it captures different segments of the population—people of both genders and of a variety of ages and races. People are able to relate to it."

Because these ads are saved on a CD-ROM in PDF format, they are compatible with both IBM and Macintosh computer systems. Churches can take them right to their local newspaper or printer and have them insert the churches' information into the ad or postcard.



"Consumers are constantly barraged by secular media and secular messages," notes Tieves. "It's time for Christians to turn the tables and barrage consumers with the only message that really counts—the message of salvation through Jesus Christ."

Tieves is available to help congregations use the *Reflections* campaign and to help them in the overall marketing of their churches. Contact him at 414/256-6484 or <brucet@sab.wels.net>. To order *Reflections*, call 414/256-3288.



District news

Arizona

Jared Gray, a graduate of Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, was named the 2002 University of Louisiana-Lafayette College of Education's top graduate. Gray distinguished himself in high school and college with his talents as a trumpet player.

Minnesota

On Apr. 7, **Wise Penny Thrift Shoppe, Buffalo, Minn.**, dedicated an addition to its building that tripled its previous size. The thrift shop, run by volunteers from WELS congregations in the Twin Cities area, donates its proceeds to local WELS organizations.

Southeastern Wisconsin



Scott McCallum, the governor of Wisconsin, helps students from St. Marcus, Milwaukee, raise the sign announcing the opening of Hope Christian School, located in Milwaukee. On May 9, McCallum and St. Marcus's students were joined by WELS school leaders and local officials to celebrate Hope's lease signing. Hope Christian School will offer a gospel-based, African-centered curriculum to up to 60 students in first through fourth grade. At this time, 20 students have enrolled for the fall, when the school will open. "May God use this new ministry to the children and families of Milwaukee's central city to bring many souls into his kingdom," says Dr. Daniel Schmeling, former administrator for the WELS Commission on Parish Schools.

Salem, Loretto, Minn., was one of 100 schools chosen nationwide to receive a \$5,000 grant from the Target Corporation through the "Take Charge of Education" program.

The **2002 International Lutheran Girl Pioneer Convention** was held Apr. 6 at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. About 130 women and young girls attended workshops, worship, craft sessions, and a banquet. Participants saw the new Lutheran Girl Pioneer Handbook for the first time.

South Central

The following churches are in the midst of building projects: **Immanuel, North Richland Hills, Tex.; Calvary, Dallas, Tex.; Holy Word, Austin, Tex.; Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Tex.; Grace, Lowell, Ark.**

A former Muslim from Mali was baptized on Apr. 19 at **Beautiful Savior, College Station, Tex.** This woman may have to return to Mali, which is 98 percent Muslim, and where she would most likely be persecuted for her Christian faith. Yet, she clings to her new faith in Jesus for strength.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Heather Braun, a member at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., and a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, was chosen to play a violin solo in the Viva Vivaldi concert held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on Apr. 28. Braun was chosen as a finalist in the worldwide Viva Vivaldi competition, in which 500 other girls submitted audition tapes.

Happy Anniversary!

MN—On Apr. 28, Martin Luther College celebrated the 40th service anniversary of **Dr. Rolland Menk** and the 25th service anniversaries of **David Bauer, Timothy Schroeder**, and **Dr. James Grunwald**.

Salem, Loretto, Minn., held a special service on Apr. 28 honoring **David Farstad** for serving 40 years in the teaching ministry.

SA—Members of **Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.**, celebrated the congregation's 25th anniversary on Apr. 7.

On May 12, members of **Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn.**, held an outdoor service to celebrate the congregation's 10th anniversary.

SEW—May 19 was the kickoff of **Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry's** six-month centennial celebration.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Kenneth Pasch; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; SA—Mark Haefner; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

Helping the harvest crew

Whether serving as a missionary in Malawi, a pastor in the United States, a member of the WELS Commission on Evangelism, or a circuit pastor, Michael Hintz will use these experiences to help him face his challenges as the new administrator for the Commission on Evangelism.

"I look at our synod's membership as a vast number of workers called by our Lord to work in his harvest field," says Hintz, a 1978 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. "The continual challenge is to equip this harvest crew with the gospel, to train them in ways of sharing the message of salvation, and to encourage them to work diligently."

He continues, "My goal as administrator is to keep promoting in our synod the call of Jesus to be his witnesses."

To accomplish his goal, Hintz will work closely with district evangelism commissions to help congregations, especially through training and consultation. He will also work with synod schools and organizations to promote personal evangelism.

Using tools such as the Internet to reach the unchurched directly is also high on his list.

"I ask that the membership of WELS pray for the Lord's blessings on this important work, so that many more will come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord," says Hintz.



Michael Hintz and his wife, Julie. Hintz left his position as pastor of Bethany, Kenosha, Wis., to serve as administrator for the Commission on Evangelism.

