

FORWARD IN CHRIST

March 2003

The Word from the WELS


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Is every
Christian a
minister?

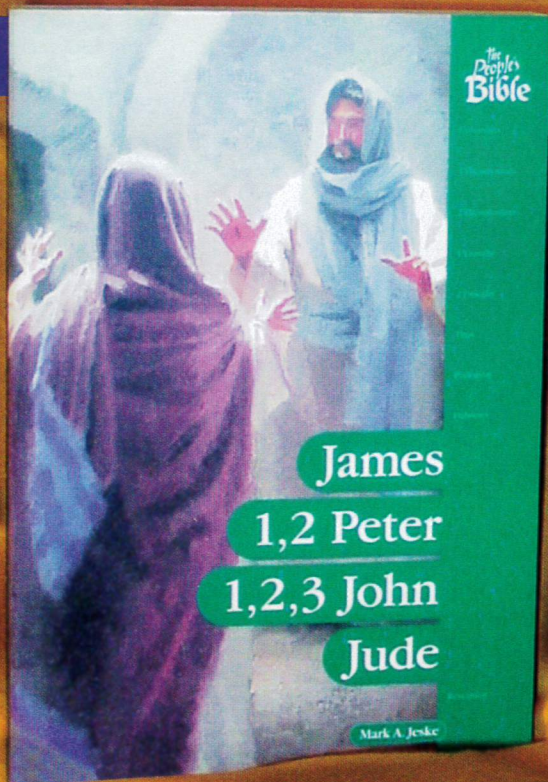
Lessons from
an empty nest

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that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?*

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His tortured soul

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
Matthew 27:46

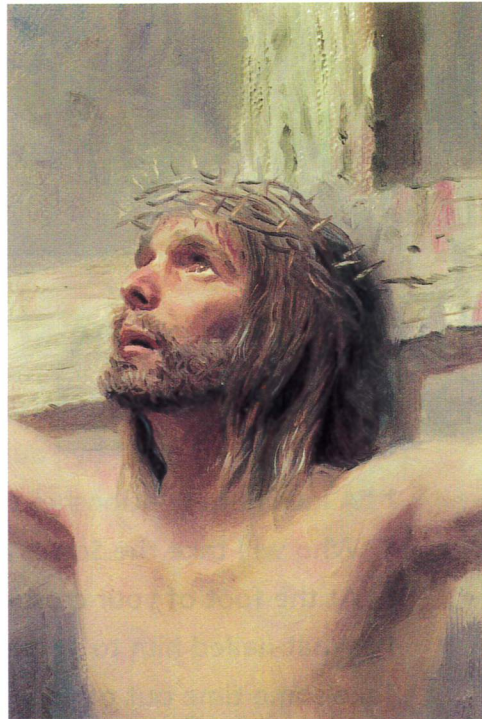
Paul M. Janke

S ometime this Lenten season we will hear Jesus cry out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Perhaps we’ll hear the cry of his tortured soul during a midweek passion history reading or in the Scripture lessons for Good Friday. The evangelist Matthew gives us the Aramaic mixed with Hebrew that Jesus actually spoke, the better to place us at the foot of the cross and to accent the importance of these words for us.

Forsaken for our sin

An eerie darkness came over the land of Israel from noon until 3 PM on the day Jesus was crucified. That darkness matched the darkness in our Savior’s soul. The physical torment that he’d undergone in the past day went beyond brutal, but the torment of his soul was even worse. He had done nothing wrong. Even under the severest provocation he had not cursed his tormentors or used abusive language.

Why, then, was he forsaken by God? That’s what the human soul of Jesus wanted to know. It won’t do to theorize that Jesus simply felt forsaken. When he spoke these words from the cross he was actually quoting himself. He had originally spoken them a thousand years earlier through King David in Psalm 22. There he prophesied with high-definition clarity all that he would suffer for us. In addition to the scorn of his



enemies and the trauma inflicted on his body by the crucifixion, his role as our substitute called for him to suffer the abandonment by God that we deserved.

In his suffering, Jesus became sin for us. He became a curse for us. Luther says that Jesus “descended to hell for your sake and was forsaken by God, as one damned forever, when he said on the cross, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ ” (*What Luther Says*, 1345). This was not his triumphant descent to hell in the early hours of Easter morning, but the harrowing, agonizing banishment he suffered on Good Friday when his Father left him alone with our evil.

Forsaken so we won’t be

“Why?” is the question frequently pushed from our lips when we suffer in some way. “Why have you made me your target?” Job asked God (Job 7:20). “Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?” (Job 13:24). The most appropriate answer might be, “Why not?” Sinners that we are, who are we to contend with God?

We may feel at times that God has forsaken us. We might feel as though he’s left us to face our troubles, our sickness, or even death on our own. Prayers seem to go unanswered. The way to escape temptation seems not to exist.

But for Christians things are not what they seem. Jesus was forsaken by his Father so that through faith in him we won’t be. God has bound himself to us with a promise: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Nor was Jesus abandoned by God for long. He would say later in Psalm 22, “For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help” (v. 24).

We Christians can live boldly. Hell has lost its power to threaten and frighten us. Those who trust in Jesus will never be forsaken. Not now and not in eternity.



