

FORWARD IN CHRIST

January 2003

The Word from the WELS

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When baby
makes three

A real-life
good
Samaritan

Confessions
of a church
volunteer

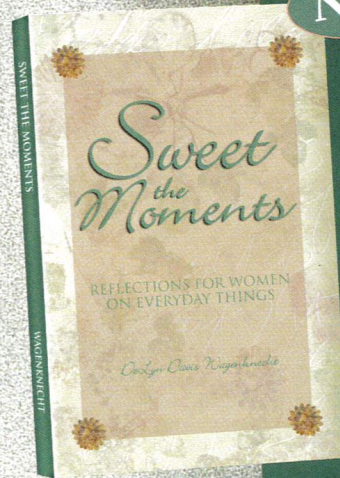


Working with Dad

“God has ordained the moments of our lives; he is in control of each one. Every second can show us something about ourselves as God’s children.”

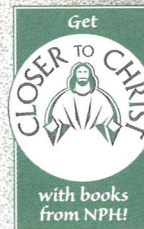
Sweet the Moments: Reflections for Women on Everyday Things is a collection of the author’s fondest memories recreated in narratives and poetry. The spiritual significance of these moments is especially emphasized, with each of the 39 entries taking the reader to a particular Bible text.

NEW



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on Everyday Things
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Wagenknecht
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A season of wonder

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9

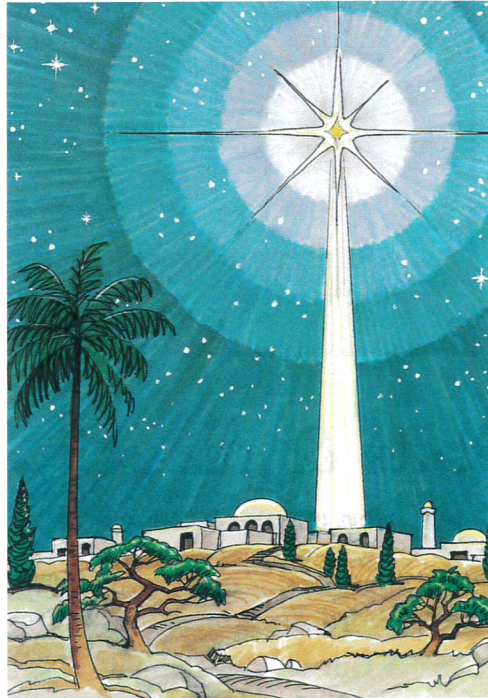
Thomas A. Westra

The look of wonder on children's faces at Christmas—when they see the tree decorated and lit up for the first time, or when they open that special present and are surprised at their good fortune—is priceless. Didn't we spend a great deal of time and money during the holiday season trying to create that sense of amazement in our children? Didn't we spend a great deal of time and money trying to recapture for ourselves that sense of Christmas wonder that we knew as children, when the tree stood so much taller and the lights were much more magical?

The awe-inspiring facts

Call me Scrooge if you want, but the lights and the decorations don't do it for me anymore. I don't cry out "Bah, humbug," but I have to admit that as I'm bringing the tree into the house I'm already thinking about how I'm going to get it out again without getting dead pine needles all over. The twinkling lights don't seem nearly as magical when you've spent hours trying to find that one burned-out bulb that caused the whole string to go dark. And the mall parking lot in December does little to make me jolly.

Still, a sense of wonder stirs within me when I consider the mystery of the incarnation—when I pause in all my holiday busyness to reflect on the truth that this helpless newborn crying in Mary's arms



is Mighty God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible. My sense of awe deepens when I remember why God became flesh. He came to live under the law, obedient to all the commands that we disobey continually, and then—after living 33 years in perfect holiness—to die, spiked to a cross, under his Father's curse, guilty of our disobedience.

The real wonder

But the real wonder of the Christ-child is not the virgin birth or the incarnation of God, as amazing as those truths are. It's not the circumstances of his birth—the cattle shed delivery room or the angelic birth announcement to shepherds, as surprising as those events were. It's not even that the reason that the holy

God became flesh was so that he could be torn by angry sinners, as mind-boggling as that is.

No. The real wonder is this: Why? Why would he want to do it? Why would he love us that much when we are so unlovable, when we have nothing to offer to him, nothing in us to commend ourselves to him. Why would a holy God ever go to such lengths for rebellious sinners like you and me?

The longer I live the more I realize that God has no reason to love you—or me—other than this: He loves us because of who he is. We do not love God or our neighbor as God commands us, and still God loves us so much that he did all this.

With every passing Christmas and new Epiphany, I am even more filled with wonder that God left his home so that one day you and I could go to that home and be with him always.

"Not in that poor, lowly stable
With the oxen standing by
Shall we see him, but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high.
Then like stars his children
crowned,
All in white, his praise will sound."
(*Christian Worship* 50:4)



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Next time you are getting stressed out about your work as God's child, remember how children relax while they work with their parents.

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bits & pieces



God put us on this earth for a reason. He wants us to share the good news—Jesus lived and died for our sins. We need to look for opportunities for God to use us to spread his Word. Several articles in this issue emphasize this point:

- Our synod's two-year theme, "Work while it is day," puts urgency into our mission. Pastor Donald Patterson starts a six-part series this month by showing how we need to work hand in hand with God and with each other. Don't miss his first article, "Work with your hand in God's hand" (p. 8).
- A woman shares her story of how God used her to share her faith with her dying husband in "I feel so used" (p. 14).
- A modern-day version of the story of the good Samaritan shows us that we shouldn't pass by opportunities to help people in need. Check out "I thought I'd be early for church . . ." (p. 18).
- Volunteering at your church is one way to say thank you to God and to help further his kingdom. One volunteer shares all in "Confessions of a church volunteer" (p. 20).



You may have heard that the synod is experiencing a revenue shortfall. Turn to p. 22 to read President Karl Gurgel's explanation on why and what we're doing about it. Then read "In the cross hairs," where Prof. Richard Gurgel asks us some questions on ministry cutbacks (p. 32).



Pastor Randy Hunter starts a new interactive Bible study this month (p. 31). Learn more about your Bible and the Old Testament this year through questions and activities.

—JKW

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IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

Prof. Gurgel points out that followers of Jesus will not always triumph on this side of heaven [**“In the cross hairs,” Nov. 2002**]. **Most followers of Jesus would support this** (most of us by personal testimony). Jesus supported this by “doing what the Father was doing” (John 8:28), and I believe that he knew if he took care of all our temporal needs we would not look to him for our eternal needs. That said, we must also see that Jesus did heal and save many so that they did “triumph” on this side of heaven (Matthew 11:2-6, Luke 7:18-30)—at least in the need that Jesus took care of. . . . Are we letting people share [these kind of] signs?

Chuck Krueger



Virginia Beach, Virginia

In his article “Are Veggies good for you?” [Oct. 2002] I find Pastor Fellers doing none of the “hammering” and “tearing apart” that Paul and Lisa Ibsch attribute to him [Readers forum, Dec. 2002]. He noted that his family still enjoys these videos (mine has, too). He pointed out their positive qualities and mentioned some good ways to use them, but his criticisms were on target. He deserves praise for a fair, balanced, and highly readable article that took a “stirring stand” on the gospel—exactly as Luther would have done.

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.



New Ulm, Minnesota

The article by Pastor Fellers about VeggieTales [“Are Veggies good for you?” Oct. 2002] is enjoyable. I am surprised by two Lutheran lapses that he made, however. (I write this with both tongue-in-cheek and also sincerity.) First, he is correct. VeggieTales is not evangelistic dissemination of the gospel, nor does it purport to be. Instead, [the videos] are an ethically didactic use of the law. But that is not

error. We Lutherans know that the law is good; and from Luther we remember the second use of the law—a curb—to restrain the vast amount of evil and corruption that pervades our world.

Plus we Lutherans should never be astonished at the depth or amount of evil that occurs in human experience, knowing from the Word as we do the radical corruption of the human heart. Therefore, we should always remember what the alternatives are that are eagerly offered by the unregenerate world.

Kids like cartoons. Would you rather they watched Judeo-Christian law-ethic cartoons like VeggieTales or the glut of Saturday morning trade offered to children. . . . The examples are almost limitless; the answer is straightforward and simple.

Russ LaPeer



Ocala, Florida

Although it's true that the law can affect civic good, Fellers wants us to see that the law without the gospel brings no real spiritual good.—ed.

Public libraries are not in the business of censoring materials [Readers forum, Nov. 2002]. Take a close look at the American Library Association and its Library Bill of Rights. The purpose of a public library is to support the leisure reading and educational reading of the community that it serves. Do we have books on humanism? Yes, we do. Do we have books on Christianity? Of course we do!

A quick scan of the catalog online at the Vigo County Public Library in Terre Haute, Ind., (Blievernicht's hometown) reveals three different titles written by Martin Luther. In addition, numerous copies of the New International Version of the Bible were on the shelf. I'm sure a more comprehensive scan of its catalog would show that it has a pretty balanced collection of materials on Christianity, as well as a variety of materials on other world religions, and yes, humanism. In addition, the Vigo County Public Library belongs to an international network of libraries.

I hope that parents who are promoting reading for their child and talking about Christian values would also be attentive to the books that their child is reading. The best way to combat humanism and other beliefs is not to hide them from our children, but to use other beliefs to show how Jesus has taken care of all the things that our children would have to worry about if they believed these other teachings. Christian parents have the opportunity to show their children about God's love and that he sent his Son to die for their sins.

Keith A. Feldt



Phoenix, Arizona

This is in reply to Eric Blievernicht's statement regarding children falling away despite Proverbs 22:6 [Readers forum, Nov. 2002].

Yes, Satan comes against our children in many ways. But, there is hope. I work in a public library that has a nice collection of Christian material for children and adults. [This material] is circulated on a regular basis. Because God's Word is not bound, but has free course, the Holy Spirit is at work even in a public library.

The Holy Spirit can also work in a museum. Displays from local WELS churches are included at the Grand River Valley Museum in Markesan, Wis.

Public libraries and museums can be tools for the Holy Spirit to point children and adults to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And God has his people in both places.

Susan Abendroth

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Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3862; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or Forward in Christ magazine.



The same old story

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Does this sound familiar? A culture war was on between two factions in society. One side had been heavily influenced by certain earlier thinkers, one of whom claimed to be able to prove logically that nothing exists; that if anything did exist, it would be impossible for man to know it; and that even if man could know it, it would be impossible for him to talk about it with anybody else. His students—flocks of impressionable young people—liked the sound of that. As far as they could tell, it meant that there was really no reason to work hard at getting your facts right—in science, history, religion, or anything else.

Another earlier thinker influencing that group had taught that there are always two equally valid sides to every question. Therefore, all talk about “right” and “wrong” is pointless. “Whom does it benefit?” and “Whom does it harm?” are the only questions to ask when someone proposes an idea. In every discussion, your only goal should be to persuade people that those ideas that benefit your side are true and those that don’t are false. Whose ideas really are true is irrelevant. “Truth” is a myth.

This side in the war set about learning the techniques of persuasion that would give them power over people. Some of them became astonishingly good at arguing either side of a question, depending on who was paying their bill at the time. In this way, they made a lot of money and obtained great power.

The other side was split into dozens of different parties that seemed unlikely ever to agree on anything. But they all held one thing in common. They believed that truth was real, knowable, and expressible in words. They believed that the test of an idea was not simply whether or not

you could get people to fall for it. They also believed that to gain power over people by manipulating the truth was immoral. For that reason, this side tended to be less interested in the technique of persuasion and more interested in questions of right and wrong. Not only did these people have different interests from the other side, but they also almost seemed to be speaking a different language, to be playing by different rules—rules that seemed to place them permanently at a disadvantage.

Maybe you would consider this a good description of 21st-century America.

Actually, this was Athens, fifth century BC.

The similarities between these two periods in history make us stop and think a bit. It seems clear that the world has changed in the past few decades, and we Christians need to think about how to communicate the gospel to our relativistic, postmodern age. But there’s no need to panic. The world has seen all this before. In general, history’s verdict on the relativists has been harsh, and it’s not hard to see why. To argue that nothing exists, for example, can be great fun for a while—but exactly what is it going to help you accomplish?

This illustration may also help some readers understand why at the school where I teach we try to acquaint future pastors not just with the Bible but also with the entire story of civilization. Knowing what certain things looked like the first time around is a big help when they come around again. As they most certainly will.

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

Knowing what
certain things
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working hand in hand

WORK WITH YOUR HAND IN GOD'S HAND

When God invites us to help him do his work on earth, he doesn't want us stressing over it. After all, we are working with our heavenly "Dad."

Donald W. Patterson

"Daddy, can I help you?" With four boys I have heard that question at least a hundred times. It happened again this past week. My five-year-old saw me making meatloaf. He wanted to help. Although I could do most things faster and better, I almost always say, "Yes." This time was no exception.

"Pull up a chair and grab those bread crumbs and pour them into the bowl," I said. I love my boys, and I want them to enjoy having an impact on the world



around them. It makes them happy. In the middle of our meatloaf mania, he wrapped his arms around me, gave me a big bear hug, and said, "Daddy, I love working with you."

Not only was he happy. He also wasn't stressed a bit. Do you know why? He was working with his dad. He didn't have to worry about exact amounts, oven temperature, and the final outcome. He knew I would take care of all those things.