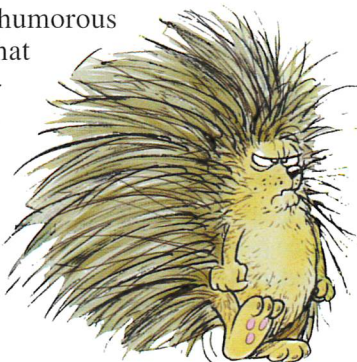
Award-winning communications

WELS Communication Services won five awards for recent work.

Steve Zambo, media communications director, wrote and produced two award-winning videos, "WELS Tech 2001" and "Seek and Keep." "WELS Tech 2001," an introductory video shown at the WELS national technology conference, won a Telly Award for outstanding special event video presentation. "Seek and Keep," a video promoting the WELS Seek and Keep Grant Program, received a Telly award for outstanding promotional video. The same video also earned a 2002 Videographer Award of Distinction for being written, produced, shot, and edited exceptionally well.

"When trying to produce media projects professionally, yet also cost effectively, it is a blessing to be recognized by peers in media, marketing, and entertainment for quality productions," says Zambo.

Forward in Christ magazine also earned recognition by its peers in the Associated Church Press's 2001 Awards Contest. Randy Hunter's "Soul Care" Bible study received a first place "Award of Excellence" in the Bible study category. Judges noted that the study was "conceived well" and that it was "informative and well-balanced." Bill Frauhiger's July 2001 cartoon of a man that hugged a porcupine received second place honors for a humorous graphic that accompanied text.



A new day in Thailand

It is another typically warm day in the Ban Ruam Thai 9 Hmong village in western Thailand. Roosters are crowing. Pigs are grunting. Mangy dogs are drifting around, hungry. Rice is cooking on an open fire. Smoke is drifting by from garbage burning. Yet this is not a typical day.

It is Feb. 3, 2002, and a small crowd of about 75 Hmong people gathers outside. About half are Christian, the rest are curious onlookers. WELS Hmong pastors Pheng Moua and Jay Lo are preaching about a man named Jesus.

New sounds fill the air.

"Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?"

"I do."

"Do you believe in God the Father almighty?"

"I do."

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?"

"I do."

"Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?"

"I do."

"Will you be baptized into this Christian faith?"

"I will."

These are the sounds of faith.

There is a new sight to be seen today. Water being poured, not to clean dirt off of hands, but accompanied by God's Word. It is the "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Fifteen people line up to be washed. They are dressed in the same clothes they normally wear. Yet they are receiving a new spiritual garment, perfectly clean and spotless. As always,

Pheng Moua, a Hmong pastor serving in Minnesota, baptizes a woman from a Hmong village in western Thailand.



they will eat rice for lunch, yet they are being fed in a new way, with the "bread of life."

It is a new day in this remote vil-

lage. A new day of grace. With the 40 souls that were baptized here two years ago, our Christian group in this village now numbers 55—a testimony to the persistent grace of our Lord.

Ten years ago a WELS Hmong man named Ger Yang first came to this village to share the gospel with his relatives. He traveled here three times, joined by our missionary in Thailand, Robert Meister. On his third trip, Ger Yang died in this village. Since then, Meister and the rest of our mission team in Thailand have been visiting regularly.

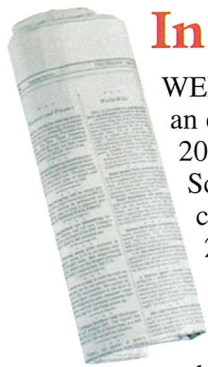
Today this Hmong congregation of Christians can discuss plans to build the first Christian church building ever erected in the village, not far from the Buddhist temple. Today this Christian group has men being trained to provide leadership in worship and Bible study.

Today is a new day.

Leon Piepenbrink

Did you know . . .

. . . that Pheng Moua and Jay Lo are home missionaries, working in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn.? Their Hmong background led them to Thailand to work with our world missionaries in a Hmong village there. WELS home and world missionaries also work together in Apacheland and with the Navajo in New Mexico.



In the news

WELS member **Tim Hintz**, an eighth-grader, won the 2002 Wisconsin State Scholastic Chess K-8 championship on Mar. 24. *The Marion Advertiser* noted that Tim had a perfect 6-0 record on his way to the championship.

The *Green Bay Press Gazette*, in its Mar. 31 article “Churches evolve for new generation,” focused on the WELS congregation of **St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.** The article describes the church’s “blended worship services with a mix of traditional and contemporary.”

Ben Blumer, St. Mark’s vicar, said, “We can’t do things the way we did them 50 years ago. God’s message is the same, but some of the presentation has changed.”

The article also notes, “In the past seven to eight years, St. Mark’s attendance has doubled, and the majority of its new members are younger than 35.”

Jeff Francoeur, a member at Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga., has been one of the most recognized high school athletes in the country for the past four years. Among other achievements, Francoeur, a football and baseball star, was voted the *USA Today* All-American Defensive Back and First-Team Baseball All-American, the *Sports Illustrated* Old Spice Athlete of the Month in March, the ESPN.com #1 two-sport prep athlete in the nation, and state Player of the Year in Georgia.