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

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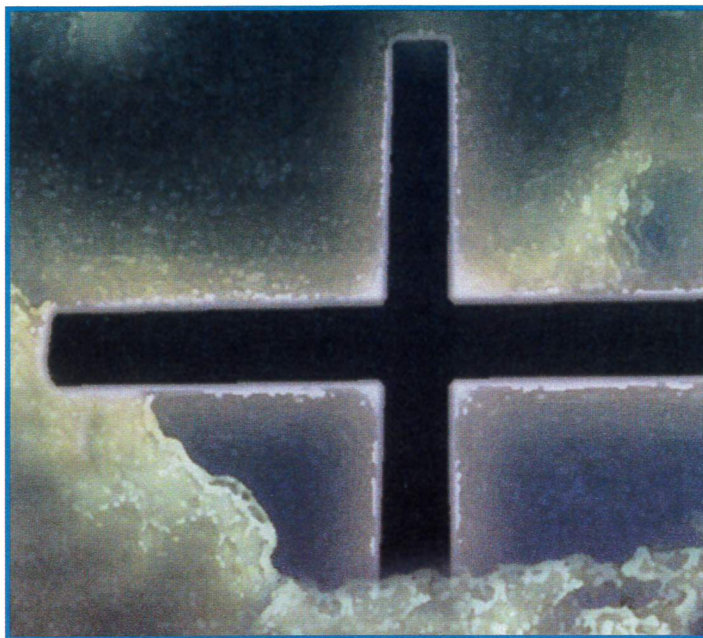
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Let's stand with each other as we let God's Word tell us the awful truth about ourselves. . . . But let's also experience the relief that comes from hearing the truth about our wonderful Savior.

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bits & pieces



Five articles this month focus on the church season of Lent.

† "His tortured soul" by Paul Janke (p. 3)

† "A love/hate relationship with Lent" by Mark Jeske (p. 8)

† "Who will take the Son?" by Carl Henkel (p. 10)

† "At the foot of your cross" by Dan Kleist (p. 33)

† "What nailed him to a tree?" by Richard Lauersdorf (p. 36)

Take some time out of your busy schedule to read these articles and reflect on what Jesus endured for you.



We quote Martin Luther in our writings. Every year we recall the importance of the great reformer nailing the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. But how much do we really know about Luther? Take a refresher course—and learn some new things—as Richard Balge leads us through Luther's life. His first article is on p. 31.



What Scripture says about "the ministry" has been an often-debated topic among confessional Lutherans. Yet how we look at the ministry effects the way we view others and ourselves in the church. In a new four-part series, David Valleskey explores

† the terms "minister" and "ministry,"

† the Christian's role as a priest of God,

† the public ministry, and

† the relationship between pastors and "priests."

Check out his first article, "Every Christian a minister?" (p. 12).

—JKW

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At the risk of sounding insensitive, I would like to question your choice to run the article “I feel so used!” [Jan.].


While I found Amy Mowry-Hepfner’s story touching, one implication of the article alarmed me.

Amy’s story has had two happy endings—the conversions of both her husbands. I am grateful that the Lord used Amy to bring two unbelieving husbands to faith.

But we don’t have to look far to find spiritually mixed marriages that do not turn out so happy. Yet the article contained not even an editorial caveat about marrying an unbeliever in the first place. Although the Bible does not explicitly forbid a Christian to marry an unbeliever, Scripture does suggest that such marriages are ill advised. I think of King Solomon, whose unbelieving wives turned his heart to false gods.

I realize the article intended to show the hand of God using Amy to bring two unbelieving men into his kingdom. I wonder, though, if printing this article without any warning about spiritually mixed marriages will be taken as WELS’ tacit endorsement of such marriages.

Paul Fanning

 Kaukauna, Wisconsin


I read and share *Forward in Christ* magazine each month. **The article entitled “Have you ever seen an angel?” [Dec. 2002] caused me to stop, study, and actually get angry at what appears to be some misleading information about angels.**

Yes, we do receive and convey the grace of God to each other and to strangers by our words and actions. In this function we are privileged to participate in the spreading of his Word and to tell the world what he has done. Some angels were also assigned to do this at various times throughout history. That does not make us angels any more than it makes angels people.

Let us proceed with the work God has seen fit for us to do, and let the angels do the work he has assigned to them. If the two jobs have occa-


sion to overlap, then to God be the glory, for great things he has done.

Stephen C. Morrison

 Chippewa Lake, Ohio

In Thomas Westra’s article, “Have you ever seen an angel?” [Dec. 2002], it bothers me that he used the word “angel” the way he did.

In the Bible we are told that God created all angels in the beginning, when he created heaven and earth. Therefore, there are no more angels added. Yes, an angel can come to us as a person, but a person can’t be an angel. It upsets me that we publish an article like this to add more confusion to more members.

 Bernie Bremer

The article did not mean to say that we are heavenly angels in being, but that like the angels we have a ministry as messengers. The word “angel” means “messenger.” Sorry for the confusion.—ed.


I want to thank Prof. Richard Gurgel for the content and spirit of his “In the cross hairs” article on WELS ministry cutbacks [Jan.].

The timing was good for reminding WELS Christians of our great personal blessings and for posing tough, soul-searching questions for each of us to prayerfully consider.

It did strike me, however, that the only WELS ministry cutback examples given were missions (world and home) and ministerial education. While these vital areas of ministry are under tremendous strain, other vital areas of WELS national ministry are in equally critical financial shape and in need of prayers and support. When there already exists a perception in the minds of some members that “all WELS needs to do” is missions and ministerial education, this article’s examples do not help to encourage and engage spiritual reflection about other vitally important areas of WELS ministry. As an administrator in the Parish Services area of ministry, which assists all 1,241 WELS congregations

with adult discipleship, youth discipleship, parish schools, worship, evangelism, and special ministries, I felt that this “cross hairs” article missed the target just a bit.


Joel Nelson

 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

My wife’s and my life story could be a mirror image to Scott and Sally’s story [“God had different plans for us,” Dec. 2002].

Adoption became our only hope of ever having a child. After two failed adoptions, we started to question if the adoption road was the correct choice. We were given the strength by God to try for an adoption once again, and on March 12, 2002, a little angel was born. We have just finished finalizing this adoption. All praise and honor for this miracle must be given to our heavenly Father.