Feeling overwhelmed

Do you see a lesson here for us adults? God wants us to remember that although he invites us to help him do his work on earth, he does not want us stressing over it. After all, we are working with our heavenly "Dad." He is in control of the entire project. So much of the project is his responsibility.

King David learned this lesson well. He was one of the most productive and active men to ever grace Israel. Think of all the battles he fought. He was at war for years. No other king before or after him extended the borders of Israel as far as David did. He had hundreds of fighting men to organize, to keep clothed and fed. Just ask any person in the military how much work goes into a weekend drill duty for a hundred people. David ran military campaigns that lasted years, and he did it without cars, computers, and grocery stores.

Think of his building project. He built cities and palaces. Have you ever built a house? He did a thousand times as much with more workers and no power tools.

Think of all the hymns he wrote and the way he organized priests and singers for the worship at the tabernacle. Ask any pastor what it would be like to prepare for corpo-

rate worship services 365 days a year. It would be a huge job.

Giving control to God

I am sure that David often felt overwhelmed by his work. But he learned throughout his life to let God have control of every project. We catch a glimpse of how he learned to work with his hand in God's by what he wrote in Psalm 131:

"My heart is not proud O LORD,
my eyes are not haughty,
I do not concern myself with
great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have stilled and quieted
my soul;
like a weaned child with its mother,
like a weaned child is my soul
within me.
Oh Israel, put your hope in
the LORD
both now and forevermore."


IN YOUR MIND ARE YOU WORKING FOR GOD OR WITH HIM? THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.

David learned to put his hand in God's and work without getting stressed out. He realized that many things were just too wonderful for him to figure out. Like a little boy letting his daddy set the oven temperature and watch the timer, David did what he knew to do and let God be responsible for the outcome. To worry about the final outcome would have been a matter "too wonderful" for David. He was like a weaned child resting in his heavenly Father's arms. He had peace and joy while he worked hard for the Lord he loved.

But he watched as others in Israel were not experiencing his peace. With a shepherd's heart he wrote the last verse of his psalm. Look at verse 3 again. "Oh Israel, put your hope in the LORD." He begged the people of Israel to put their hands in God's and work happily with him instead of working as if they were by themselves, as if they were in charge of everything small and great.

Ancient Israel is gone now. But we are still here, and we have incredible work to do. We have people to reach with his Word, churches to build, schools to run, families to lead, and jobs to fulfill. Are you stressed out about any of the ways you serve God on earth? In your mind are you working *for* God or *with* him? There is a difference. To work for him is to be disconnected and overly responsible. To work with him is to be happy, peaceful, and relaxed.

Next time you feel yourself getting all stressed out about your work as God's child, remember how children relax while they work with their parents. Remember David's psalm. Then quiet your soul by reminding yourself that you are working with your hand in your heavenly Daddy's. Knowing this will make you happy to be busy and active at his side.

As you feel yourself calming down and enjoying just being his child again, you might say a little prayer to show your love for him. You might say, "Daddy, I sure have fun working with you." 

Donald Patterson is pastor at Holy Word, Austin, Texas.

WORK
while it is day

There's no formula for making those early parenting years great for you and your marriage, but even when you struggle, the joy wins out—by far.

Laurie Biedenbender

And baby makes three

When I was pregnant with our daughter, Steve and I, like most first-time parents, were clueless. The way parenthood played out in our minds, we'd take our little bundle home, dress her in pink, know instinctively how to respond to every cry, play and laugh all day, put her to bed at 8, and then sit back, sip wine, enjoy a roaring fire, and sigh at the beatific wonders of parenthood. (Never mind that we didn't have a fireplace. We could dream.)

Great with child (and I was really great), I looked at other families in the grocery store and thought, "Our kids will never scream in the produce aisle. Our kids won't run around with pacifiers when they're almost three. Our kids won't pick their noses."

The harsh realities of parenthood

For the first few days of parenthood, our vision was right on. At Anna's baptism party, she was so beautiful and good (good equals quiet in parenting parlance) that we thought being a mom and dad was simply magnificent.

One day in the second week, the reality truck hit. I still couldn't fit into my regular clothes, I couldn't stop crying, and the fourth diaper change in an hour made me wonder what I was doing to our baby's digestive system, whether we could afford these disposables after all, and why I'd bothered with college.

Two years later, tiny Philip, although incredibly cute in his blue sleeper, screamed all night long. We dubbed him the Philibuster. Steve and I both feigned sleep, hoping the other would get up with him. Finally one of us flung the sheets back, muttered words we'd never want our baby to hear, and stomped off to the object of our love.

Other vivid memories of those years: the constant carpet of Cheerios, the surprising amount of pain a stray Barbie shoe can inflict on a bare foot, and the fear that I would never read a grown-up book again. Then some kindly old woman at church would smile and say, "Enjoy it, dear. These are the

best years of your life." And I'd be petrified that she might be right.

Forgive me for leaning toward the mommy side of the tale. Dad may come home from a hard day at work, hoping for smiles and the whiff of pot roast, and find his wife standing at the door with a scowl. The only whiff is of Baby's tangy diaper, and the only thing his wife says is, "Here. Take him. I need a nap." Dad gives up his nights of basketball and softball to be with the family, and he turns down a tempting promotion because it means more hours away from home. He hopes for a little private time with his wife at night, but she falls asleep before her head hits the pillow and then mumbles dreamily, "Please don't touch Mommy."

No easy formula for parenthood

I'm sorry if the reality truck is hitting too hard. I've heard that some parents have better instincts or more even temperaments or they read the right books or something, and for them parenthood is a picnic. I admire these parents.



I know that those desperately waiting for a child would give anything for just one of those sleepless nights. I don't mean to sound ungrateful for God's blessings. It's just that having children changes your marriage in huge—and unexpected—ways.

Now would be a good time for a bulleted list of "Things to remember when you're new parents." These lists always include the same things: attending church, holding regular family devotions, making time for "dates," and communicating about more than just your kids' science projects.

Those lists are good, but they omit too much. Like what to do when one of you has a lower tolerance for a toy-strewn house than the other. Or who should walk your fussing baby out of church and after how many seconds of crying. Or if girls' nights out are still an option.

No, there's no formula for making those early parenting years great for you and your marriage.

The joyous realities of parenthood

But there is this:

Even when you struggle, the joy wins out—by far. It warms a wife's heart to see her tough-guy husband roll up his sleeves and tenderly guide applesauce into their baby's mouth. Watching your daughter try on your heels and your son comb his hair like his dad completes a circle you hadn't even known existed. All the sentimental clichés about first words, first steps, and first teeth—they're all true. Seeing your child discover his love for books and living room floor wrestling matches, watching him walk away from you—happily—into his first classroom, knowing that every day as he grows more and more into himself, he's growing

farther away from you—it's heartwarming and heartwrenching both.

Simply said, children make a difference in a marriage. Raising kids instantly grounds you as a couple and points you outside yourselves. It evokes new depths of emotion: you never thought you could love so deeply and rage so insanely—at the same time. Parenting draws out a brand-new set of behaviors, some pulled from the hot, sticky vat of your own childhood, and some improvised on the spot. You hear yourself say something your dad did, and first you cover your mouth in shock. Then you realize they're good words and always have been.

All that
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this child is.

All that pettiness about diapers and sleepless nights pales when you remember what a sacred trust this child is, that God knit her together in the womb and gave her to you: "Here's this new little person. She's my child, and I'm expecting her to spend eternity with me. In the meantime, she's going to live with you. Love her, feed her, make sure she crosses the street safely, and above all, tell her about me."

And that moment when Pastor pours water over your new baby and marks her with a cross, you realize that the Spirit has flown into her heart and that you're going to be together for all eternity. That moment when your son sings, throaty and off-key, "I am Jesus' little lamb" . . . that moment when your daughter clicks her black Mary Janes together and proclaims, "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree" . . . that moment when your children wear the white robes and make the promises and together with you eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood—those moments take your breath away.

"So this is it," you think. "This is what it's all about."



Laurie Biedenbender is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minnesota. She and her husband, Steven, have been married 12 years and have two children—Anna, 10, and Philip, 8.



Anna Biedenbender



The gospel is free

Members of our sister church bodies continue to look for opportunities to share the free gospel message.

Linda R. Buxa

Puerto Rico

“Religious people looking for a religion.” That’s how a Puerto Rican poet described his own people, a group where 75 percent are Roman Catholic, but only two in 10 are active.

“They claim to be religious, but the true God is often not the center of their religion,” says Missionary John Strackbein.

So, he says, the challenge is “to get the gospel out to almost four million Puerto Ricans who don’t know or believe that what Jesus offered the world is 100 percent free.”

The members and mission team of the *Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Confesional* (IELC) take that challenge seriously.

Serving friends

“The church has a great heart for missions,” Strackbein continues. Especially when it comes to friends bringing friends.

One member invited his neighbors to an evangelism presentation. Seven of those 10 joined a class he taught.

“All seven claimed to believe the message, but most didn’t follow through because of cultural, parental, and peer pressure,” says Strackbein.

Three did join—three years and several classes later. Once they joined, however, they were dedicated. The man who held the Bible

Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church, Puerto Rico

Members: 231
Established congregations: 4
Mission congregations: 2
Preaching stations: 1
National pastors: 2
Vicars: 1
Evangelists and seminary students: 3
Bible Institute students: 7
Expatriate layworkers: 1
Expatriate missionaries: 3

class is now a national pastor, and one woman is president of the women’s group.

Serving other countries

IELC members don’t limit their mission work to their own country.

Preachers were sent to help the first WELS outreach efforts in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Later, pastors and evangelists made trips to Antigua. After two years of visits, a Spanish-speaking congregation formed, and a Puerto Rican missionary was sent to serve it.

Members continue to reach out aggressively to Hispanics in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and the United States.

Served by others

“Reaching out aggressively” has included help from U.S. volunteers.

Last summer, through Forward in Christ (FIC) thank offerings, two Martin Luther College students canvassed San Juan’s neighborhoods. Three families now attend regularly, and two of those three are in adult



Congregation members in the IELC congregation in Barrancas.

confirmation courses.

In Caguas, the FIC offering paid for another volunteer to teach English as a Second Language classes. A missionary offered law-gospel presentations to class members. During the year, three people joined the church.

Serving each other

Members are thankful for the support they receive from WELS members and missionaries. At the same time, their goal is to be self-sufficient.

“Many men have stepped forward to serve the Lord either as evangelists or pastors,” says Strackbein. The church is planning to have these pastors take over all congregational responsibility.

Members will be on their own for funding, outreach, administration, and training ministers. Missionaries, who would serve as advisors, will find new locations in Puerto Rico to witness or move to other parts of the world. The national church plans to start the process in 2004 and hopes to finish by 2012.

For all the exciting changes taking place, the IELC knows that Puerto Rico still has “religious people looking for a religion.” With the Holy Spirit on their side, members are patiently committed to changing that.

Mexico

“Hardly ever ask anyone if they belong to a church,” says Missionary Michael Hartman.

In Mexico, that’s wise. Since 90 percent of the people are Roman Catholic, he already has a good idea about church affiliation. Instead, Hartman goes straight to their relationship with God and asks, “What do you believe about God?”

Often, people believe in a scary, disciplinarian god. Somewhat surprisingly, Hartman adds to that fear. “First, I show them why they should be even more scared—God demands perfection, and they can’t do it,” he says. “They are not okay with God.”

But he doesn’t let them stay afraid for long. “After God’s demands have sufficiently crushed their man-based hope, then you can tell them of Jesus . . . that precious gospel message.”

Challenges

“That precious gospel message” is what draws people to the *Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Confesional* (IELC). And for good reason. At the IELC, people hear that the gospel is free.

Still, they have doubts. Of the 20 to 30 people who attend Bible instruction class each year in Mexico City, fewer than 20 percent decide to be confirmed members, mainly because of cultural influence.

Consider Alejandro. A professor of literature at UNAM, the huge Mexico City university, Alejandro attends Thursday and Saturday Bible class and Sunday worship—and has for over two years.

When others in Bible classes ask questions and have doubts, “Alejandro, a particularly intelligent and natural leader, will often answer them as well

Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mexico

Members: 395
Established congregations: 7
Mission congregations: 1
National pastors: 5
Vicars: 1
Seminary students: 3
Expatriate layworkers: 2
Expatriate missionaries: 3

as I could,” says Hartman. However, Alejandro can’t bring himself to join.

“When he was a boy and went to the Catholic Church, it was drilled into him his obligations to the church,” says Hartman. “Now that he’s found his freedom in Christ, he struggles with the idea of joining any church. He’s afraid that he’ll have obligations once more.”

National leadership

The IELC has been working to reach people like Alejandro since 1964, when a Mexican pastor sought fellowship with WELS. Work was based in El Paso, Texas, because Mexican law didn’t allow residency for missionaries. The law changed in 1993, and missionaries moved in.

Still, the mission staff doesn’t plan to live in Mexico forever. The goal remains to help the church body “strive towards a greater independence,” says Hartman.

That means turning all the work over to national pastors. First, Hartman’s focus is overcoming the national pastor shortage and training more leaders for the future. Three students attend the seminary, a couple of whom Hartman hopes will graduate in 2004.