Francoeur received a full scholarship to Clemson University in Clemson, S.C. On June 4, the Atlanta Braves chose Francoeur in the first round of the major league baseball draft. He must decide by Aug. 3 which offer he will accept.

Obituaries

Walter Hoepner 1911-2002

Walter Hoepner was born Aug. 30, 1911, in Theresa, Wis. He died Apr. 7, 2002.

A 1937 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at St. Paul, Cudahy; St. Paul, Town Forest; Emanuel, New London; St. Peter, Town Freedom; Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac; St. Paul, Hurley; and Zion, Mercer, all in Wisconsin.

He was preceded in death by one sister and three brothers. He is survived by his wife, Ruth.

Ralph E. Swantz 1917-2002

Ralph Swantz was born June 16, 1917, in Hendricks, Minn. He died Apr. 18, 2002, in Brainerd, Minn.

A 1938 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served at Trinity, Johnson, Minn.; Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn.; First, La Crosse, Wis.; and Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Georgianna; three sons; two daughters; 14 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and one brother.

Shirley Jean Bahr 1945-2002

Shirley Bahr was born Apr. 21, 1945, in Red Wing, Minn. She died Apr. 24, 2002, in Bangor, Wis.

A 1967 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, James; one daughter; one son; her parents; two sisters; her father-in-law; and many nieces and nephews.

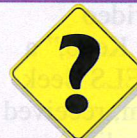
Donald Krause 1937-2002

Donald Krause was born Aug. 5, 1937, in Appleton, Wis. He died Apr. 2, 2002, in Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

A 1964 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, he

served at Bethlehem, Morristown, S.D.; Our Savior, Hart, Mich.; Emanuel, Flint, Mich.; Redeemer, Pierre, S.D.; St. Peter, Tomah, Wis.; St. Paul, Hustler, Wis.; Salem, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.; and Emanuel, Forestville, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen; two sons; two grandchildren; one brother; one sister; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews.



**So, God,
what about . . . ?**

Want God’s advice, but you’re not sure where to look? We’ll get you started with the basics. Remember these verses—and share them!

Sometimes it’s not easy to forgive a person who wronged you. But just as Christ has forgiven us, we must forgive others. Here’s what the Bible says about forgiveness:

- Proverbs 19:11: “A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”
- Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
- Colossians 3:13: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”
- Matthew 6:12: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”
- John 20:23: “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”
- 1 Corinthians 13:4,5: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

On your own

Learn about how often you should forgive in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35.

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Three Months Ended Mar. 31, 2002

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received			Percent of Subscrptn	Annld Ave Per Commun
	Communicants 12/31/01	2002	Year to Date Projected	March Offerings	Three Months Offerings		
Arizona-California	18,043	\$1,116,570	\$241,680	\$103,788	\$250,307	103.6%	\$55.49
Dakota-Montana	8,889	488,262	73,818	22,509	93,678	126.9	42.15
Michigan	36,078	2,240,222	444,823	172,972	433,849	97.5	48.10
Minnesota	43,194	2,508,035	411,390	162,006	490,380	119.2	45.41
Nebraska	10,545	679,010	114,071	56,745	139,007	121.9	52.73
North Atlantic	4,445	421,477	84,509	20,705	54,748	64.8	49.27
Northern Wisconsin	60,720	2,723,239	524,558	182,954	506,877	96.6	33.39
Pacific Northwest	5,278	332,515	67,263	21,604	75,694	112.5	57.37
South Atlantic	7,565	610,145	127,457	51,144	121,711	95.5	64.35
South Central	5,003	549,212	111,941	45,702	117,620	105.1	94.04
Southeastern Wisconsin	56,883	3,595,877	595,685	261,311	697,921	117.2	49.08
Western Wisconsin	59,204	3,284,671	604,883	223,597	604,139	99.9	40.82
Total - This Year	315,847	18,549,235	3,402,078	1,325,037	3,585,931	105.4%	45.41
Total—Last Year	316,386	18,191,225	3,272,842	1,224,526	3,236,559	98.9	40.92

CURRENT OPERATING FUND

Statement of activities

Nine months ended Mar. 31

	2002 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$14,027,125	\$13,119,627	\$13,676,776
Gifts and memorials	6,600,033	4,888,928	5,688,396
Bequest/planned giving	125,339	1,136,493	1,715,130
Tuition and fees	7,334,460	9,482,237	5,974,884
Other	(61,167)	124,821	117,000
Transfers—endowment earnings	-	169,201	266,250
Transfers—gift funds	3,438,975	9,400,006	3,438,975
Transfers—continuing programs	-	2,452,415	2,535,450
Transfers—other	-	3,362	-
Total revenues	31,464,765	40,777,090	33,412,861
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	6,561,222	8,118,266	6,867,528
Ministerial Education	17,217,934	6,739,676	16,389,587
Parish Services	1,527,764	19,112,969	1,727,751
Administrative Services	3,500,225	1,503,825	3,490,961
World Missions	5,829,980	4,213,344	6,707,120
System Wide	128,943	243,144	246,288
Total expenditures	34,766,068	39,931,224	35,429,235
Changes in unrestricted net assets	(3,301,303)	845,866	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	-	-
Bequest/planned giving	(2,000)	-	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-
Change in temp restricted net assets	(2,000)	-	-
Net assets - beginning of year	3,684,500	4,350,503	
Net assets - end of period	381,197	5,196,369	