Michael Fetzer

 Clare, Michigan

There is something peculiar in the article “God had different plans for us” [Dec. 2002].

You mentioned that Scott and Sally didn’t want their last name used, which I can understand. Then you proceeded to show their picture, which robbed them of any privacy they were seeking. What gives with you people?

Milton R. Gibbs

 Moscow, Idaho

The nature of the adoption that Scott and Sally are involved in is one that allowed them to meet the birth mother and share first names, but not last names. Scott and Sally provided us with this picture and did not feel that this compromised their privacy.—ed.

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.

Our representatives, not featherbedders

Armin J. Panning

In a 1963 landmark decision involving specifically the state of Arizona, a federal arbitration board appointed by President John F. Kennedy ruled that it was legal for railroad management to eliminate the position of “fireman” on diesel-powered trains.

The practice this ruling was dealing with has come to be called “featherbedding.” The dictionary defines featherbedding as “the labor practice of artificially keeping or increasing the number of workers employed even though the specific job or task can be completed with fewer workers.”

The budget shortfall that is gripping our synod has led to serious consideration of cutting back our synodical workforce. At the time of this writing, proposals are being considered for recalling world missionaries, curtailing or closing home missions, reducing faculties and staffs at synodical schools, and eliminating positions in parish services. Part of the rationale is that forcing the areas of ministry to examine their mode of operation will make them more efficient.

Greater efficiency is certainly possible, and any improvements that can be made should be embraced. But while rethinking our mode of operation, we need to be on guard against the subtle thought that perhaps the people currently holding missionary, teaching, or other service posts are expendable. These people are not featherbedders. They are not outmoded firemen from the steam age going along for the ride on modern diesel units. They have important work to do. We need them to be our representatives—to go where we cannot go and to prepare and equip messengers to share the life-giving message that we have the responsibility to proclaim. We need them, whether we can currently fund them or not.

Such rationale is not to be confused with a self-serving mentality merely interested in protecting jobs. It’s a concern rooted in our Savior’s own compassionate heart and in the clear directive he has given us. Matthew tells us: “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’ ” (Matthew 9:36-38).

Actually, praying for workers has two aspects. First of all there is the matter of praying for those who already are in kingdom work but whose positions presently may be at risk due to lack of funds. In the short run, such changes may indeed be necessary, but in our prayers let’s remember the people affected. They are, after all, subject to fear and apprehension, discouragement and disappointment, even disillusionment and bitterness, just like the rest of us.

But perhaps even more at risk are the young men and women currently in their training years. There is always the temptation to be drawn toward other careers more appealing than the public ministry. How much stronger is that temptation when it could appear to our young people that they’re not needed for kingdom work! Let us constantly pray for them and persistently encourage them. As we do so, may it be with the firm resolve that, as the Lord blesses us, we will financially support the work we’re asking them to do in our stead.

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

While rethinking our mode of operation, we need to be on guard against the subtle thought that perhaps the people currently holding missionary, teaching, or other service posts are expendable.

A love/hate

Lent makes me confront this hard truth: everything that Jesus suffered really should have landed on me.

Mark A. Jeske

My son, Michael, and I are interested in stories of the American Civil War. In a way it is a love/hate interest, though. It is sobering to read of the destruction and cruelty of war and the appalling loss of life. Over 600,000 dead and wounded! But it is also exciting to read about the incredible bravery, sacrifice, and heroism of the soldiers, most of whom were volunteers, not professionals. It is thrilling to see how the sundered Union was preserved and how the appalling curse of race-slavery in America was done away with once and for all.

I'm guilty

I have a confession to make. It's Lent now, so I guess this is as good a time as any for making confessions. I have a love/hate relationship with Lent, too.

There. I've said it. Pretty embarrassing, huh? How can a pastor have misgivings about an entire season in the church year? How can I urge you to observe this special season if I am conflicted about it?

It's not the going to church twice a week, on Wednesdays as well as Sundays. I love going to church. It's

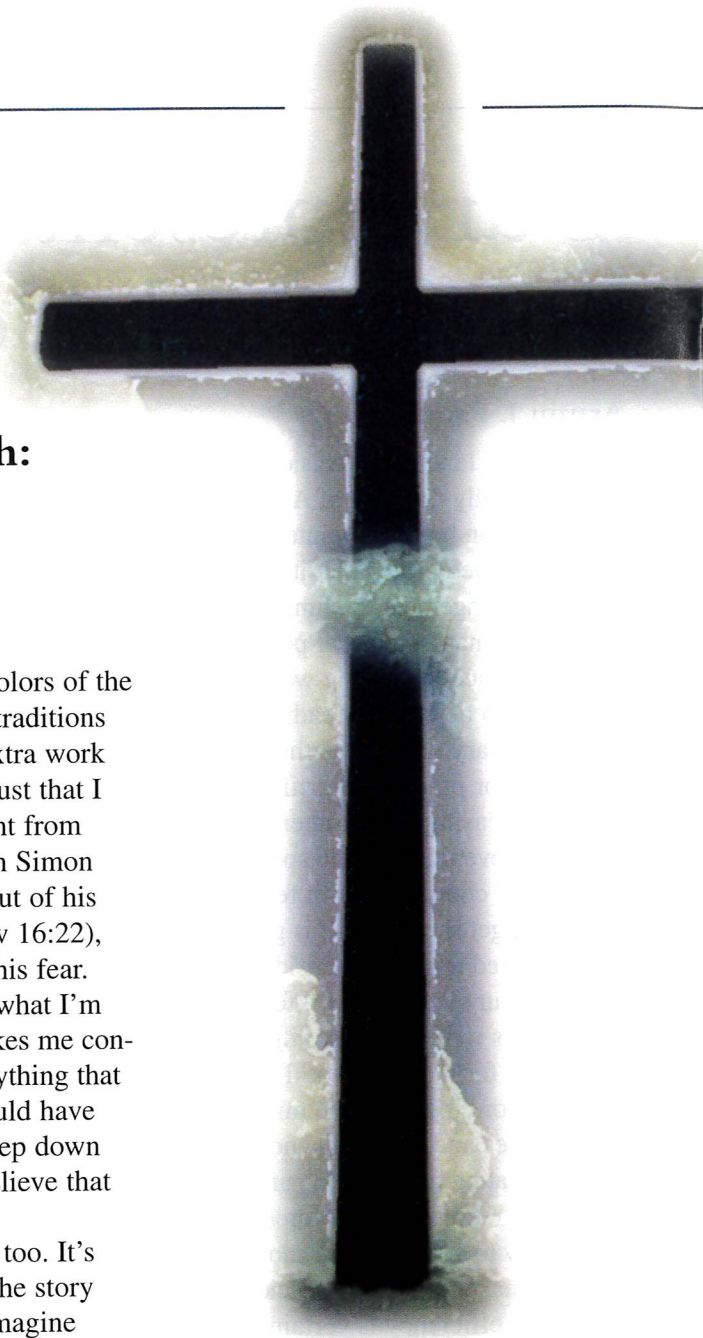
certainly not the purple colors of the Lenten paraments or the traditions of self-denial or all the extra work for worship leaders. It's just that I would prefer to go straight from Epiphany to Easter. When Simon Peter tried to talk Jesus out of his "death journey" (Matthew 16:22), I completely understand his fear.