Outreach

National church members haven’t let the pastor shortage stop their outreach. Instead, they’ve expanded it.

Recent seminary graduate Mario Dominguez serves in Gomez Palacio, Durango—an area opened up through



When the pope visited Mexico City in July 2002, millions of people crowded the streets. Missionary Michael Hartman says, “It was almost like a parade. Everyone had banners, flags, and was chanting, ‘Se ve, se siente, el papa est presente’ (You can see it, you can feel it, the pope is present). . . . It was a most eerie feeling that only emphasizes how much the Mexican people need to hear the true gospel.”

contacts by a neighboring pastor in Torreón.

“It is quite exciting,” says Hartman. “It is the first time the national church has opened up a new mission field on its own.”

Another area opened up through Mission to the Children, a program formerly run by congregations in Tucson, Ariz. Throughout small towns in Sonora, people “are craving to learn more about God’s love for them and his plan of salvation,” says Hartman.

Because these towns are isolated, Mission to the Children is about the only organization serving here. Missionary Ralph Martens will train leaders in the individual villages.

All this is evidence that no matter what challenges they face, members of the IELC will continue to share “that precious gospel message” and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.



Linda Buxa is a member at Holy Trinity, Kodiak, Alaska.

For more information on these countries, visit <www.wels.net/sab/wor/wor-home.html>.

I feel so used!

God used a young woman to spread his Word to her dying husband.



Amy L. Mowry-Hepfner

A 23-year-old woman is in the shower. Just two hours earlier her husband of 15 months died of Hodgkin's disease. She prays, "Lord, thank you for using me. If you would have me marry a thousand times in my life, as long as you use me to bring them to heaven I will gladly do it." Typical? No. True? Yes!

I was 22 and about to become a June bride. A week before the wedding my fiancé, Jim, was admitted

to the hospital with a severe case of walking pneumonia. He had been short of breath all spring, but he had had asthma as a child, and we figured that was what was causing his breathing difficulty. We were wrong, and he had to have his lungs drained. He assured me that the wedding would take place as scheduled.

Jim got out of the hospital two days before the wedding. He came to my parents' house and told me that while he was in surgery the doctors found

out that his Hodgkin's disease had returned. (It had been in remission for eight years.) His first appointment was scheduled for the week after we got back from our honeymoon. The doctor assured Jim that the treatments were nothing to worry about. Since he was okay with it, the wedding went on.

Two weeks later, Jim went in for his treatment. Thinking that it would take only a few minutes, I waited in the car. I had waited for what seemed like hours, when Jim came out. He

was as white as a ghost! I thought for sure he was going to tell me that there was no hope and that he had only weeks to live. He explained to me that the chemicals were going to make him very sick and that he would lose all of his hair, so if I wanted to annul the marriage he would understand.

I said, "Is that all? I didn't marry you for your hair! I thought you were going to die!"

We talked about how scared he was. I reassured him that God was taking care of us and that we should lean on him.

Jim told me that my faith in God was the one thing he respected most about me. When I met Jim, he felt that some supreme being ran the universe, but he did not know God on a personal level and certainly didn't know about the salvation we have in Jesus. God used me to introduce Jim to him.

Through the next year Jim's faith grew. One day, close to our first anniversary, Jim asked me to call our pastor and enroll him in adult confirmation class. I was thrilled.

As Jim's faith grew, though, so did the cancer. The doctor tried an experimental treatment, but to no avail. I was scared now! I thought about how I would handle Jim's death. Would I become introverted and lock myself away? Would I scream and cry and carry on? Oh, how would I handle it? And what would happen to me? I had quit my job to take care of him, and we had a house payment and two car payments and . . . and . . . and . . . What was I going to do?

On Sept. 13 at 4 AM, Jim woke me up because he couldn't breathe. I drove him to the hospital where he was admitted immediately. After a long battery of tests, the doctors came into Jim's room. One doctor

explained to us that Jim had pneumonia caused by the Hodgkin's disease and that it was not treatable. If by some miracle he did survive the pneumonia, the cancer would kill him in a month.

Out in the hall I asked the doctors about what Jim would go through in each scenario. They explained that if Jim died that weekend of the pneumonia, he would slip into a coma-like state and drift away with virtually no pain. If he survived, he would live for about one more month and then die a very painful death from the cancer.

The Holy Spirit gave me the strength of faith to share God's love with Jim, and God did the rest.

My entire life was shattered. All our hopes and dreams for the future—smashed against the rocks of despair! Then there was the big question—what was I to pray for? Should I pray that God would take Jim now and let him die an easy, painless death? Should I pray that God give us an extra month together only to have Jim die in agony? We were only married for 15 months. That's not long enough. I just couldn't pray. Nothing seemed real. Nothing seemed right. I threw up my arms in surrender, and . . . out of my heart the Holy Spirit screamed for me/from me, "Thy will be done! Father, just help me through it."

It was, and he did. Jim slipped into a comatose state late that night. In the morning, I sat at his side and recited all the Bible passages and hymns that I could remember about dying in Christ and eternal life for the believer.

Just before noon, a nurse came in, and family and friends were asked to leave the room.

As the nurse was working, Jim opened his eyes and looked at me. The look in his eyes said, "I love you, and I'm sorry." I smiled and said that it was okay, that he fought long enough.

"Go home," I said, "Jesus is waiting for you." He closed his eyes, and, as I felt his spirit leave his body, I felt this enormous peace fill my heart. I also felt my Jesus standing with me and his love surround me. I didn't have to worry about how I would react; God took care of that for me. I couldn't be sad. I couldn't hurt. I couldn't grieve. All I could do was rejoice.

You see, God had used me! He knew that Jim only had a short time left on this earth, and God wanted him in heaven. The Holy Spirit gave me the strength of faith to share God's love with Jim, and God did the rest. Sometimes that's all it takes—sharing love.

Being used by God is a wonderful feeling. If he uses you—you'll love it. You'll beg him to use you again and again.

He did use me again. I got married two years later. This man knew of God but didn't have a relationship with God at the time I met him. We have been married for 15 years now, and his faith is strong. He talks with God every day and is active in our church. Now, we are both being used. God has loaned us two of his children to teach his ways. I know that I will always be more than happy to be used by God any and every time he asks.



Amy Mowry-Hepfner is a member at Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minnesota.

The picture shows Amy and her first husband, Jim.

WHATEVER

Black and white

Though it may not be as obvious, racism is still a problem that exists today.

Beth Zahn

Growing up today as a teenager in our world isn't always an easy thing. So much has happened in the last 40 years that it seems almost impossible for our parents to relate. Technology and other advancements have made it a different place than it was for our grandparents at our age.

And yet, some things are still the same and still a part of our everyday lives. To me, the biggest and most noticeable is racism.

Racism has decreased dramatically compared to how it used to be. Now everyone is allowed in school, there aren't separate buses, and "equal opportunity employer" signs seem to be the norm. Racism still exists, though—maybe not so much out in the open, but in people's minds and in the little things they say and do.

Every day, in some form or another, I have to deal with comments that come out of people's mouths, people claiming they're not racist. I spend so much time standing up for African-Americans because I don't believe there is room in this world for racism, and I feel that, as God's servant, I should love everybody. Some of these people claim they also love everybody. But how can a statement like "go back to your own country" not be racist?

I think such statements are nothing but stupidity. If African-Americans have to go back, shouldn't we all? Not a single one of us really belongs here unless we are Native Americans. If you're going to tell a black person to go back to Africa, then you better hop on a plane with your ticket to Germany, or Norway, or somewhere else.

These kinds of things are coming from people I work with and attend school with. The saddest thing

is that some of these people claim to be believers. How can you believe in God, yet hate some of his creation? No one is better than anyone else; God didn't create a "superior" race. It hurts me to hear such negative comments about fellow humans, especially since I have a lot of African-American friends.

I think that a lot of it has to do with where you live. If you're not exposed to different things, you get in a mindset and almost refuse to change. That's why I think it is hard for some people to be accepting.

People talk all the time about getting along and helping the world be a better place, but it really has to start with you personally. Don't hate people you don't know. Don't generalize and make false assumptions. We all have to work together and really want to have something happen in order for anything to be done about this problem.

People don't think about what they say sometimes and the pain that it causes. If we all just took the time to think about others and stopped putting our selfish feelings first, major steps could be taken.

It all comes down to the fact that God created us all, and we are all sinners. We, as Christians especially, need to reach out and do everything we can to save everyone. We aren't doing that when we put others down or make racist comments. We should set an example for the world to follow.

Beth Zahn, a senior at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Peter, St. Peter, Minnesota.

Know no boundaries

Love—especially Christ's love—knows no race, no ethnicity, no boundaries.

Sierra Beckles

On the inside my boyfriend and I are very much alike. We both think humans should be able to fly and that *Hunchback of Notre Dame* is a classic. We're both afraid of spiders like you wouldn't believe.

But there's something else we both believe in that is so much more important. We believe that one's race should not define who you are.

On the outside I have brown eyes and black hair. On the outside he has blonde hair and blue eyes. I'm black. He's white.

Even though it's 2002, I know there are people who would give anything to be in a room with the two of us and give us a thousand reasons why we shouldn't be together. On a remote level that bothers me, but in the grand scheme of things I couldn't care less.

It bothers me when my boyfriend tells me that his grandparents don't really approve of us. I know there's nothing I can do about that except pretend I don't care because in the end I am to them whatever they want me to be. But, of course, it doesn't stop there.

It bothers me when I turn on the television to whatever talk show is on, and I see parents sitting there, telling America that God himself doesn't want different races together. It doesn't matter to them that the whole basis for their argument revolves around how much melanin is in someone's skin. This is one of those things that I can't change. I am what God made me.

In a way, I've already accepted that there are people whom I can't change. I can tell them why all men are created equal.

I can even tell them that underneath my skin I'm exactly like them. I can show them that love knows no race, no ethnicity, no boundaries, but what's the point when they're not listening? By fighting with someone, I'm lowering myself to their level.

I refuse to do that.

My mother once told me about an incident that happened when she was a year older than I am today and out with her friend, Bill. Bill is white, and, obviously, my mom is black. They were wandering around a mall when they noticed an old, white lady blatantly staring at them. Just to get a rise out of her, they started holding hands and smiling in her direction.

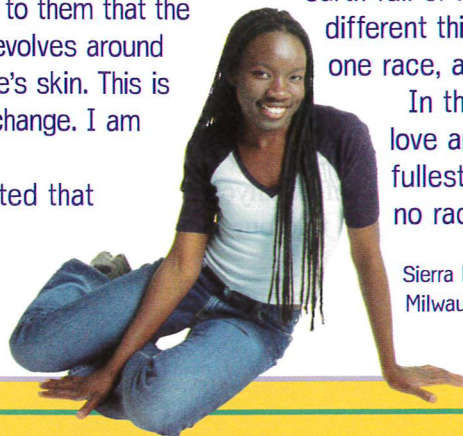
The question is: What gave this woman the right to try to make my mother and her friend feel uncomfortable?

In so many ways I am my mother's daughter, and because of that I would've done the same thing, except that I wouldn't have to pretend that I was with my boyfriend. We'd be the real thing.

One thought sticks in my mind during all of this: God created all of us. You take away any racial individuality, and you'll get an entire earth full of identical people. Different races bring different things to the table. You take away any one race, and you alter history for the worse.

In the end I think it truly comes down to love and the ability to experience life to its fullest. We have that in Christ. Love knows no race, no ethnicity, no boundaries.

Sierra Beckles, a junior at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, is a member at Atonement, Milwaukee.



I thought I'd be early for

A man experiences a real-life version of the good Samaritan story early

David S. Payne

God teaches powerful lessons . . . often at times when we least expect it. I didn't expect to learn about the story of the good Samaritan on the morning I planned to be early for church.

It was an unusual Sunday. I had gotten up early. Showered, shaved, and breakfasted, I decided to do the extraordinary and walk to church. It was plenty early, and the cool, fresh air felt good.

I checked my watch. I needed to be at church early. I was the elder on duty, and Pastor was out of town. It was my job to open the doors, greet our guest pastor, and make sure everything was ready. Church was about two miles away. I wound my way down tree-lined streets. Looking ahead, I glimpsed two ragtag silhouettes. They were two blocks ahead. I thought maybe I should cross the street.

I was gaining on the two shadows. My steps were twice as long as theirs. They looked like twins—not more than seven years old. They were still in their pajamas. Their slippers were soaked with dew. They were taking turns dragging a soggy pillowcase stuffed with who-knows-what. One had a blanket slung over his shoulder.

I glanced around wondering if they belonged to one of the houses—nobody in this neighborhood was up. The streets were deserted. I was almost up to them now. Maybe they were heading home from a sleepover.

"Hi, guys!" I said.

"Hi, mister," they replied.

"What're you doing?" I asked.
"We're on an adventure."
"Really . . . well, good luck!"
I said cheerily and walked past.

Looking ahead, I glimpsed two ragtag silhouettes.

Walking ahead, I listened, hoping to piece the mystery together. Nothing they said filled in the missing clues. Should I keep going, or should I try to find out more? I needed to get to church! People were counting on me. The guest preacher couldn't get in. It would be lots easier to keep walking and leave the boys behind.