Statement of financial position

	Mar 31, 2002	Mar 31, 2001
Assets:		
Due from other funds	(2,719,200)	2,587,083
Accounts receivable—cash adv.	122,810	124,250
Other accounts receivable	366,323	232,925
Contributions receivable	3,682,500	3,648,200
Mortgage note receivable	7,093	9,499
Allowance for doubtful accts	(45,100)	(45,100)
Prepaid expenses	147,162	60,487
Total assets	1,561,588	6,617,344
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	1,019,825	1,299,867
Accounts payable	160,566	121,108
Total liabilities	1,180,391	1,420,975
Unrestricted	(3,301,303)	1,548,169
Temp restricted	3,682,500	3,648,200
Total net assets	381,197	5,196,369
Total liab. and net assets	1,561,588	6,617,344

Mark Meissner, director of finance

World news

Southern Baptist Convention membership grows—The Southern Baptist Convention has grown to over 16 million members, according to the 2001 Annual Church Profile.

This figure is an all-time record for the Southern Baptists. It shows an increase of 92,612 over the number of members in 2000.

Window commemorates victims of Sept. 11—About 400 Army chaplains and chaplain assistants helped craft a stain glass window in memory of the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

This pentagon-shaped window features an American bald eagle, the U.S. flag, a picture of the Pentagon building, the date of the attack, the words “United in Memory,” and 184 crimson pieces symbolizing the military and civilian personnel who died at the site.

Dennis Roberts, owner of IHS Studios (an art glass studio) in Texas, designed the window and will donate it to the Army. The Army intends to offer the window to a new memorial chapel that is being designed for the Pentagon to commemorate the victims of the attack.

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

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A genuine miracle

The Lord's grace and power are miraculous when sinners turn to him for pardon and peace.

Paul E. Zell

Repentance is a genuine miracle.

Sometimes we are told about one person who repents (King David, Saul of Tarsus). At another time we see 3,000 repent (Peter's listeners on Pentecost Sunday). Here it is as many as half a million or more.

Whatever the numbers, the Lord's grace and power are truly miraculous when sinners turn back to him for pardon and peace.

Belief of the Ninevites

All that the Lord needed to set the stage for this miracle was for his prophet to carry out his calling. After frustrating Jonah's attempt to flee and then rescuing him with a great fish, the Lord summoned him a second time. This time Jonah went to Nineveh.

Once he arrived, we imagine Jonah entering busy shops in commercial districts; going from house to house in residential neighborhoods; knocking on doors; stopping passersby on the street; addressing gatherings. His message spread quickly. Soon every person in the city was aware of Jonah's dire prophecy: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed."

Amazingly "the Ninevites believed God." That's a miracle, isn't it? They believed that Jonah's message was the Word of the one true God. They believed that God punishes violent behavior, so they believed that God had the right to destroy them. They also believed that God is merciful.

BIBLE READING

Jonah 3:1-9

¹Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: ²"Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

³Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. . . . ⁴ . . . He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." ⁵The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

⁶When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. ⁹Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

If he gave their godless society an opportunity to repent, they concluded, certainly he must be com-passionate and gracious.

Gift of God's mercy

Reserved Lutheran observers may be puzzled by dramatic gestures of regret over sin. "The king of Nineveh . . . covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust." His subjects already had done the same. Even cattle and sheep were outfitted in scratchy clothing to demonstrate their owners' grief. Everyone fasted.

Public sin often needs to be acknowledged publicly. But more important, repentance includes an inner work that only the Holy Spirit can bring about: trust in God's mercy followed by the desire to give up evil ways.

Every day we need to be led through this exercise that our weak and unfit human nature cannot carry out. The Father's perfect law compels sorrowful acknowledgement of our selfishness, anger, greed, lust, laziness, violence, misplaced priorities. His Son grants us the peace that he purchased at Calvary's cross. The Holy Spirit motivates us to give up evil ways.

Remarkable! The daily work of our God is to repeat among us what he did at Nineveh. He brings about repentance for the forgiveness of sins and a new life. What a miracle!



Paul Zell is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

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

Balge, Jonathan R., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Cortright, Charles L., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Haefner, Mark A., to Grace, Seward/Bethel, Waco, Neb.
Hintz, Michael L., to Commission on Evangelism administrator, Milwaukee
Jaeger, Joel W., to Christ, Milwaukee
Ladner, Jonathan M., to West LHS, Plymouth, Minn.
Mielke, Thomas A., to Messiah, South Windsor, Conn.
Parcher, John L., to retirement
Schoeneck, Mark E., to St. Paul, Marshall, Wis.
Ulrich, Ross W., to Zion, Monroe, Mich.
Widmann, Warren L., to WELS Spiritual Growth Project Director, Portland, Ore.