What I don't like, and what I'm afraid of, is that Lent makes me confront this hard truth: everything that Jesus suffered really should have landed on me. I guess deep down inside, I don't want to believe that I am really that bad.

But I am, and you are, too. It's hard enough to listen to the story of Christ's passion and imagine his suffering. Even though I've read it many times, I wince each Wednesday. But the hardest part of Lent is not just in feeling sorry for Jesus. It is absolutely crushing to have to admit that I put him there—in Gethsemane, the high priest's palace, Pilate's praetorium, the Via Dolorosa, and Calvary. I made necessary the bonds, the scourge, the thorns, the nails, and the spear—and so did you.

God's law is infinitely more severe and demanding than any

human law or human court. Every sin is a capital crime before God, and I flinch at hearing that I belong on death row. I would rather pretend that I'm fine. I would rather make excuses for my bad deeds, find people to blame, or find somebody more visibly immoral than I to make me look better by comparison. It would be much more comfortable to worship a god who is like Santa Claus, claiming to hold people accountable as to whether they've



relationship with Lent

been naughty or nice but then giving everybody presents anyway.

But Lent is a healthy annual observance, for it lances all foolish human pride, mine included. It tells me the truth about myself. Lent keeps me on my knees, where I belong, asking for the Lord's mercy. Alcoholics in recovery know this—at their AA meetings, they begin by admitting their alcoholism and confessing that they are powerless to change by themselves. Well, my name is Mark, and I'm a sinaholic.

The hardest part of Lent is not just in feeling sorry for Jesus. It is absolutely crushing to have to admit that I put him there. . . .

I'm innocent

But here's the part that I love about Lent, the reason why I keep coming back. The Lenten message powerfully proclaims that Jesus Christ's work was successful. His forgiveness is greater than my sin. The gospel I hear is infinitely more wonderful and enriching than any human treasure. The Lenten message tells me that the suffering Servant

suffered willingly. He likes me. He thinks I have value. Imagine! A sinner like me is actually valuable to God. Amazing!

The Lenten story demonstrates that God is absolutely determined, at a fearful and personal price, to reclaim his lost children, of which I am one. It demonstrates that all of his Old Testament prophecies about the coming Savior were fulfilled. That helps me believe every one of God's New Testament promises to me. The Lenten message assures me that Christ personally and conclusively ended the threat of the things that most terrorize the human race: sin, death, hell, and Satan himself.

By submitting to the Father's will and perfectly carrying it out, Christ did everything for me that I could not do for myself. By absorbing in his body the wrath of divine justice, he spared me from ever having to undergo that nightmare. It is finished! Sin is finished. Death is finished. Hell is finished. Satan himself will go headfirst into the lake of burning sulfur.

I'm saved

Without Lent, there could be no Easter. Without the suffering and death of the innocent victim, there could be no forgiveness. I couldn't ever hope to escape the grave unless Jesus had gone first and turned on

the lights down there. Hell would have claimed me unless Jesus had suffered it first for me. Satan himself would terrorize me every day of my life if the woman's offspring hadn't first crushed his serpent-head.

So I hope you'll join me in the seven-week walk with Jesus to his cross. Let's stand with each other as we let God's Word tell us the awful truth about ourselves. We need you, Jesus. But let's also experience the relief that comes from hearing the truth about our wonderful Savior. We love you, Jesus.

A British priest named Samuel Crossman wrote this poem in 1664, and it will be my personal theme song for the next seven weeks. Maybe it speaks to your heart as well:

"My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me,

Love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be.

Oh, who am I that for my sake

My Lord should take frail flesh and die?"



Mark Jeske is pastor at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

WHO WILL TAKE THE SON?

When we, in faith, take the Son, we end up with far more than we can ever imagine.