I couldn't get the story of the good Samaritan out of my head. How many sermons had I heard on that Bible story? The priest and the Levite had passed by—the religious guys who should have known better, who had to get to the temple.

Something was definitely not right. Were they running away? I slowed down so they could catch up. I turned around and started to walk backwards.

"Mister, why are you walking backwards?"

"I'm worried about you guys being out all alone. Do your parents know where you are?"

"Nah, we left before anyone was up. We're going to find our mommy. Our dad's in jail."

"Where does your mom live?"

"In Neenah."

"Do you know how to get there?"
"We can find it."

"How far have you been walking? What street do you live on?"

"I don't know," said one.

"I think it's Harding Street," said the other.

"You know the address?"

"We live with our grandma."

"Won't your grandma be worried?"

"Nah, she won't wake up till 9 AM. We left at 5 AM."

We were at the highway bridge. I looked at my watch, trying to see if I could still make it to church. I hoped that someone with keys would get there early. I wasn't going to.

As we walked over the bridge, I tried to convince them that they wouldn't make it eight miles to Neenah. They were already hot and tired. I was trying to figure out how to get help for the two little runaways.

"I'm thirsty!"

"Me, too! And I'm hungry."

Just ahead was a park with a water fountain.

"I know a place you can get a drink."

People were stirring now . . . retrieving morning papers, walking dogs, taking morning walks. I tried signaling them. No one responded. Either they couldn't make out my signals or they didn't want to get involved.

Seeing the park gave the boys hope. The dewy grass soaked us. They ran to the water fountain. My heart pounded as I saw a park worker collecting garbage. He could help

church . . .

one Sunday morning.

me. I wondered what he thought seeing me in my Sunday best and the boys in their strange attire.

“Mister, let’s go.”

“You guys go on . . . I’ll catch up!” I slipped over to the park worker and explained the situation. He would contact his dispatcher, who would contact the police.

The boys were about a half-block ahead. I hustled to catch up. We were in a really nice section of town.

“Mister, are these hotels? These buildings are really big.”

We talked about everything—the sky, birds, trees. They revealed they had even packed underwear! One exclaimed that he had forgotten to pack their medicine. They got really “wild” when they didn’t take it, he said.

Looking back, the park worker was following me in his truck.

“Are you guys hungry? I know where we could get something to eat.”

It wasn’t hard to convince them. The boys were really tired now. We had walked a mile and a half. Our church was in sight. I knew the ladies would have goodies for fellowship between services.

I asked the boys if they had ever been to church. They said their grandma took them. I asked if they knew about Jesus. With all the boys were going through, I was happy they did.

We cut across the churchyard. The treats were in the entry. The

service had just begun. The boys were famished. They dug in with both hands.

The park worker slid in and told me to keep the boys occupied. The police were on the way. I signaled my wife. She had driven and was wondering what was happening. I quickly explained, and she helped me herd the boys into Pastor’s office.

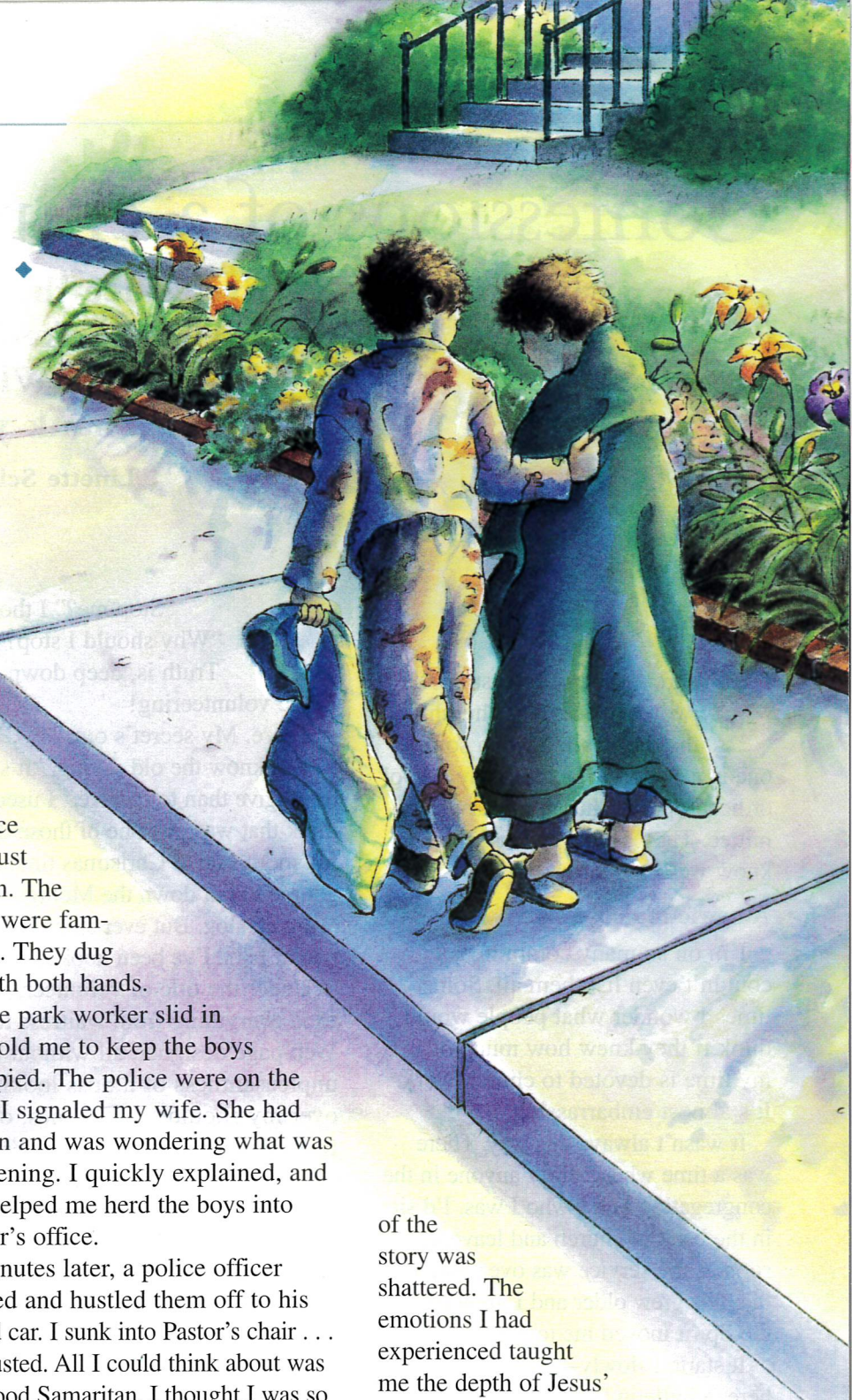
Minutes later, a police officer arrived and hustled them off to his squad car. I sunk into Pastor’s chair . . . exhausted. All I could think about was the good Samaritan. I thought I was so familiar with that story. Having experienced a bit of it, I wondered how the Samaritan felt finding the man lying on the road. How fast did his heart pound? What thoughts raced through his mind?

I could see the picture in my old Bible storybook. A nice, white cutout background. Real life wasn’t so neat and tidy. My juvenile understanding

of the story was shattered. The emotions I had experienced taught me the depth of Jesus’ words. What a powerful tale of sacrifice and ministry the Lord had told.

The day I planned to be to church early, Jesus taught me a powerful lesson before “church” ever started.

Dave Payne is a member at Eternal Love, Appleton, Wisconsin.



Confessions of a church volunteer



Ever since that first pan of bars, I've been hooked on volunteering at church. What a great way to say "Thank you" to my gracious God.

Linette Scharlemann

There's always at least one or two of us in every church—the ones called when someone is needed to teach Sunday school or head up the Church Library Committee. They call us because they know we'll probably say yes.

A newfound obsession

I'm on so many committees I couldn't even list them all. Sometimes I wonder what people would think if they knew how much of my time is devoted to church work. It's almost embarrassing.

It wasn't always this way. There was a time when hardly anyone in the congregation knew who I was. I'd sit in the back of church and leave as soon as the service was over. But as the kids grew older and I grew braver, the Spirit moved me to get involved.

It started slowly—a pan of bars here, a bulletin board there. Before long my newfound attitude of volunteerism had me working concession stands, organizing luncheons, even leading Bible studies. My calendar is full of commitments for which I confidently or reluctantly volunteered.

I guess it shouldn't have come as a surprise when a friend suggested I get a "Stop me before I volunteer again" T-shirt.

"Stop me?" I thought.
"Why should I stop?"
Truth is, deep down,

I love volunteering!

There. My secret's out.

You know the old saying, "It's better to give than to receive." I used to think that was just one of those things my mom said at Christmas time to get me to put down the Montgomery Ward catalog. But ever since that first pan of bars, I've been hooked.

Under the title of volunteer, I've tried everything from waitress to Web page designer, all without the unpleasantness of a boss looking over my shoulder, deadlines, or fear of being laid off. True, I've never received a paycheck, but I have received lots of tips in the form of grateful smiles, warm hugs, and even a gift or two.

The natural response of a thankful heart

Despite how that may sound, we perpetual volunteers aren't in it for what we get out of it. It's simply the natural response of a thankful heart. In the words of that wonderful hymn: "We give thee but thine own, What e'er the gift may be; All that we have is thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from thee" (*Christian Worship* 485:1).

Though we don't deserve it, God generously gives us our mind, body,

time . . . everything we have. The greatest of these undeserved gifts is, of course, our Savior. Having been redeemed by the love Jesus displayed as he volunteered everything one dark and glorious Friday, we are now empowered to follow his example. Volunteering is the Christian's way of saying thank you.

There are moments, I'll admit, when I get tired of serving and wonder if it's worth the effort. At these times I look to Galatians 6:9 for encouragement: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." What a comfort to know God is with us. He sees every act of Christian love, no matter what it might be. He's there cheering us on. He makes it all worthwhile.

So don't always assume the ones working in the kitchen are missing out. We volunteers love what we do. We are motivated by Christ himself, overjoyed to have the opportunity to say thank you, and blessed in ways you may never know. That is, unless you, too, have something to confess.



Linette Scharlemann is a member at St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota.

Cookin' God's books?

Roy H. Rose

Major corporations filing for bankruptcy . . . CEOs indicted . . . accounting firms called on the carpet. These have been headlines from last year. Somebody's been "cookin' the books," and the pot's overflowing! Are we distraught, angry, fearful that this could happen? That shareholders in large companies would be cheated, that some would lose their pensions and other retirement benefits? "How could large companies do that to the shareholders?" we ask.

Would we do the same to God? Would people dare to cook the books and cheat God? It's happened before. Through Malachi God tells his people near the end of the Old Testament era, "When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? . . . Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king . . . Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings" (Malachi 1:8,14, 3:8).

In that era, when tithes and sacrifices were part of the law, a great many in Israel were cookin' the books and cheating God himself. They were bringing their worst instead of their best, the leftovers instead of the firstfruits. If they did that with the tithes and sacrifices demanded by law, what were their "freewill offerings" like?

Today, in the New Testament age of freedom, we're no longer laboring under the laws of sacrifices and tithes. We have the freedom to bring our offer-

ings to God cheerfully and willingly in love for him who first loved us. We can tithe or do more (and in some circumstances, less) if we wish. Yet, could we too become guilty of cookin' the books when it comes to our freewill offerings?

Do we find ourselves thinking, "Let's see, that eight percent I'm going to give to the Lord this year . . . is that before taxes or after taxes? Before the house and car payments or after I've taken care of those necessities? Before that anniversary trip to Hawaii or after?" What does "firstfruits" (in Proverbs 3:9) really mean?

If we look into our own hearts and stewardship practices and indict ourselves for cookin' God's books today, what can we do? No better example can be found than that of two "book cookers" of long ago. One stood in the temple, bowed his head, and prayed, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." The other, named Zacchaeus, vowed to stop cheating and give back to others what he had taken for his own selfish purposes.

Perhaps it's time for many of us to do the same with our offerings—to ask God to forgive the selfishness that has led us to cheat him out of the offerings he deserves as the God of grace who has saved us and to bring him the offerings that truly express our thankfulness for all our undeserved blessings, always trusting in our Savior's promises to supply all of our needs.

Roy Rose is pastor at St. Paul, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Could we
become guilty
of cookin' the
books when
it comes to
our freewill
offerings?

Revenue shortfall forces difficult decisions

A letter from President Karl R. Gurgel regarding synod funding.

Dear friends of the Savior,

You may be hearing for the very first time that our synod is experiencing monetary difficulties. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003, revenues will fall short of the synod-approved budget by \$4.3 million. A revenue shortfall of about \$8 million is projected for the next budget year. Hearing this for the first time, or repeated, may raise some logical questions in your mind. For example, why do we have a shortage of mission dollars? And what are we doing to address the issue? Permit me to provide you with some answers.

Why do we have a shortage of mission dollars?

1. Gift Trust Fund: In the early 1990s, a Gift Trust Fund was established by the then Coordinating Council to hedge against emergencies and downturns in the economy. Later, the Synodical Council, in an effort to keep current programs going and to fund new outreach efforts, decided to spend down the Gift Trust Fund, and \$2.5 to \$7 million was added each year to the operating budget. That fund is now depleted, so its ability to contribute to our operating revenue has ended.