Teachers

Ampe, Joyce L., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Appold, Patti A., to Luther HS, Onalaska, Wis.
Baumann, Linda A., to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Brandt, James A., to Commission on Parish Schools associate administrator, Milwaukee
Cloute, Alison L., to Trinity-St. Luke West, Watertown, Wis.
DeVries, Barbara J., to St. John, Newburg, Wis.
Dobberpuhl, Heath D., to Divine Savior, Shawano, Wis.
Doyle, Sara L., to Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo.
Dus, Jessica J., to Crete, Crete, Ill.
Elowski, Joy E., to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Gosch, Amy L., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee
Guenther, Susan E., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Gutzke, Ann C., to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Hirsch, Mark A., to Christ, Grand Island, Neb.
Holtz, Carol M., to Immanuel, Tyler, Minn.
Janke, Ann D., to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Kante, Renee V., to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Knittel, David A., to Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio
Kock, Kathleen F., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Koehler, Koren B., to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.
Krueger, Marily A., to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
Lacy, Sarah G. Jr., to Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn.
Lemke, Kim Marie B., to First, Lake Geneva, Wis.
Lemke, Steven A., to Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.
Leslie, Melissa A., to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.
Lovett, Vicki, to Immanuel, Fort Worth, Tex.
McKenney, Lois A., to St. Peter, Helenville, Wis.
Meitner, Philip, to West LHS, Plymouth, Minn.
Mielke, Penny R., to Shepherd of the Hills, Inver Grove Heights, Minn.
Miller, Kelly K., to Immanuel, Fort Worth, Tex.
Moll, Philip R., to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.
Murphy, Mark W., to Trinity, Brillion, Wis.
Nelson, Mary C., to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
Nommensen, Bradley A., to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.
Ogg, Peggy J., to New Salem, Sebawaing, Mich.
Oldre, Sonja J., to Zion, Valentine, Neb.
Potratz, Elisabeth S., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Raleigh, Cheryl A., to Grace, Osceola, Wis.
Reid, Marlys J., to Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis.
Riechers, Valerie L., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Sonntag, Deborah L., to Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz.
Stellick, Karin R., to Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.

Strehlow, Jeffrey D., to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Tyson, Henry, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Ungemach, Margaret A., to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Wagner, Julie D., to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.
Wendland, Margaret A., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee
Wilson, Kip D., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Wilson, Noreen M., to St. John, Pardeeville, Wis.
Woodier, Louise A., to retirement
Wright, Susan E., to St. Paul, North Fond du Lac, Wis.
Wrobel, Beth, to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
Yahnke, Jennifer L., to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee

Staff ministers

Busse, Jason D., to Immanuel, Long Valley, N.J.
Schoeneck, Jonathan R., to Immanuel, Salem, Ore.

ANNIVERSARIES

Manitowoc, Wis.—Immanuel (75). July 14. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Luncheon & entertainment to follow.
Green Lake, Wis.—Peace (100). July 21. Service, 9 AM. 920/294-6593.
Boyd, Minn.—St. John (120). July 21. Service, 10 AM. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 320/855-2401.
Kasson, Minn.—Our Savior (10). Aug. 11. Service, 9 AM. 507/634-4692.
Milwaukee—Mt. Lebanon (75). Aug. 18. Service, 9:30 AM. Picnic to follow. 414/461-1563.
Crivitz, Wis.—Lutheran Youth Encampment at Camp Bird (50). Aug. 24. Dinner, 5 PM, Columbus Club, Appleton, Wis. RSVP by Aug. 1, Edward Stelter, 920/793-3092.
Milwaukee—Redemption (50). Nov. 17. Service, 9 AM. Noon dinner. RSVP by Nov. 1, 414/466-5100.

COMING EVENTS

National OWLS Convention—Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors, July 9-11. Ramada Convention Center, Wausau, Wis. Lester Ring, 507/354-4403.
Camp—Good Shepherd Bible Camp, Angelus Oaks, Calif. July 7-13 & July 14-20. Campers fourth through 10th grade. Families welcome. Charles Found, 805/492-8943.
School reunion—Grace, Goodhue, Minn. July 14. Service, 10 AM. Dinner to follow. RSVP, Lois Luetke Kluender, 203/459-0839.
DMLC 25th class reunion—class of 1977. July 20. Appleton, Wis. Ed and Laura Becker, 708/672-0713. <eb-ssp@rocketmail.com>.
Training camp—an opportunity for kids entering grades 3-8 to grow in God's Word in an outdoor setting. July 21-26. Sponsored by WELS' Chicago Pastor's Conference. YMCA Camp Duncan, Ingleside, Ill. Andy Bauer, 847/438-5018.
Regional youth rally—Minnesota District. Aug. 4-7. St. Louis, Mo. 507/232-3938.
DMLC retired alumni get-together—Aug. 13. Luther Haven, 8949 N 97 St, Milwaukee. Opening devotion, 11:45 AM followed by lunch. All food & table service provided. Freewill offering. RSVP, Donald Zimmerman, 414/355-9595 or Richard Grunze, 414/423-0118.
WELS Labor Day Retreat—Aug. 31-Sept. 2. Berkshire Mountains, Mass. 603/472-5551.
WELS Home Educators Retreat—Sept. 6-8. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Debbie Thompson, 920/348-6482.
Life-a-thon run/walk—sponsored by WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. Sept. 14. Peter Georgson, 414/933-7322.
Ukraine tour—sponsored by Thoughts of Faith, an Evangelical Lutheran Synod independent mission