Carl R. Henkel

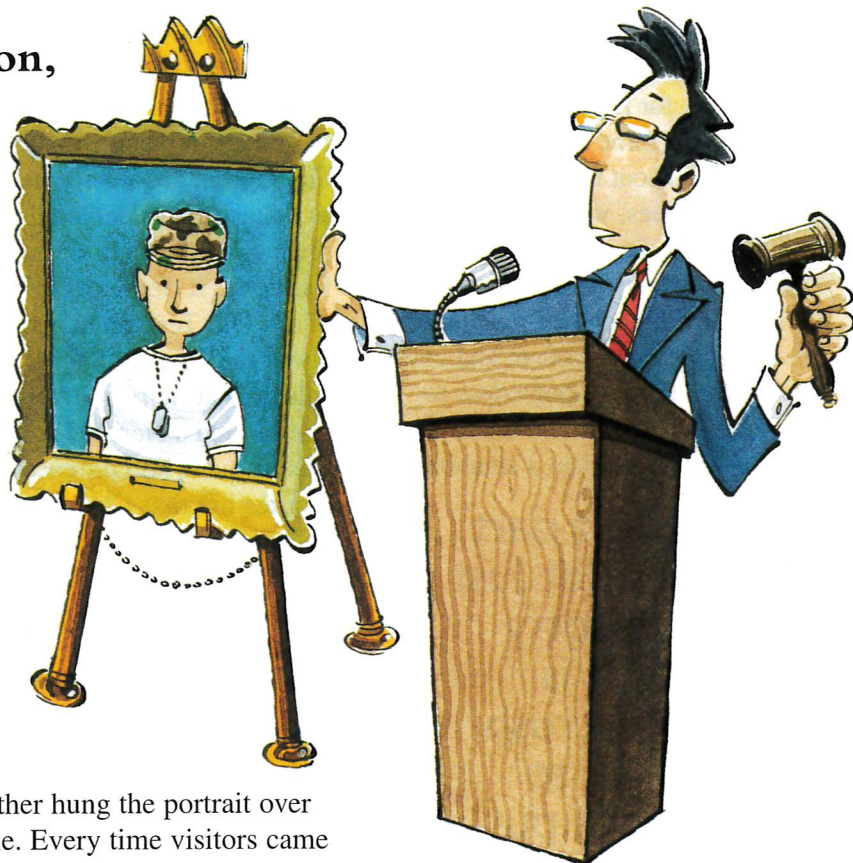
A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. When the Vietnam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later a young man knocked at the door. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him. He died instantly. He often talked about you and your love for art."

The young man held out a large package. "I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this."

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured his son's personality. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the man and offered to pay him.

"Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift."



The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of his other great paintings.

The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered. On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?"

Someone from the back shouted, "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one."

But the auctioneer persisted. "Will someone bid for this painting? Who

will start the bidding? \$100? \$200?"

Another voice shouted angrily, "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids."

But still the auctioneer continued. "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the back of the room. It was the long-time gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford.

“We have \$10. Who will bid \$20?”
“Give it to him for \$10. Let’s see the masters.”

“\$10 is the bid. Won’t someone bid \$20?”

The crowd was becoming angry. They didn’t want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments.

The auctioneer pounded the gavel. “Going once, twice, sold for \$10.”

A man sitting in the second row shouted, “Now let’s get on with the collection.”

The auctioneer laid down his gavel. “I’m sorry, the auction is over. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything.”

The moral of the story

God gave his Son 2,000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, his message today is: “The Son! The Son! Who’ll take the Son?” Because you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

I love that story! Whether it’s based on an actual event or not does not diminish the credibility of the underlying message:

- Put Jesus first in your life and everything else will fall into place. Trust in Jesus, and you will get not only the ultimate blessing of heaven but also a life of earthly blessings.

- Jesus himself said much the same in his Sermon on the Mount: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

Applying that moral

It continues to alarm me how I can be totally certain of this promise but still fail to apply it and live it.

But regardless of how you or I—or the rest of the people of this world—respond to the precious promises of holy Scripture, their truths remain. Jesus remains faithful and true. He offered himself once and for all on the altar of the cross, and he continues to offer himself to all humanity as our only Savior and Lord. His great desire is for us to trust him completely and to bask in his abundant blessings.

The one sure way to quiet our greedy, self-centered, sinful nature is to keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus and his bloodstained cross.

But we’ve witnessed all too often how money and “things” have destroyed individuals and shattered families. One can understand why the Bible so frequently warns against the love of money and urges us not to fall into the copious traps of materialism. We face the temptation to put these things above the one who so graciously gave them to us.

On the other hand, our lives of relative comfort and ease may well be a small part of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that “all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). For this we rejoice and give thanks.

But our sinful nature continues its unabashed attempt to lure our hearts away from the generous giver

and on to the gifts he has given. When that happens, we would do well to put ourselves into the action of the auction and hear our own voices thoughtlessly crying out, “We didn’t come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts,” and to hear the auctioneer’s wearied response, “The son! The son! Who’ll take the son?”

The one sure way to quiet our greedy, self-centered, sinful nature is to keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus and his bloodstained cross. The season of Lent provides just such an opportunity.

When we, in faith, take the Son, we end up with far more than we can ever imagine: assurance of absolution and forgiveness, peace that passes understanding, joy in the midst of adversity and sorrow, and certain hope of eternal life in heaven. That’s just the beginning! Add to that a heart overflowing with gratitude, a soul filled with love and compassion, and a life lived in cheerfulness and contentment. With all these blessings that come along with Jesus, why would we ever want to trade him in for a Van Gogh or a Rembrandt? They are cheap substitutes at best.

When we put Jesus first, he gives us the world as well. When we take the Son, he throws in a few Van Goghs and Rembrandts too. What a deal!

The one who takes the Son gets everything!



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

Part 1: What do the terms "minister" and "ministry" mean, and how should they best be used?

Part 2: What is a Christian's role as a priest of God?

Part 3: What is the public ministry? Who serves in the public ministry?