2. Individual Mission Offerings: After 9-11, individual donors, wary of the downturn in the economy, decreased their gifts to WELS significantly. Most dramatic was the decrease in Schwan Foundation's gift to WELS. In the late 1990s, this gift often exceeded \$12 million a year. Last year the Schwan gift to WELS was nearly \$10 million. Next year it will be less than \$7 million.

3. Tuition revenue: Tuition from our worker training schools flows into the synod's operating budget and provides fully one-quarter of its revenue. But tuition at our schools was held to the rate of inflation throughout the

1990s, even though the expense of running our schools—which comes from the operating budget—grew four to six times the rate of inflation.

4. Congregational Mission Offerings: CMOs have generally increased each year in the last decade, but increases were, for the most part, at or below the rate of inflation.

5. Interest revenue: Weaker financial markets have cut into the revenue from the WELS Investment Fund. Lower rates have decreased interest income from other funds.

6. Bequests: WELS members pledge millions of dollars to WELS ministry in their wills. But these monies are not available for ministry until the wills are probated. Proceeds from these bequests have been abnormally low the last two years.

What are we doing to address the issue?

1. Synodical Council: Over a year ago the SC addressed the revenue shortfall by asking all WELS ministries to plan their 2003-05 ministries with 25% less (after adding costs for compensation and inflation). Already this year, the SC is asking all areas to operate at 9% below their synod convention budget allocations.

2. Conference of Presidents: The COP, constitutionally charged with funding the synod's budget, began preparing in the fall of 2001 for a synodwide stewardship motivation and education effort entitled, "Work While It Is Day."

3. Commission for Communication on Financial Support: In February 2002 CCFS representatives, district presidents, and circuit pastors met to prepare for visits to every congregation of the synod. More than 96% of these visits have been made. CCFS is preparing a follow-up presentation for 2003.

4. Budgeting:

Deciding how to budget during a revenue shortfall is challenging. We seek to follow convention reso-

lutions. Since the Synodical Council is responsible for synod direction between conventions, we follow the direction they give us. We also want each area of ministry to be responsible for suggesting its own work program. And, wanting to be good stewards, we have to be aware of the current financial situation, while still trusting that God can provide more.

Each area of ministry was asked to propose expenditures in the 80% range for the next fiscal year. Once we heard the consequences of budgeting at the 80% level, a remaining \$2 million of projected revenue was allocated where, in our judgment, it could have the most spiritual impact.

Every area of ministry was affected. Of the roughly 700 workers staffing our worker training schools, home and world mission fields, and administration, about 15%, 105 people, would lose their present positions. This number is almost equally divided between pastors, teachers, and staff. These men and women are all people who have devoted their lives to serving the Lord. We will need to be supportive of them while we seek other places and ways for them to serve.

5. Flexibility: We are urging flexibility and looking at alternate solutions. We are allowing the synod-convention-approved new compensation guidelines to be implemented gradually. We are using as many restricted fund dollars as possible to support budgeted ministry. And we have initiated a Mission Partners effort that promises to generate \$2.5 million for each of the next two years.



President Karl R. Gurgel

What happens next?

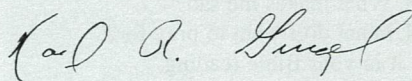
During December, January, and February, the area of ministry boards will be meeting to review and revise these preliminary plans. The Synodical Council meets in January with the Conference of Presidents to consider overall synodical direction. And, at the end of February, the Synodical Council meets to recommend a budget to be adopted by the synod in convention next summer.

Trust and optimism

The fact that most of the downturn in our mission revenue was unforeseen and unavoidable turns us away from ourselves and toward God. We repent of any and all poor stewardship that has contributed to our problems, and we look with confidence to our ever-gracious God's ability to make all things work out for our good. The revenue prospects for the second year of the upcoming biennium improve slightly, and the long term outlook, God-willing, is even more optimistic.

Undoubtedly this may not answer all your questions. We will continue to supply you with more information after the meetings of the various areas of ministry. However, should you have more questions, don't hesitate to ask them. Also, don't cease asking our Savior to bless us with human wisdom and godly confidence.

In His Service,



Karl R. Gurgel

Have a question you want to ask about the budget? Want to keep updated on what's going on? Look on-line at <www.wels.net>. We'll keep you posted and provide you a forum to ask your questions.

Other news will be reported as it becomes available after budgetary meetings. Watch for the May issue of *Forward in Christ* for a more in-depth report.

Project Timothy turns 10

Send a dozen teenagers to the Caribbean in July and what do you get? Beach parties and bronze skin. But send them under the name Timothy and in the name of Jesus Christ, and you get a valuable program for spreading the gospel.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Project Timothy, a program of Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., that gives students a chance to share their faith and learn about ministry.

Just like Timothy, a young man who traveled with Paul to learn from his expert ways and to assist him in ministry, groups of students and chaperones travel to locations such as Antigua, Grenada, and Latvia to experience the joys and challenges of ministry and to learn how the gospel crosses all boundaries. The majority of their canvassing and other work centers around vacation Bible schools, but they have also helped with painting, cutting brush, and other projects. During one trip to the Czech Republic, students acted as teachers and counselors at a Bible camp outside Plzen.



Project Timothy participant Tim Gum with vacation Bible school students in Grenada last summer.

Typically, 200 students apply for Project Timothy each year. The first trip to Antigua and St. Lucia in 1993 had 11 students. Last summer 66 students were sent to 10 different locations.

Over its 10 years, Project Timothy has been a blessing to over 200 students. Jon Scharf, a member of the first Antigua team, says, "At the time I saw it as a way to have fun and see a little more of the world. It definitely was that. But it also gave me some real ministry experience and a chance to interact with people very different from myself."

The LPS students are models of Christian service for members of host congregations. When students travel all the way from the States to support these missions, the people are touched and see, perhaps for the first time, that they are part of a larger family of Christians that share their beliefs.

"It showed me that there is more to ministry than just books and preaching," says Paul Mattek, an El Paso team member in 1996. "It showed me that in some ways I need to grow up. High school life is fun, but there is a world out there that is hurting and needs the gospel."

Through Project Timothy, the gospel is on its way, and the Holy Spirit is at work.

Laura Warmuth



Project Timothy participants on the shore of the Baltic Sea during the 2002 Latvia trip. From left: Scott Fairbanks, Pastor Clark Schultz, Dan Schwartz, Becky Berg, Kendalyn Taylor, Neil Birkholz, Greta Zimpelmann, and Professor Angela Scharf.

WELS businessmen launch media ministry

It began innocently enough. While a group of WELS businessmen were talking together in fall 2000, someone mentioned that it was unfortunate that there was not a spokesperson for Lutheranism in the media.

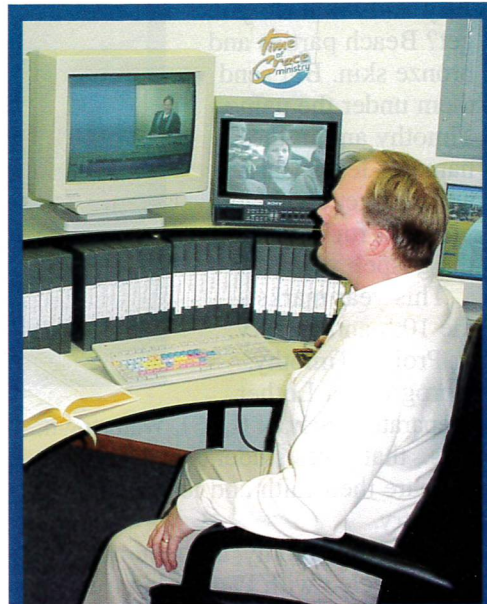
Although the conversation did not go any further that day, the idea had been planted, and it resurfaced when the men met again. As they discussed the idea of creating a ministry that would present the gospel through the eyes of Lutheranism, they became excited about the potential to reach lost souls. By spring 2001, Time of Grace Ministry was established.

On Nov. 18, 2001, the first half-hour episode of Time of Grace Ministry was televised in the Milwaukee area. Each Sunday at 7:30 AM a new message is broadcast. Mark Jeske, pastor at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, presents a sermon with his own dramatic flair. The topic of the sermon is emphasized by an introduction and a conclusion given by Jeske or one of the show's hosts. The gospel choir at St. Marcus or another music group is often used to enhance the message. Congregation members' responses add energy and enthusiasm to the program.

In less than a year, the show has gained a following of about 15,000 viewers each week. According to Nielsen ratings, it receives the most viewers of any religious broadcast in Southeastern Wisconsin.

"God has blessed us every step of the way," notes Daryl Raabe, president of Time of Grace Ministry.

Time of Grace is not just a television ministry, though. Jeske also gives short meditations on the radio two times a day during the workweek. The ministry's Web site, <www.timeofgrace.org>, includes devotions, transcripts, and audio of past programs. And, Time of Grace



Chad Johnstone works on editing an episode of Time of Grace, a ministry begun by a group of WELS businessmen.

has an aggressive ministry plan for the future, including reaching out to as many as four additional markets in the next year. Within five years, Time of Grace hopes to reach nearly every major market in the United States so that its weekly message of hope is available to every American. Funding for this effort comes from grants and personal donations.

Often a good idea never goes anywhere because no one wants to take the next step to put the idea into action. However, the passion that the men who created this ministry have for spreading the gospel has carried itself through in their actions. Time of Grace is a volunteer effort that only employs two full-time employees. As executive director Jim Johnson explains, "Not only do I have the best product, but I have the support of the best people."

DEFINING RELIGION

Ecumenism: the desire for visible union and religious cooperation among all Christian groups without regard to differences in teaching and practice. As Christians we want to express fellowship with those who teach and believe as we do, but we cannot express fellowship with those who teach falsely (Romans 16:17).

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

FEBRUARY 2003

This Bible reading series is designed to take only a few minutes each day. To help you through your Bible study, consider this anecdote: Peter the Barber once asked Martin Luther how he, an ordinary kind of guy, could read the Bible with profit. Luther answered, "Ask yourself:

1. What does God tell me here?
2. What makes me glad?
3. What makes me sad?
4. What do I want to pray for?"

Try it in your Bible reading.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Leviticus 8 | 15. Lev. 26 |
| 2. Lev. 9, 10 | 16. Lev. 27 |
| 3. Lev. 11 | 17. Hebrews 1 |
| 4. Lev. 12:1-13:46 | 18. Heb. 2 |
| 5. Lev. 13:47-14:32 | 19. Heb. 3:1-6 |
| 6. Lev. 14:33-15:33 | 20. Heb. 3:7-4:13 |
| 7. Lev. 16 | 21. Heb. 4:14-5:10 |
| 8. Lev. 17 | 22. Heb. 5:11-6:8 |
| 9. Lev. 18 | 23. Heb. 6:9-20 |
| 10. Lev. 19, 20 | 24. Heb. 7:1-14 |
| 11. Lev. 21, 22 | 25. Heb. 7:15-28 |
| 12. Lev. 23 | 26. Heb. 8 |
| 13. Lev. 24 | 27. Heb. 9:1-15 |
| 14. Lev. 25 | 28. Heb. 9:16-28 |

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. If you have an example to share, send it to us at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <fic@sab.wels.net>.

About two and a half years ago, Kevin and Karen Brumm, members of St. John, Jefferson, Wis., lost their second child. Cassidy was stillborn two weeks before her due date.

"When you go through that type of thing," says Karen, "it's extremely heartbreaking. When I hear of someone else going through the same thing, my heart just breaks all over again."

The Brumms decided to help heal some of these broken hearts. They have mailed at least 20 packages containing poems, a letter telling their story, and teddy bears for surviving children to families whose children are stillborn. The Brumms don't know many of the people. They get names from neighbors or friends who know couples going through this ordeal.

The letter the Brumms send reveals what they went through and how their faith helped them. It doesn't mince words when describing how difficult this experience was. It reads (in part):

"At the hospital, the nurses put the monitors on me. They kept changing the position to hear the heartbeat. There was nothing. They called our doctor, who came in with an ultrasound machine. She pointed out the different body parts as she progressed over the baby, then said the words that changed our lives forever. 'That's the chest cavity. That's where the heart should be beating.' *Should be beating?*

"The doctor said she would break my water, and we would deliver the baby. At about 7:20 AM, our perfect little girl was born. Perfect except for the fact



(L to R) Kevin, Conner, Carson, and Karen Brumm. Carson was born after the Brumm's second child was stillborn.

that her heart was not beating. . . .

"We held her and studied her little face before the nurses took her to bathe and dress her. After they left the room with Cassidy, reality hit me, and I started to cry uncontrollably in my husband's arms. Our lives had been crushed. Our hopes and dreams were gone. . . .

"When Conner [our five-year-old son] arrived in our room, his eyes were like shining stars! He eagerly looked around the room and came over to my bed. We told him that he had a baby sister, but she had gone to heaven to be with Jesus. . . .

"The weeks and months following have been a learning experience for all of us. We know that God has a plan for us, and it's not ours to question. Even though we've suffered an earthly devastation, we know our baby girl is safe in the arms of Jesus."

The Brumms see mailing these packages as outreach opportunities. Says Karen, "They [the recipients] can see that God really has carried us through."

Doing this has also helped heal the Brumm's broken hearts.