society working in Ukraine. Sept. 24-Oct. 8. Tour starts in Krakow, Poland. Inclusive tour includes air, hotel, daily breakfasts and dinners, and motor coach. 1-800-521-1322 or 1-877-892-4718.

Symposium on Holy Baptism—for WELS & ELS pastors. Sept. 23-24. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. 262/242-8100.

Christian Life Resources National Convention—Oct. 4-5. KI Center, Green Bay, Wis.

WELS National Campus Rally—Dec. 27-30. Michigan State University. 517/336-9293.

WELS/ELS Ladies Retreat—Jan. 10-12, 2003. Woodlands Lutheran Campground, Montverde, Fla. Cost, \$110. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.

AVAILABLE

Worship Music, a Resource for Lutheran Keyboard Musicians—provided by the Commission on Worship and NPH. 800/662-6093 ext. 5763.

Church furnishings—altar, pulpit, lecturn, knee railing, baptismal font. Free for pick-up. Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla. 850/936-1005.

Church lighting—8-canister hanging lights, metallic gold finish with colored glass inserts. Free for the cost of shipping. Divine Word, Plover, Wis. 715/341-2915.

NEEDED

Altar and baptismal font—Don Tollefson, 908/876-5429.

Used Veggie Tales materials—such as VBS teacher materials, videos, puppets for outreach mission. Hope Meyer, 718/207-0709.

Playwright—if you have a faith-inspired play that is ready to take life on-stage, e-mail <nycangela@hotmail.com>.

SERVICE TIMES

Mountain, Wis.—Mountain Ambulance Service Building, 14336 State Hwy 32. May-Sept. Saturday worship, 6:30 PM. Craig Korth, 715/473-5633.

Bella Vista, Ark.—Beautiful Savior, 648 Lancashire Blvd. Sunday worship, 9:30 AM. Sunday school and Bible class, 10:45 AM. Russel Kobbs, 479/876-2155.

Wausau, Wis.—Salem, 2822 6 St. Sunday worship, 7:30 & 9 AM. Memorial Day through Labor Day. Tim Mandeik, 715/845-2822.

Grass Lake, Mich.—St. Jacob, 12501 Riethmiller Rd. Sunday worship, 9:15 AM until Labor Day. 517/522-4187.

POSITION AVAILABLE

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

NAMES WANTED

Marion County, Fla. (Ocala area)—Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.

Mountain/Suring/Breed/Lakewood, Wis.—Craig Korth, 715/473-5633.

Bass player—for St. Philip, Milwaukee, gospel choir. John Paul Simons, 414/774-2190.

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

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

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: STANDARDS FOR JUDGING “GOOD CHRISTIANS”

Question: I am friends with a couple that judges people according to “how Christian” they think people are. This makes me uncomfortable, especially because some people they talk about are people that I feel live a decent Christian life. I also feel that we are not the ones to judge “how Christian” somebody is. Only God does that.

What makes somebody a good Christian? What biblical responses can I use the next time they put down a fellow Christian for not living up to their idea of Christian living?

Answer: Remind your friends that their Savior is the one about whom Isaiah says, “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (Isaiah 42:3). Jesus doesn’t excuse our weaknesses as if they weren’t sin, yet in his gracious forgiveness he overcomes our weaknesses and strengthens us to live differently. Even if your friends are correct about spiritual weakness they perceive in others, a response more in keeping with the Savior’s would be to encourage and strengthen others so that they might grow stronger. Perhaps you can remind your friends how thankful we can be for a Savior who isn’t harsh with us as they appear to be with others.

You might ask your friends to consider whether their standard for judging is of their own making rather than God’s. It’s easy to construct skewed criteria for what makes a “good Christian.” Such self-created “good Christian” definitions usually are heavy in areas in which we feel strong, while ignoring areas in which we are weak. Having fabricated our own “good Christian” scorecard, we proceed to look down our proud noses at those who don’t measure up. Ironically, while we are busy giving others a failing grade by our standards, we are often the ones flunking when measured by God’s

standard of Christ-like love. The mirror is always the first place to glance when we are looking for those who don’t deserve the title “good Christians.”