Part 4: What is the relationship between pastors and "priests"?

Every Christian a minister?

What is the ministry? Who are ministers? What is meant by the public ministry? The way we answer these questions has a profound effect on the way we view others and ourselves in the church.

David J. Valleskey

In this brief series I am going to talk about a doctrine that has been the subject of much debate among confessional Lutherans over the past 150 years. During the years that the Wisconsin Synod and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod were in fellowship, there was considerable discussion between the two synods on this doctrine. Now when WELS engages in doctrinal discussions with conservative Lutheran churches in the United States and around the world, we often fail to agree on this doctrine. It is a doctrine that has been the subject of deep study by our sister synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, for the past several years. The doctrine? What the Scriptures say about the ministry.

Asking questions

What is the ministry? Who are ministers? What is meant by the *public* ministry? What is the origin of the public ministry? Who serves in the public ministry? Pastors? Teachers? Professors? Laypeople?

How do those who graduate from the staff ministry program of Martin Luther College fit into the picture? What is the proper relationship between the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the doctrine of the ministry?

Is it correct to say that every Christian is a minister with a ministry to perform?

These are not abstract questions of interest only to theologians. The way we answer them has a profound effect on the way we view others and ourselves in the church. If I am a layman, what is my role? Do I have the right to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments? If I am a teacher or a staff minister, am I in the public ministry the same way that the pastor is? If I am a pastor, what do I see when I look upon the members of my congregation? What do I see when I look upon the teachers in the congrega-

tion's school? What do I perceive to be my role in the congregation? A Christian's proper understanding of who he or she is and who others in the congregation are will help a congregation operate in line with God's will for it.

Defining terms

A book with the title *Everyone a Minister?* aroused quite a bit of interest when it was published 30 years ago. The subject continues to be of interest today. Is it correct to say that every Christian is a minister with a ministry to perform? One of the reasons why some people answer this question with a "yes" and others with a "no" is that the words "ministry" and "minister" can be understood in more than one way.

In the Bible the Greek word translated as "ministry" is *diakonia* (from which our English word deacon is derived). *Diakonia* means service. A *diakonos* is one who serves. In that sense we can properly say that every Christian is a

minister (one who serves God) with a ministry (service of God) to perform.

If that was the only way *diakonia* and *diakonos* were used, there would be no difficulty. The Bible, however, also uses these words in a different way. It uses them not just to refer to an activity but to an office. Paul tells the Corinthians: God “has made us [Paul and his missionary companions] competent as ministers of a new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3:6). In his second letter to Timothy, Paul urges his young co-worker, “Discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). In these passages and many like them, the Bible is speaking about a special way of serving God through what we often call the public ministry, which is carried out by spiritual leaders such as pastors, whom we call ministers of the gospel.

Our English dictionaries also reflect these two different usages of the same words. My dictionary, for example, defines ministry both as “an act of serving” and as “the profession, services, and duties of a minister of religion.” It defines a minister both as “one serving as an agent for another” and as “one authorized to perform religious functions in a church.” In addition, in English usage “minister” and “ministry” can refer to governmental offices and functions.

Serving God

So, is every Christian a minister? Does every Christian have a ministry to perform? Given the meaning of the words, both in the Greek and the English, it is not wrong to answer these questions with a “yes.” Yet, because of the different ways in which these terms can be

defined, we need to explain carefully what we are saying. For the sake of clarity and to minimize confusion it may well be wise to use such terminology as *personal* ministry to describe the service that every Christian renders to God in response to God’s love and mercy in Christ. Or, perhaps even more preferable, it might be good simply to say that all Christians have the privilege of serving God in their lives. A Christian is serving God, for example, when out of love for his Savior, he volunteers to mow the church lawn. But it would be confusing, to say the least, to give him the title “minister of lawn mowing” and to declare that he is engaged in the “ministry of lawn mowing.”

Rather, in view of contemporary usage of these words, it would appear to be wise to restrict the use of the title “minister” to the one who is “authorized [called] to perform religious functions in a church” and to restrict the term “ministry” to the “profession, services, and duties of a minister of religion.” That way we will all know what we are talking about when we speak of the ministry or the service that the minister performs. Certainly this is not meant to minimize in any way the service of God that all Christians can perform in all areas of their lives—in the home, church, and society. ✨

David Valleskey is president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Important terms

Minister: one who serves God (broad definition); one who is authorized [called] to perform religious functions in a church (common definition).

Ministry: service to God (broad definition); the profession, services, and duties of a minister of religion (common definition).

Personal ministry: the service that every Christian renders to God in response to God’s love and mercy in Christ.

Public ministry: ministry performed in the name of and on behalf of a body of believers (broad definition); ministry that has to do with the proclamation of the gospel (preaching and teaching the Word and administering the sacraments) performed in the name of and on behalf of a body of believers (narrow definition).

Member ministry: a type of public ministry of the gospel carried out on a part-time basis by a congregation member.

Priest: every Christian (also referred to as the “universal priesthood” and “priesthood of all believers”).

Pastor: a public minister of the gospel who oversees the entire ministry of the church.

Immediate (direct) call: a call that doesn’t involve an intervening agency.

Mediate (indirect) call: a call that involves an intervening agency (such as a congregation).

Julie K. Wietzke

Sharing God's love

Our sister churches in Germany and Latvia continue to spread the true Word of God to countries that desperately need to hear it.

One was founded over 125 years ago. The other, a babe, of almost four years.

One struggles to share the gospel in a country where in some areas less than one percent of the population attends church. The other is considered a sect and not even recognized by the national government.

One just started a school, its first since the 1930s. The other celebrates when a congregation constructs its own building.

Both work to share confessional Lutheran theology—and the love of Christ—to a world needing the saving message of the gospel.