"If you have to go through something like that, you want there to be a reason," says Karen. "Maybe God wanted me here to help other people."

In the news —



Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., was featured on the front page of the Metro section of the July 7, 2002, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Kettle was praised for creating the first artificial wetlands among schools and municipalities in the Upper Midwest. The wetlands serve as part of an experimental sewage treatment plant.

Greg Buxa, a member at Holy Trinity, Kodiak, Alaska, and a pilot in the U.S. Coast Guard, discussed flying in Alaska's weird weather conditions on a Weather Channel show called *Weather Quest Alaska*. The show aired during the week of Sept. 16, 2002.

Kaitlin Degner, a high school senior and a member at St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., was featured in *The Free Press of Mankato*, Minn., on Oct. 19, 2002. The article, entitled "Degner era draws to a close," discusses Degner's impressive competitive swimming career. She is widely recognized as the top swimmer in south-central Minnesota, and she holds five school records at St. Peter High School.

On Nov. 6, 2002, **Joel Lillo**, pastor at Trinity, Appleton/St. Paul, Hortonville, Wis., was a contestant on the popular game show *Weakest Link*. While on the show, Lillo proved that he was no weak link—of the six contestants, Lillo was eliminated fourth.



Joel Lillo, a recent contestant on *Weakest Link*, poses outside of the studio. Lillo's wife now wants him to try out for *Pyramid*, hosted by Donny Osmond.

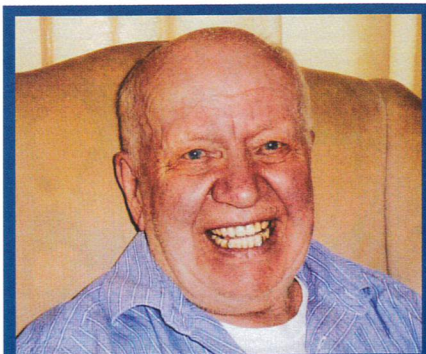
Visitation ministry a success

The visitation ministry that began last year at St. John, St. Paul, Minn., has been successful beyond everyone's expectations. The purpose is to train members to minister to other members of the congregation who need spiritual, and sometimes physical, assistance. Areas of service include regular visits to shut-ins, prisons, nursing homes, hospices, and hospitals to read devotions.

The visitation team consists of five men and nine women. After discovering the need for this ministry, St. John's pastor selected people whom he believed possessed the appropriate gifts and qualifications. These individuals participated in an eight-lesson training program. When this program was completed, the visitation team members were approved and called by the congregational voters' assembly.

The pastor gives visiting responsibilities to the visiting ministry coordinator, who provides available and suitable visitors. The program is monitored to ensure its success.

And successful it is, as witnessed by the many heartwarming stories told by visitation ministers. One female shut-in was quite reluctant to have anyone visit her initially. She finally consented to a "trial" visit, after which she told her visitor that she would like her to come again. This shut-in now goes on short outings with her visitation minister, although previously she rarely left her home.



When Ed Ackerson, an involved member at St. John, St. Paul, Minn., moved to a nursing home, St. John's visitation ministers were a friendly link to his church home.

Another visitation minister stopped at a local nursing home to visit a member. An administrator cautioned her that this particular woman had been reluctant to have anyone visit her. When the visitation minister stopped at this woman's door, the nursing home resident quizzed her about a number of items that had appeared in the church newsletter. After deciding that the visitor's answers were appropriate, the resident invited her to come in and sit on her bed so that they could visit.

Many people being visited have called to ask when their assigned visitor is coming again because they enjoy the visits so much. The visitation ministry has emerged as a wonderful blessing at St. John—both for the visitation ministers and the people being visited.

Julie Averbek

District news

Northern Wisconsin

Timothy Flunker was installed as the **Hispanic Outreach Coordinator** for the Northern Wisconsin District on Oct. 27, 2002, at First, Green Bay, Wis. Flunker will lead an organized effort to reach out to the growing Hispanic population in the district.

Happy Anniversary!

SEW—Redemption, Milwaukee, celebrated its 50th anniversary with special services on Nov. 3, 10, and 17, 2002.

WW—Christ, West Salem, Wis., celebrated its centennial in 2002. Special services were held throughout the year, including an old-fashioned service on Nov. 17.

Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., celebrated three professors' anniversaries this school year: **Harold Schewe**, 40 years; **Steven Ehlke**, 25 years; and **Roger Kuerth**, 25 years. All three professors are also pastors.

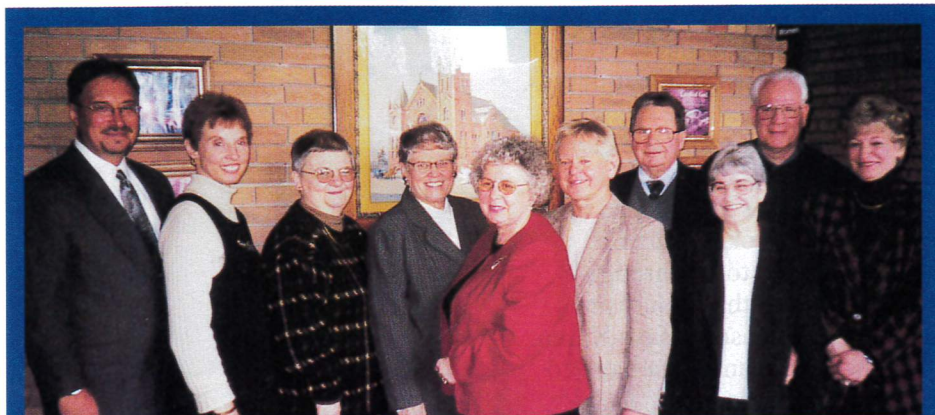
Minnesota



On Oct. 15, 2002, pastors in the Red Wing Conference officially thanked Randy Kuznicki, pastor at St. John/St. Peter, Goodhue, Minn., for serving as conference secretary for 25 years. Here Secretary Kuznicki poses with his trusty laptop.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NW—Joel Lillo; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

CORRECTION: St. Peter, Balaton, Minn., not St. Peter, Tomah, Wis., honored Lovilla Schlenker on May 5, 2002, as was reported in the Nov. 2002 Western Wisconsin district news.



The visitation ministers at St. John, St. Paul, Minn.

Volunteer wins award

Did you know that a special six-key typewriter can create 264 different words or letters in Braille?

Beverly Collyard didn't know that—until she spent six months learning how to transcribe Braille to help the blind. She's been volunteering her services ever since—for 26 years.

Collyard volunteers one to three days a week at the Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI), St. Paul, Minn., where she manages the Braille department. Here she coordinates the work done by 12 WELS transcribers around the country and works with volunteers in publishing and distributing the transcribed works. She also does transcribing on her own, including recipes, knitting patterns, and certificates.

Her reward? "You can't help but be encouraged and delighted to work with [the blind]," says Collyard, a member of St. John, St. Paul, Minn. "I'm appreciative that I can help the blind in this way. It's my way of thanking the Lord."

In August, she received an earthly commendation—a 2002 Governor's Acts of Kindness Award. Eight people, from the 90 nominees, won these awards and were invited to hear Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura speak at his mansion.

One of her co-workers, Genevieve Baumeister, received a Certificate of Commendation for her efforts at the MVI. Baumeister, a member at Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., coordinates the distribution and production of cassette materials. She has been volunteering at the MVI since 1968.

The Mission for the Visually Impaired, a committee of the Commission on Special Ministries, works to reach out to the blind and visually impaired by producing and distributing Christian literature in Braille, on audio-cassette, and in large print. About 60 people volunteer regularly.



Beverly Collyard (left) and Genevieve Baumeister.

For more information or to request materials, contact the Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Ave, St. Paul MN 55107-2998; 651/291-1536; <Welsvisimp@aol.com>.

Obituaries

Edward George William Zell 1920-2002

Edward Zell was born Sept. 20, 1920, in Mishicot, Wis. He died Oct. 3, 2002, in Redford, Mich.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Lola Park, Redford Township, Mich. He also served on many synodical committees, including the Committee on Relief for 38 years, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Board of Control for 26 years, and the Board for Ministerial Education for 16 years.

He is survived by his wife, Jayne; two sons; one daughter; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Gerald E. Berger 1929-2002

Gerald Berger was born Aug. 22, 1929. He died Oct. 13, 2002, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1950 graduate of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served at New Salem, Sebawaing, Mich., and Salem, Milwaukee.

He was preceded in death by two brothers and one sister. He is survived by his wife, Marie; one sister; three sons; three daughters; and 15 grandchildren.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Art was my first opponent in a tennis league that I had joined. I called him from my pastor's office at Christ the Lord Lutheran Church to schedule a time for us to play. I left a message for him on his answering machine. After our match, Art, who confessed to have fallen away from his Methodist faith, told me how my phone call troubled him at first. It turns out that Art has caller I.D., so, when he looked at his phone it said, "Christ the Lord." Art thought that Christ was calling for him. He told me that he almost had a heart attack! It led to a great witnessing opportunity for me. Art is now on our congregation's prospect list.

*Jeff Mahnke
Clearwater, Florida*

World news

Bone box may be linked to Jesus—

In October, researchers announced that an ossuary (bone box) could be the first historical artifact linked to Jesus or his family.

The inscription on the box says it contained the bones of “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.”

James, Jesus, and Joseph were all common names in the first century. But one researcher estimated that only about 20 men in first century Jerusalem would have the James-Joseph-Jesus name relationship. It is also highly uncommon for a man’s brother to be listed on the ossuary, unless that brother is prominent or important.

The box, dated at about 63 AD, is on a tour and exhibition.

Grant money helps the poor help themselves—

Annual grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development will help fund programs to help the poor pull themselves from poverty.

About \$10.2 million will fund 339 programs throughout the United States. The money for the grants comes from an annual collection in U.S. parishes.

Half of the programs concentrate on work in urban areas.

New version of the Bible published—

A new “reader-friendly” version of the Bible has been published.

Eugene Petersen wrote *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, a Bible translated directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts into contemporary language. Verse numbers aren’t even used.

So far over 350,000 copies have been sold.

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.

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Nine Months Ending September 30, 2002

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received			Percent of Sbscrpnt	Annld Ave Per Commun
	Communicants 12/31/01	2002	Year to Date Projected	September Offerings	Nine Months Offerings		
Arizona-California	18,043	\$1,116,570	\$773,529	\$75,994	\$785,883	101.6%	\$58.07
Dakota-Montana	8,889	488,262	298,600	37,091	311,897	104.5	46.78
Michigan	36,078	2,240,222	1,457,436	147,512	1,424,480	97.7	52.64
Minnesota	43,194	2,508,035	1,566,318	137,550	1,593,501	101.7	49.19
Nebraska	10,545	679,010	432,797	39,718	435,633	100.7	55.08
North Atlantic	4,445	421,477	288,024	39,337	285,530	99.1	85.65
Northern Wisconsin	60,720	2,723,239	1,754,519	176,064	1,727,420	98.5	37.93
Pacific Northwest	5,278	332,515	218,780	26,707	231,318	105.7	58.44
South Atlantic	7,565	610,145	408,905	44,259	390,168	95.4	68.77
South Central	5,003	549,212	386,072	43,419	389,967	101.0	103.93
Southeastern Wisconsin	56,883	3,595,877	2,252,260	237,082	2,287,227	101.6	53.61
Western Wisconsin	59,204	3,284,671	2,170,747	221,016	2,149,456	99.0	48.41
Total—This Year	315,847	18,549,235	12,007,987	1,225,750	12,012,481	100.0%	50.71
Total—Last Year	316,386	18,182,765	11,741,307	1,180,359	11,412,735	97.2	48.10

CURRENT OPERATING FUND

Statement of activities

Three months ended September 30

	2003 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$3,985,187	\$3,964,100	\$18,671,800
Gifts and memorials	2,452,318	2,659,088	10,165,400
Bequest/planned giving	252,708	11,454	2,357,000
Tuition and fees	1,992,387	3,641,914	8,233,000
Other	(72,886)	(2,491)	157,000
Transfers-endowment earnings	48,450	-	373,000
Transfers-gift funds	728,676	1,146,325	2,914,600
Transfers-continuing programs	-	-	4,721,960
Transfers-other	-	-	-
<i>Total revenues</i>	<u>9,386,840</u>	<u>11,420,390</u>	<u>47,593,760</u>
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	2,122,526	2,349,238	8,757,962
Ministerial Education	5,831,963	7,234,026	22,199,670
Parish Services	513,881	487,086	2,412,072
Administrative Services	1,174,519	1,118,599	4,854,893
World Missions	1,741,574	2,047,043	987,116
System Wide	92,087	13,308	339,799
<i>Total expenditures</i>	<u>11,476,548</u>	<u>13,249,300</u>	<u>39,551,512</u>
<i>Changes in unrestricted net assets</i>	<u>(2,089,708)</u>	<u>(1,828,910)</u>	<u>8,042,248</u>
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	-	-
Bequest/planned giving	-	(2,000)	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-
<i>Change in temp restricted net assets</i>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>-</u>
<i>Net assets - beginning of year</i>	<u>(773,020)</u>	<u>3,704,500</u>	<u>-</u>
<i>Net assets - end of period</i>	<u>(2,862,728)</u>	<u>1,873,590</u>	<u>-</u>

Statement of financial position

	Sept. 30, 2002	Sept. 30, 2001
Assets:		
Due from other funds	\$(6,968,451)	\$(3,779,668)
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	121,810	124,250
Cash advances - School	(183,183)	1,527,672
Other accounts receivable	262,248	244,540
Contributions receivable	3,682,500	3,702,500
Mortgage note receivable	7,093	9,499
Allowance for doubtful acct	(45,100)	(45,100)
Prepaid expenses	81,800	110,166
<i>Total assets</i>	<u>(3,041,282)</u>	<u>1,893,859</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	-	-
Accrued expenses	36,149	45,672
Accounts payable	(214,703)	(25,403)
<i>Total liabilities</i>	<u>(178,554)</u>	<u>20,269</u>
Unrestricted	(6,545,228)	(1,828,910)
Temp restricted	3,682,500	3,702,500
<i>Total net assets</i>	<u>(2,862,728)</u>	<u>1,873,590</u>
<i>Total liab. and net assets</i>	<u>(3,041,282)</u>	<u>1,893,859</u>

This is an unaudited statement.