Failing to check the mirror was precisely the problem with the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. They were experts at spotting weaknesses in others. However, no one was fur-

ther from the kingdom of God as they proudly ignored their need for a Savior. It is because of the Pharisee that beats within the natural heart of us all that Jesus says, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove

the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3-5).

Jesus isn’t telling us that we can never call a brother or sister in Christ to repentance. He is telling us that when we do, we must speak those calls as humble, repentant sinners ourselves, lest our vision be arrogantly clouded by our own unobserved sin.

Finally, it might be good to remind your friends that no one has ever earned the title “good Christian.” Rather, cleansed in the blood of Christ and clothed with his holiness, those who trust in Christ’s redeeming love aren’t just “good,” they are “perfect” in God’s sight.

The mirror is always the first place to glance when we are looking for those who don’t deserve the title “good Christians.”

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>.



In the Yucaipa Christmas parade a few years ago, Prince of Peace, Yucaipa, Calif., entered a float in which the center panel rotated to show a white cane or the letter "J" for Jesus. Their float fit in with the theme of this parade, "White Cane Christmas," which called attention to the work that the local Lions Club does for the blind. Eighteen members spent a total of 122 hours working on the float.

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.

The faith of a child



The community's Sugar Festival activities were underway, and Jason, who had just finished first grade, had entered the first annual Junior Sugar Festival King competition. The audience was seated in the bleachers of the city park's baseball diamond, and Jason's uncle, Gene, was on the field, capturing the moment on film.

Over the three years that I had known the family, I could see how much Gene's nieces and nephews enjoyed, respected, and loved him. So when the interviewer asked Jason who his favorite person was—and I saw Jason look straight at his Uncle Gene—I fully expected that "My Uncle Gene" would be the next words I'd hear. Instead, what I (and the rest of the people who had gathered for the event) heard was "Jesus." When asked why Jesus was his favorite person, Jason gave a beautifully simple confession of his faith in Jesus as his Savior from sin.

Those of us in the bleachers who knew Jesus the way Jason did, wiped tears from our cheeks, thanking God for using Jason to share the good news with our community.

Shirleen Maertz
Hartland, Wisconsin

What's your favorite . . .

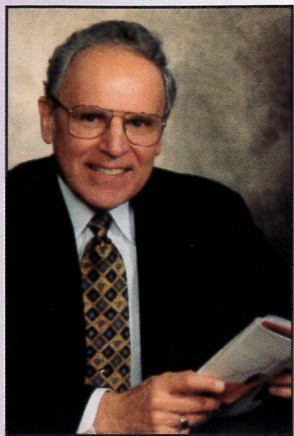
Have a favorite Bible passage or a Scripture verse that you find especially inspiring? Let us know what it is and why. Then check out some of the results in the September potluck.

Send your reply to Potluck Poll, *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <juliew@sab.wels.net>. Please include your name, home church, phone number, and e-mail address.

FIREWORKS AND FREEDOM

Going to see fireworks this month? All over the United States, firework displays on July 4 will remind us of the freedoms we enjoy in the States. But have you thought about your spiritual freedoms lately? Check out "Let freedom ring," a devotion on the WELS Web site that talks about all of our freedoms. It's at <www.wels.net//sab/csm/aged-dev-0007.html>.

HAPPY JULY 4TH!



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

How can we think that life isn't fair when the life we live by faith in Jesus is eternal?

Life isn't fair

As I write this, I'm feeling a bit melancholy.

It's that time of year again when spring is supposed to be here but the weather is more like winter. On this particularly bleak day, it makes me think of bleak things. I suppose that, in part, it's the lingering specter of the 9/11 tragedies and the war against terrorism. But it's more than that. It's more than the war activity in Israel and the West Bank. And although my own perceived problems don't help, they are truly trivial.

Instead, I think of people around me, close to me—the likes of which you probably know too. There's the friend who one day seemed to be in full health, and the next day was ushered into emergency, life-threatening surgery for colon cancer. There's the aging grandmother suffering from dementia and constantly anxious about inconsequential details in her life. There's the young man with chronic back pain. There are those whose burden it is to watch and care.

Throw in the struggling economy, if you like: the failed companies, the lost jobs, the disintegrating nest eggs. Count in the aches and pains, the toil and trouble, the unrealized dreams of so many around us—probably also some of your own. Think of the family whose child lies dying in the hospital. I think of my own mortality. The words of the Teacher of Ecclesiastes echo in my consciousness: "Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

I'm feeling melancholy.

Life is so unfair. I remember the times that wiser people reminded me of that truth. "No one promised that life would be fair," they repeated. In my youthful naivete, I was slow to learn.

But today I know it. Life isn't fair.

Life isn't fair if by that you mean that bad things happen (also to you) in a sin-corrupted world. Life isn't fair if you think that troubles can't find you even though you mind your own business. Life isn't fair if you somehow feel as if this life must go on forever. Life isn't fair if you feel that it owes you something in return just for living it.