They are the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, Germany, and the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia.

Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, Germany

The first congregation in the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche* (ELFK) was founded in 1876 after confessional Lutherans broke away from the state church. The state church, in name “Lutheran,” tolerated unbiblical teachings and practices.

Communist rule after World War II brought trials for both the ELFK and the state church, including the closing of churches and the pressure on parents to “dedicate” their children to the Communist ideology, not to Christ.

Although now the ELFK has complete religious freedom, challenges remain.

“Most Germans in western Germany still consider themselves Christian, but do not believe in the Bible and know very little about Christ,” says Michael Herbst, ELFK vice president. “In the area of the former East Germany, the influence of 40 years of communist propaganda and pressure on church work can be felt.”

But this doesn’t dishearten ELFK members. They continue to share the gospel message, working hard to find new ways to reach out.

Radio and television stations provide limited opportunities for the ELFK to broadcast church services and devotions. The ELFK’s Web site informs people about the synod and its congregations and seminary as well as provides sermons and devotions.

To serve its own children and to reach out to children in the community, the ELFK opened a grade school in 2001. Martin Luther School, Zwickau, started with 15 first-graders. This year, 33 children are enrolled in first and second grades. Most are not ELFK members; some aren’t Christian.

“We start with a devotion and have three times in a week one hour of biblical instruction,” says Gerhard Wilde, former ELFK president. “Our specialty: English by a teacher from USA [Maria Reese, a recent Martin Luther College graduate] and music.”

The school is already well known but has limited space and money to grow. The ELFK would like to start more schools but doesn’t have the money, staff, or space.

“We do not know how our gracious Lord will show us new opportunities,” says Herbst. “That we could start in Zwickau is really a miracle before our eyes.”

Youth work has always been stressed by the ELFK. Youth groups in local churches and a synodical youth program provide opportunities for German youth to grow together in God’s Word. Camps for children ages 10 to 14 are similar to our Lutheran Pioneers programs.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN FREE CHURCH, GERMANY
Members: 1,600
Established congregations: 15
Mission congregations: 3
National pastors: 16
Vicars: 1
Seminary students: 5
Expatriate missionaries: 0



The 2001-02 students and faculty of Martin Luther School. The students are holding candy bouquets, a gift traditionally given to German children at the opening of a new school.

Keeping the youth close to each other and to God was especially important during the communist time, but still is necessary today. “Nowadays the temptations for young people to fall in love with the world might be even stronger,” says Herbst.

That’s just another reason for the ELFK to stress God’s grace and mercy to its members and others throughout Germany.

Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia

About 120 years after confessional Lutherans broke away from the state church in Germany, confessional Latvian Lutherans were preparing to do the same thing.

The Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia (CLCL) was founded in 1999, after two congregations pulled away from the liberal Lutheran church in 1996. Together the congregations had fewer than 100 members.

“When we left the big liberal Lutheran church there were skeptical predictions that such a small independent church would not last long,” says Gundar Bakulis, CLCL president.

Yet in six years the CLCL has grown to 10 congregations and about 500 members.

“There still is a possibility to reach the people with the Word . . .,” says

Bakulis. “Perhaps, due to the fact that many in our country still feel very insecure, their hearts are more open to hearing the law and the gospel than those living in social and material stability. We are sure that the spiritual “night” in Latvia is a real threat as our country is becoming wealthier and more secure.”

The CLCL hits many obstacles as it attempts to spread the true Word. Many call this church body a sect. It doesn’t help that almost all CLCL congregations worship in rented rooms while liberal Lutherans worship in historical churches.

“[People] see the marvelous historical church buildings where just a few years after Wittenberg the Lutheran message was proclaimed. So they believe it is still truly Lutheran to be inside there. They can’t comprehend what Lutheranism can be in congregations who meet in culture clubs, garages, private houses,” says Janis Dimza, commercial director of the Augsburg Institute, the CLCL publishing house.

But God provides. In August 2002, the Kekava congregation dedicated the first CLCL church building. Donations from confessional churches around the world helped with costs. Since then, the congregation has had 10 or more visitors each Sunday.

In Ozolnieki, the city council gave land to the congregation. The only condition—the congregation has

to build a church within five years. But that’s not easy, especially when there isn’t money for building.

Another obstacle involves a Latvian law that favors “traditional” churches (Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox, etc.) by denying registration of “new” religious movements for 10 years. (Although Lutheran, the CLCL is considered new because it is confessional.) The government, however, is considering amending the law so that the CLCL can be registered earlier.

Through all this, the Word prevails. The CLCL biweekly 20-page newspaper, *Latvijas Luteranis* (*The Latvian Lutheran*), is the most popular religious periodical in Latvia. “Through *Latvijas Luteranis* many thousands of believers in Latvia have an understanding of the law and gospel, and ultimately of the love of God,” says Bakulis.

The church body also continues to grow. Four new pastors were ordained in August, three of whom had left the liberal Lutheran church body. The CLCL also recently started a preseminary course for four men.

Fellowship with churches in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference extends the CLCL even further. WELS joined in fellowship with the CLCL in 2001.

Says Bakulis, “[It] was one of the highest points in the history of development of our CLCL. That day I felt like joining a larger fellowship with people having the same faith as we. We are young and very small. It is important to know that we are not alone.”

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

CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN LATVIA

Members: about 500
Established congregations: 10
Mission congregations: 2
National pastors: 11
Preseminary students: 4
Expatriate missionaries: 0



Well-wishers greet the four new pastors ordained into the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia on Aug. 4, 2002. The pastors are (l to r) Uldis Alpe, Aigars Dabolins, Janis Gaisins, and Egons Mudulis.

Lessons from an

Empty nesting has a different tempo, rhythm, and sound. But the music is still playing.