Mark Meissner, director of finance



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Edenhauer, Kenneth R., to St. John, Cornell, Wis.
Glowicki, Jeremy P., to St. John, St. Paul, Minn.
Pagel, David C., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.
Spiegelberg, Thomas C., to retirement

Teacher

Klemp, Michelle K., to St. James, Prairie du Sac, Wis.

Staff minister

Weimer, Robert E., to Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Milwaukee

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 57th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 28-Aug. 1 at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Details will be announced later. Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* must be submitted to the president's office by Feb. 1.

NOTICE FOR CONGREGATION TREASURERS

The cutoff date for Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 2002 offerings sent to our lock box will be credited as 2002 receipts through Thursday, Jan. 9, 2003, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as "December" offerings on the remittance coupon. We ask that you continue to mail your offerings to the lock box. That location, our bank, will provide you with the fastest deposit process for your congregation.

Mark Meissner, director of finance

ANNIVERSARIES

Sebewaing, Mich.—New Salem (150). Jan. 12. Service, 10 AM. Meal to follow.
Phoenix, Ariz.—Arizona Lutheran Academy (25). Mar. 23. Service, 4 PM. Meal to follow. 602/268-8686.

COMING EVENTS

Lutheran Girl Pioneer & Lutheran Pioneer events—

- Leadership Development Workshop—Jan. 11, 8:30 AM to 4 PM, St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis. Feb. 8, 8:30 AM to 4 PM, Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
- Lutheran Pioneer National Convention—Apr. 26, St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis. Opening service, 8:30 AM. Closing service, 5 PM. Banquet, 6:30 PM.
To register, call 888/214-8225.

National Sunday School Teachers Conference—Jan. 18. Antiqua Bay Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. 414/256-3274.

Florida retirement community seminar—third weekend in January. Sponsored by the Evangelism Committee of St. Mark, Leesburg, Fla. Various retirement community options will be reviewed to help WELS members relocate near a WELS church if they are retiring in Florida. St. Mark, 352/326-3211.

Mission and Ministry Seminar—Feb. 4-6, 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Caleb Schoeneck, 920/564-6049.

Retreats—

- **WELS/ELS Ladies Retreat**—Jan. 10-12. Woodlands Lutheran Campground, Montverde, Fla. Cost, \$110. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.
- **Singles Retreat**—Jan. 17-19. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Vickie, 920/437-8659.
- **Pathways to Christ Retreat**—Mar. 21-23. Hawthorne Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.
- **Today's Christian Women's Retreat**—Mar. 21-23. Sheraton Lansing Hotel, Lansing, Mich. For more information, visit <www.tcwr.org> or e-mail <info@tcwr.org>.
- **Christian Woman Today Spring Retreat**—Mar. 28-30. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Sertich, 262/784-0412.
- **Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women**—Apr. 4-6. Radisson Plaza Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-3945.

Martin Luther College Choir tour—

- Feb. 22, St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis., 7 PM.
- Feb. 23, St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis., 10:30 AM; Riverview, Appleton, Wis., 7 PM.
- Feb. 24, Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis., 9:45 AM; St. John, Lomira, Wis., 7 PM.
- Feb. 25, Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, 8:30 AM; First, Lake Geneva, Wis., 7 PM.
- Feb. 26, Grace, St. Joseph, Mich., 7 PM.
- Feb. 27, Huron Valley LHS, Westland, Mich., 1 PM; St. Paul, Livonia, Mich., 7 PM.
- Feb. 28, First, Racine, Wis., 7 PM.
- Mar. 1, Grace, Milwaukee, 6 PM.
- Mar. 2, Siloah, Milwaukee, 10:30 AM.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society 40th Annual National Convention—June 26-29, Madison, Wis. Hosted by Capitol & Rock River Circuits. 414/321-6212

AVAILABLE

Altar accessories—Four sets of paraments for altar, lectern, and pulpit in red, green, purple, and white. Four linen altar cloths, various banners, and an Advent wreath. Free for cost of shipping. David Sweet, 928/474-2098.

Yearbooks—available for cost of shipping. Martin Luther College, 1996-2001. Dr. Martin Luther College, 1950-1995. Earl Monday, 507/354-8221, ext. 243.

Bible software—free to a WELS school. Illumina is a digitally animated Bible and encyclopedia suite. Minimum requirements are Pentium II 300 MHz; Windows 98, 2000, Professional, Me, or XP operating system; 32 MB RAM; 200 MB available hard disk space; quad-speed or faster CD-ROM or DVD-ROM; super VGA or higher; sound card and speakers; mouse; and printer. Mark Voss, 651/768-0718.

Pews—ten golden oak pews, 8' long, with hymnal racks. Free for the cost of shipping or pick up from Phillips, Wis. Mark Wenzel, 715/339-6766.

Organ & partitions—20 straight and curved. Free for the cost of shipping or pick up from Florence, Ky. Russell Wilke, 859/283-9009.

NEEDED

Tapes—for a Verdin Carillon, model ITV 800. Particularly need a one-minute bell to begin services. Keith Schreiner, 507/532-2162.

Altar accessories—altar paraments, altar ware, communion ware, offering plates, banners, and flags for a new church. Eric Raasch, 712/336-5528.

Choir robes—in blue, burgundy, or green. 920/779-6346.

SERVICE TIMES

O'Fallon, Ill.—Christ Our Savior is an outreach arm of Martin Luther, St. Louis, Mo. Bible study, fellowship, and a short devotional service on Tuesday evenings, 7-8:30 PM. John Chapas, 618/632-1160.

Clermont, Fla.—new ELS mission congregation. Sunday worship, 11 AM. Adult information class, Sundays at 6:30 PM. Greg Sahlstrom, 352/243-8181.

NAMES WANTED

The Villages, Fla., (Lady Lake, Lake, Sumter, and Marion County area)—Herb Schaefer, 352/753-7515.

St. Louis Metro East/Scott Air Force Base, Ill.—John Chapas, 618/632-1160.

Clermont, Fla.—Greg Sahlstrom (ELS), 352/243-8181.

WELS-wide adoption group—Looking for support or friends with similar nationality for your children? Wish to attend an adoption group without worrying about fellowship issues? If you're interested in forming a WELS-wide adoption group, contact Matt Manthe, <mattman@lakefield.net>.

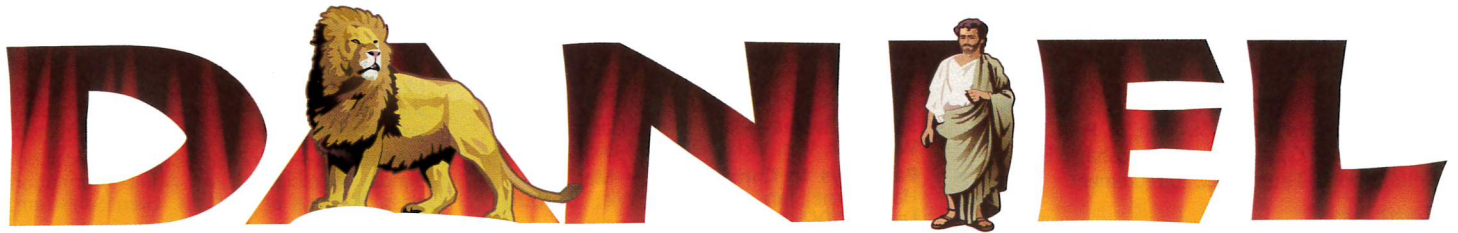
POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Teach English in a foreign country—Has the Lord ever laid on your heart a desire to share Jesus with people of a foreign country? If so, this may be the opportunity you are looking for. We have English language teaching positions open beginning Sept. 1. Travel, housing, health insurance, and a subsistence salary are paid for qualified applicants. Teachers instruct students in spoken English at grade school, high school, and college levels. College graduates in education are preferred, but we are willing to consider others. Ten-month commitment minimum. Joel Lintner, 651/770-6532.

Professors—Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn., has faculty positions available for the 2003-04 academic year—education (teacher training), history (emphasis on American history), social science/anthropology, molecular biology, English literature, and Director of Library Services. Must have a Ph.D. or a minimum of a master's degree with a willingness to pursue a terminal degree. Nominations or applications should include a resume, academic transcript credentials, and three letters of recommendation. Contact Ronald J. Younge, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bethany Lutheran College, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001. Application deadline is Feb. 1.

Environmental Education Program Director—for Camp Phillip, Inc., Wautoma, Wis. Must be eligible for a call into the WELS public ministry and be spiritually mature. College degree preferred, although other education and experience will be considered. Must enjoy working outdoors with campers of all ages; possess good communication skills; and present camp programs with enthusiasm, a sense of humor, patience, and self-control. Contact Tom Townner, chairman of the personnel committee, by Feb. 20, 912 W Parkway Blvd, Appleton WI 54914 or <cpexec@yahoo.com>.

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3862; <BulletinBoard@sab.wels.net>. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.



A humbling witness

We proud sinners deserve to be humbled by God. Yet our proud, stubborn hearts melt with gratitude when we read that instead God's Son humbled himself and became our servant.

Philip L. Kieselhorst

If you want to read a frightening tale that will give you a chill deeper than a January arctic breeze, put down Stephen King's novel and read the true stories in Daniel 4 and 5. Read about the king who boasted of his majesty and was driven from his throne in madness. Read about another king whose "face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way" (Daniel 5:6). What will frighten you most as you read these chapters is the chilling message God shares with all: "Those who walk in pride [God] is able to humble" (Daniel 4:37).

Two proud kings

Nebuchadnezzar was a tough guy. He didn't scare easily. But when God sent him a warning, he shook. The message was blunt: God will humble you in a frightening way.

It didn't take long for Nebuchadnezzar to forget the warning: "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

That's when the horror began for Nebuchadnezzar. "He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the

dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird" (Daniel 4:33).

Pride is a monster we can't kill.

King Belshazzar had many reasons to be humble. He knew what happened to his predecessor (Daniel 5:18-22), and he knew armies were marching toward Babylon. So what did he do? He threw a party! He praised the gods of silver and gold. He mocked God. Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?

Benjamin Franklin said, "There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility." He is right. Pride is a monster we can't kill. It will bring about our downfall in a horrifying way.

One humble Savior

God recorded these events to scare us. He's preparing us for the big finish. We should have been driven into the madness of hell a long time ago. Countless times,

God could have written "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN" on the walls of our homes to let us know, "You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). Belshazzar's knees are not the only ones that should be knocking together.

God's hand has written an important message for us. This is the inscription: "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI" (Matthew 27:46). This is what it means: Jesus was weighed on the scales in our place and found wanting for our sakes. He was judged for our sins. He was driven into hell. He was slain the night he became the sin of the world.

Our proud, stubborn hearts melt with gratitude when we read that God's Son humbled himself and became our servant. Our hearts burn with love when we hear that Jesus' nail-scarred hands wrote our names in the book of life.

Now that we know the big finish God has in store for us, we're not scared anymore. In fact, we are filled with pride. But this time, we're not taking pride in ourselves. This time we are taking pride in our humble Savior.



Philip Kieselhorst is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Getting to know God's story

Randy K. Hunter

We remember people by their stories. Someone says "Lindberg" or "Reagan" or the name of your mother or father, and their stories bring them to life. People remember you by a story, too, frightening as that may be.

God knows that about us. He wired us up; he knows how we work. More than anything, God wants us to know him, and that means he wants us to know his story.

The Bible is God's story. It's the story of God working everything out and bringing people into his story.

This series of learning activities will help you appreciate your Bible, identify major stories, and feel more comfortable using your Bible. Watch for the Old Testament this year, the New Testament next year. Use these studies privately, in a group, or before meetings.

The first three chapters of Genesis unfold a drama that moves viewers from exhilaration to smiles to tears and back to amazement. Hang on, it's a quick ride.