Life isn't fair in another way, too, but thank God for it. It isn't fair that God's own Son had to give up the glories of heaven to live in this melancholy world. It isn't fair that the sinless Jesus had to become sin for us, had to die the accursed death on the cross in our place. It isn't fair that in spite of all my failings, God loves me and makes sure that all things work together for my good.

It isn't fair. It's grace!

I pointed out earlier that it is springtime as I write. That means that we have recently celebrated again the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. He is alive and enjoys heaven's glories again. That's fair, and it guarantees us that we, too, will live forever with him. He's alive, and we're alive in him. Yes, that's grace.

I must say that I can't remain melancholy for very long. How can we let melancholy rule when Jesus rules in the heavens and in our lives? How can we feel low by thinking about our mortality when we have been assured of immortality with Jesus? How can we think that life isn't fair when the life we live by faith in Jesus is eternal?

Gloom is replaced by glory. Sadness gives place to serenity. Complaints turn to praises. Melancholy melts into merriment because we live with Jesus.

Gary P. Baumler

WELS CAMPUS MINISTRY

Needs You!

Campus Ministry gives students the chance to grow in faith and service with Christian friends during the vital college years . . . and YOU CAN HELP! HERE'S HOW!!



Being recognized by members of the local congregation really made me feel at home. They've even offered us rides to church and dinner at their houses.

Kami Jo Radsek
Lawrence University

Encourage college and technical school students from your congregation to register with WELS Campus Ministry (see form below)! The students will receive *Lightsource* (the WELS college newsletter), and the nearest WELS Campus Ministry (if available) will be notified.

Assist your local Campus Ministry! Whether it's helping with Bible studies or preparing care packages, welcoming the new students to your area church makes a HUGE difference!

Register on the Campus Ministry Web site as a Career Weaver. This volunteer group answers student questions about college and careers. Share your experiences and give them a Christian perspective for their major and career search!

Check out our Web site! www.wels.net/cm

All the information you need to get involved is on-line. You can also contact the WELS Campus Ministry by mail or phone at:

WELS Campus Ministry; 2929 N. Mayfair Road; Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398;
Email: cm@sab.wels.net

Phone: (414) 256-3279

To register students, mail the form below completed with all known information or complete the form on-line by selecting "Get Mail" from the Registration Building on our Web site.

NAME:

Last _____

First _____ Middle Initial _____

Birth Date ____/____/____

Gender: Male Female

HOME ADDRESS:

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Church Name (at home): _____

City, State, Zip _____

Pastor: _____

COLLEGE INFORMATION

College Name: _____

COLLEGE'S ADDRESS:

City, State, Zip _____

Living with parents when college is in session?

Yes No

School Year: _____

College Graduation Date: _____

Program Major: _____

ADDRESS WHILE AT SCHOOL:

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone No. while at school: _____

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ROLLER COASTER TUNES

Paul G. Eckert

As some vocalists change the melody of “The Star Spangled Banner,” so others do the same with God’s Word.

Especially after Sept. 11, 2001, the U.S. national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner,” was heard more frequently and expressed our patriotic feelings. That’s good. Hopefully, it expresses respect for the great country our God has given us and doesn’t just signal that a ball game can now start.

But have you ever wondered if you wanted to hear the U.S. national anthem sung? Many vocalists try to see how many variations they can make to the tune. The ups and downs from the written score make you think of mice running around on a keyboard. The loops and spins are more jarring than the loops and spins of a roller coaster. You wonder how composer John Stafford Smith and author Francis Scott Key would feel if they were listening today.

You may feel that all of the variations improve the U.S. national anthem as much as I feel that they do not. That’s fine. We have no word from God about how a national anthem should be sung.

But isn’t this also what’s being done with the Bible? As some vocalists change the melody of “The Star Spangled Banner,” so others do the same with God’s Word. The creation account is roller coasted into a myth or poetic account that turns the truth upside down with the theory of evolution. The virgin birth, the miracles of our Savior, the truth of his words, the complete need for and the total efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, even his bodily resurrection,

all become keys on the keyboard of truth to be altered and changed into the flats and sharps of man’s thinking, which sees its wisdom as greater than God’s revealed wisdom and truth.

The Bible has an author or composer. God himself has spoken “through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2). His Son has assured us that “the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Of this divinely inspired Word, Jesus had this to say, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city” (Revelation 22:18,19).

We as Christians can do something about holding to the truth of God’s Word without change. We can thank God for it and ask him to preserve us in it. We can know it better by regularly hearing it in worship, Bible classes, and in our homes. We can share it with others exactly as its divine author gave it to us.



**VARIATIONS FROM
GOD’S TRUTH
ENDANGER ALL.**

Sing “The Star Spangled Banner” however you wish, but when it comes to God’s Word, “Let the one who has my Word speak it faithfully” (Jeremiah 23:28). Variations from God’s truth endanger all. His Word is there to make us “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). God doesn’t want us to doubt this truth, but to be sure of his promises that “these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).



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