- In Genesis 1, you'll find the story that has mystified millions: the origin of all things. Create a memory aid to help you remember what God created on each of the six days.
- In Genesis 2, God fills in some of the details about humans and animals. List as many ways as you can find that mankind is different from the rest of creation.
- In Genesis 1:26,27, God revealed a unique feature of humans: they were made in God's image. God's image cannot be a reflection of his physical nature. God's image is a spiritual characteristic: holy or sinless. List two ways being made in God's image affected Adam and Eve's thinking. List two ways being made in God's image affected Adam and Eve's relationships with others.
- The apostle Paul described how the image of God works: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature . . . put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:5,10). A different nature—the earthly nature—is now also at work in us. Compare the differences between the earthly nature and the image of God.
- Read the saddest story in the world in Genesis 3. If you're using this as a group study, plan and present a dramatic reenactment of the fall into sin, using everyone in your group and no spoken words.
- This same chapter gives us a glimpse behind enemy lines to see how Satan works. Write a "He said _____, but he meant _____" for each of Satan's phrases in Genesis 3.
- Theologians call Genesis 3:15 the first gospel. Literally, it's the first "good news" after the fall. Make a list of all the good news God announced in verses 14-24.
- Genesis 5:1-3 records a subtle change that has affected all people since Adam and Eve. Describe the change in your own words.

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

Find this article and possible answers on-line. Go to <www.wels.net/sab/frm-nl.html> and click on current issue. Then click on "Getting to know God's story." Answers will be available after Jan. 6, 2003.

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: MINISTRY CUTBACKS

Ordinarily, you see a question here for me to answer. This month, allow me to ask you some questions on a subject that weighs heavy on my heart.

If you are a WELS member, are you willing to watch a dozen or so world missionaries called home? For at least the next two years, are you willing to see few if any mission congregations opened in the United States? Are you willing to see growing enrollments at our college and seminary taught by shrinking faculties who are hindered in interacting with students to help them grow into the mature Christian leaders our congregations need?

Why are these questions so urgent? An operating fund shortfall is forcing an immediate nine percent budget cut in the synod and a 20 percent cut for the next fiscal year (see pp. 22,23). Although no one claims perfect stewardship with every penny, let me assure you that the synodical budget “body fat” is not 20 percent. Real meat of real gospel ministry to real souls is about to be hacked away in unprecedented measure.

Please don’t misunderstand. I’m aware that, even with such cutbacks, Christ remains the Lord of his Church. He will get his kingdom work done—either with us or in spite of us. His work of gathering the strays and binding up the wounded does not begin or end with the Wisconsin Synod. Also, budgetary stringencies perform a wholesome task of forcing those in positions of responsibility to ask tough questions about how best to spend limited resources.

However, searching for better ways to do God’s work is one thing; slashing vital gospel ministry is quite another. I’m convinced that the Spirit through the means of grace uses the work we do together as a synod to make an eternal difference in peoples’ lives. I have seen that firsthand in places as diverse as Mequon, Wis., and Guntur, India.

I’m also absolutely convinced that God has richly blessed the family of believers we call WELS with sufficient resources to expand—not contract—the ministry we do together! I’m not talking just to the “wealthy” among us. I am talking to every WELS member. We are among the most blessed people in the world. We have been especially blessed with faithfulness to God’s truth. We have been blessed with opportunities around our country and world to aggressively share that truth. Remember: we possess the truth for no other reason than to proclaim it for the winning of the lost and for the joy and edifying of Christ’s holy people.

So I ask—with urgency—are you willing to allow drastic ministry reductions? Or will you do what God’s people did in another time of testing? In Malachi, after

God challenged his people to consider their trust in his care, the prophet reports, “Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard” (Malachi 3:16). If you aren’t willing just to “let things happen,” do what the faithful of Malachi’s time did—talk with each another. Discuss (today!) with others in your congregation what must be done. Search diligently—I must begin with my heart!—for any spirit of apathy that prevents us from firmly grasping the

great and noble mission Christ has given his church, a mission extending far beyond our congregational walls.

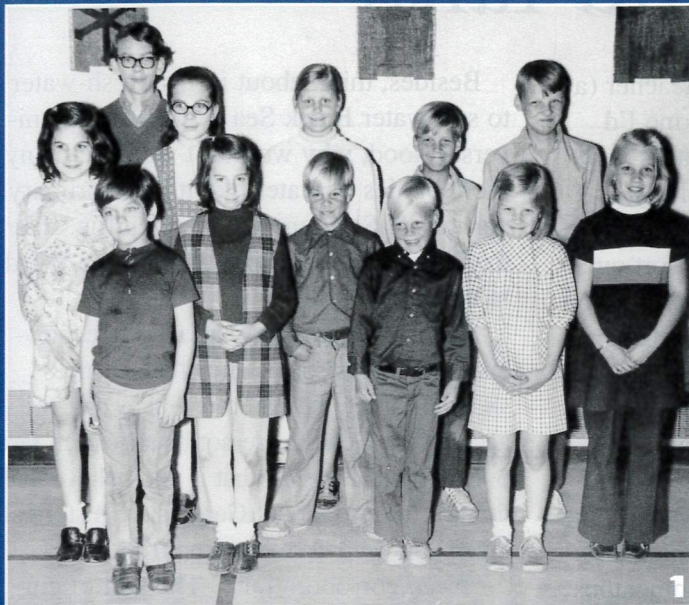
And talk to your Lord. Beseech him to move us by his powerful gospel to recommit ourselves to the ministry of that gospel here and around the world.

The Lord delights in such discussions of his saints. Such prayers of the saints he delights to answer. In the meanwhile, I will prayerfully await his answer—and yours!

I’m convinced that God has richly blessed the family of believers we call WELS with sufficient resources to expand—not contract—the ministry we do together!

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

Joe and Mabel Schaffer, members of St. John, Westland, Mich., for 55 years, have had most of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren attend St. John's Lutheran Elementary School, Westland. They have five children, 19 grandchildren, and 40 great-grandchildren.



Picture 1, taken in 1972, is of their 12 grandchildren who attended St. John's Lutheran Elementary School. Picture 2, taken in fall 2000, shows the next generation. These 17 children—15 great-grandchildren and two grandchildren—were also attending St. John's Lutheran Elementary School. This year the Schaffers have 21 family members attending St. John's Lutheran Elementary School: 18 great-grandchildren and three grandchildren.

Submitted by Joseph and Mabel Schaffer

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.

Notes on education

Men's thoughts

"The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life."—Plato, *The Republic*

"A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education he may steal the whole railroad."—Theodore Roosevelt

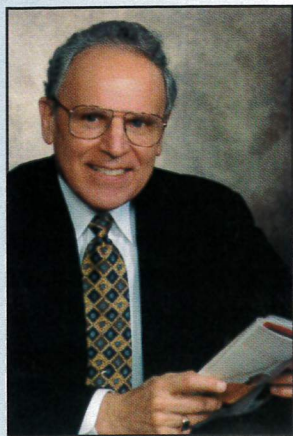
"The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done."—Jean Piaget (1896-1980), *Swiss cognitive psychologist*

"A wise man is one who finally realizes that there are some questions one can ask which may have no answers."—Anonymous

God's thoughts

"Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."—Proverbs 9:9,10

"Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."—Psalm 25:4,5



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

Although we welcome scientific evidence that supports the Bible, we are foolish to hang our faith-cap on it.

Science and faith

My high school science teacher (an evolutionist) once told me I'd have my faith rocked at its very foundations in college because of my belief in creation.

He was wrong, but I've had to sort out some things in the meantime. The question keeps coming back: "What does science have to do with faith?"

The easy answer is "Nothing." But explaining that answer is not nearly so easy.

A Religion News Service article I saved prompts these thoughts. For five years some Christians have been saying that the latest science supports the belief in a momentous flood in Noah's day. Yea, for good science!

Or not? The evidence had to do with geology and the fact that the once fresh-water Black Sea has become a salt-water sea. But now we learn that for thousands of years, apparently, salt water from the Sea of Marmara has been somehow seeping into the Black Sea. No flood necessary!

I'm not here to argue or even understand the scientific evidence in this case, but to discuss how Christians should take such news.

For the Christians who were upset—some greatly agitated—by the new findings, it should be a lesson. Science cannot prove Bible history, especially miraculous events. It cannot disprove it either. It cannot go back; it can only theorize based on uncertain evidence. Good scientists constantly test and retest their own findings.

Although we welcome scientific evidence that supports the Bible, we are foolish to hang our faith-cap on it. Science finds new and varying evidence, changes theories, creates its own missing links, usually assumes no divine intervention, is never absolute. As one theologian said, science is "a fickle friend at best." That friendship is too rocky for something as precious as our faith.

Besides, think about it. If a fresh-water to salt-water Black Sea helps prove a universal flood, why wouldn't we have many more bodies of water like it? The primary "proof" of Scripture is not scientific. It is the Holy Spirit working through the Word to bring us to faith.

An even bigger issue surfaces here, however. Some Christians agree that science shouldn't affect faith because, they say, the accounts in Genesis are not historical. In fact, one theologian insists that if you believe that the first 10 chapters of Genesis are historical, "then you need corroboration from science."

"Need corroboration?" The sort of corroboration that the Black Sea offers? Corroboration that disallows God's hand at work, which doesn't take into account that God created the universe with the appearance of age? Corroboration that looks at bone fragments and comes up with a new level of man's evolution? Corroboration that would have us believe that everything came from nothing and life emerged from non-life by its own power?

It is true, as another theologian contends, that "the Bible is not a book of archeology or science." But that makes it no less true when it speaks of events that have shaped our earth and our lives. The alternative is plainly unacceptable. Our creation, our fall into sin, the promise of the Savior, the work of Christ for our salvation, and his resurrection from the dead all took place in history. They are archeologically and scientifically true. Make any part of it a myth, and all of it becomes suspect. Take out one piece, and the rest falls like a house of cards.

Our God and his Word are not so fragile. They will stand into eternity after this earth with its imperfect science has been destroyed.


Gary P. Baumler

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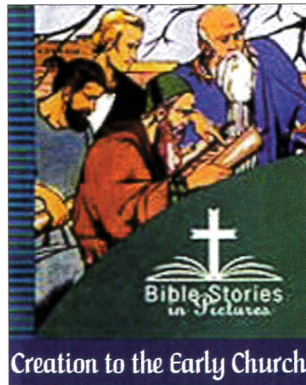
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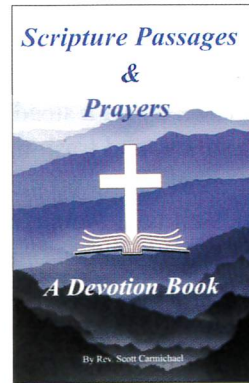


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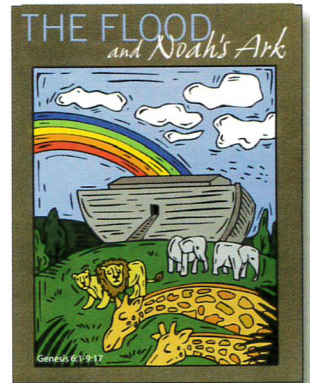


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Flying turtles

Turtles are not created to fly, just as God's children are not created to live in the trash. Yet, Satan has so distorted life that most people no longer know that the purpose of life is to worship the Lord.

Carl R. Henkel

Deep within the forest a little turtle began to climb a tree. After hours of effort he reached the top, jumped into the air waving his front legs, and crashed to the ground.

After recovering, he climbed the tree again, jumped, and fell to the ground. The turtle tried again and again while a couple of birds watched his sad efforts.

Finally, the female bird turned to her mate. "Dear," she chirped, "I think it's time to tell him he's adopted."

Just picture the scene. The little turtle grows up watching Mom and Dad fly. He longs for the day he can fly too. He thinks that's what turtles are supposed to do. He doesn't know any different.

But turtles are not created to fly!

Mimicking others

Now picture another scene. A little boy grows up on a steady diet of trash talk, trash TV, and trash music. Across town a little girl grows up the same way. Their friends all talk, watch, and listen to the same trash. Maybe their moms and dads talk and watch and listen to trash too. The only conclusion the boy and girl can arrive at is that that's what people are supposed to do. They don't know any different.

But people were not created to live in the trash!

People are created to worship the Lord! That is why we live. But Satan has so distorted the meaning to life and the values of life that most people no longer know the purpose for life. Teachers are appalled at the movies parents allow their children to watch, appalled at the language and the stories the little tots bring to the classroom, appalled at their lack of decency and respect. But these children are only mimicking what they've witnessed in others.

Being a light

Is it too late? What can we do to win back a society that has lost all sense of direction? A society where we Christians who are called to be lights have buried our heads in the sand, hoping that when we come up for air, everything will be all right again? A society where evil is called good and good is considered evil?

We have our work cut out for us. Where do we even start?

The turtle had to learn the hard way that he wasn't made to fly. He probably never would have learned that except that his parents told him.

Many people go through life wondering why nothing makes sense, why nothing works, why nothing brings lasting happiness. They wonder why their diet of trash fails to bring satisfaction, why their life outside of God's will fails to give peace.

Ultimately, if we're going to change the world we have to begin with ourselves. We are God's adopted sons and daughters. He brought us into his family so that we could worship, praise, serve, and obey him now and live with him forever in the life to come.

Each of us needs to recommit ourselves in our faith to serve and obey our heavenly Father. Others may live in the trash, but we know better. We know who we are—and what we are made for.

So Christian, get out of that tree and start walking the (slow but) sure and steady pace of a determined turtle. We've got a job to do. Lift your head out of your shell and show the world what people are really made for.

People are not created to live in the trash. People are created to worship the Lord!

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