James A. Aderman

There's an empty bird's nest swaying metronome-like in a tree outside. Set against the slate gray clouds of winter, it's lifeless and forlorn. It's the remnants of a demanding dance floor where bird-parents waltzed ceaselessly last spring to satisfy the cheeping beat of hungry, featherless, bug-eyed babies.

My wife and I are empty nesters. But our nest doesn't feel like a deserted dance floor. True, our home doesn't rock and roll as it once did. Empty nesting has a different tempo, rhythm, and sound. But, let me assure you, music is still playing.

An adjustment

That's not to say there weren't mournful measures that accompanied our anxiety as our three daughters left home. We still listen to the sad silence of a child's bedroom, a space now devoid of evidence she ever lived there. There's the sound of a daughter sobbing on her end of the telephone because of her day's trial and our frustration of not being with her to fix it or even to offer a hug. And how could I forget the dreadful dirge that threatened to overwhelm Christmas the first time a daughter had plans for the holidays that did not include home.

But those shrill chords of loss fade in time—and, as my wife reminds me, life does go on.

Nothing here lasts forever

For the two of us, empty nesting has been the classroom where we've better learned that the stuff of life is never permanent.

I am learning firsthand that in the late middle of life, thick locks of hair gray and fall out. My memory of a muscled chest is now the reality of a bouncing belly. Friends move away. Parents are welcomed home to heaven.

Empty nesting is a time to appreciate the treasures we have while we have them and to be content in God's grace when those treasures are out of reach.

Kids' summer vacations are preempted by careers. The work world replaces their Nintendo games. Calls for dad's help no longer include fixing bicycle tires or editing English assignments. Now it's help with moving from one apartment to another, making home repairs (on their homes, not mine), and buying another car.

Long gone are the days of three squirming preschoolers bouncing noisily across church pews. We

infrequently worship together as a family—only in part because we no longer live close by. Two of my daughters enjoy a warm relationship with Jesus; one is keeping him at arm's length.

Nothing is permanent this side of heaven. Things and people—even those we treasure most—dance through our lives and then leave the stage. Successes and failures, joys and griefs sound their high and low notes on life's musical staff. And the music moves on.

My wife and I have learned that empty nesting is a time to appreciate the treasures we have while we have them and to be content in God's grace when those treasures are out of reach.

Treasure relationships, not accomplishments

That has taught me to cherish more fully the relationships with those I love.

While my kids were growing up there seemed unlimited opportunities to spend time as a family. So many that I thought I could easily forfeit any number for the sake of work. I realize now that I could have better balanced my career and my role as husband and father. The fact is that I still struggle with giving loved ones the appropriate share of my life. But I don't struggle as much.

empty nest

I look forward to the times my daughters visit almost as much as I looked forward to dating their mother. I enjoy conversations with them. Now we can confide in each other, challenge each other, and even correct each other. And there's the symphony of my daughters giggling together, teasing, and feigning fighting (which is much better than the real fighting that used to happen from time to time).

My wife and I have also reconnected. Our relationship frequently took a back seat to dirty diapers, crying kids, and "you've just gotta come to my soccer match." Now we're rediscovering why we were attracted to each other over 30 years ago—and we've been pleased to find not only that that beautiful, 20-something person still exists but also has improved with age.

Do it now

Because nothing is permanent, Sharon and I have decided not to wait until the fabled freedom of retirement allows us to travel, pursue personal interests, and spend time together. We don't know what life's music will be in a little more than a decade when social security kicks in. We can't depend on good health. The care of aging parents may keep us close to home. Retirement savings may be depleted in a declining stock market.

We travel—across the United States and beyond. We broaden our horizons. (I recently earned a second master's degree and am working on a third.) We savor restaurants, new experiences, and personal adventures. (I plan on piloting an ultra-light aircraft before I turn 60.) We've learned the advantages of fall and spring vacations. (The weather is still nice, and the sights are less crowded.) We make room for concerts and plays. We nestle in to quiet times at home, often curling up together to watch a video on Friday nights—sometimes even staying awake long enough to see the end.

Trust God's grace

The empty-nest truth that nothing here lasts forever has served to keep us focused on that which is permanent: God's unchanging and infinite love, his complete forgiveness in Jesus, and the heaven that awaits.



Jim and Sharon Aderman

To paraphrase the prophet, we've learned, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no children living at home, though health fails and parents pass away, though there is no money in the bank and stock certificates are worthless, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (cf. Habakkuk 3:17,18).

Nothing in the song of life is able to crescendo above the melody of God's mercy. Now, better than before, our empty nest features that song—the strains of God's unchanging, amazing grace.

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.

Working hand in hand with fellow Christians

Sometimes we Christians look a little humorous as we try to play the game of life together. We're like children in their first few games of T-ball. We have heard all the rules but don't always remember to put them into practice.

Donald W. Patterson

Have you ever watched a T-ball game? If you do, you will split your sides with laughter. I am convinced that anyone could win \$10,000 on *America's Funniest Home Videos* if he just visited any T-ball diamond with a video camera.

I especially like the first few games of the year. The players only remember about half the rules. It makes for some great moments, like when the batter hits the ball off the tee and then runs as fast as he can, but to third base instead of first. Sometimes a player will make a heroic effort to catch a ball but once he catches it, he gets so excited that he forgets to throw it. He just stands there while the runners round the bases.

My all-time favorite is when the ball rolls past every defender and out to the fence. Often two players will get to the ball at the same time.

One will grab the ball while the other is falling over him. Then they will start to fight over the ball. Just when one is about to throw it, his teammate knocks the ball out of his hand and tries to pick it up and throw it himself. There they stand fighting over the ball in the outfield while the folks in the bleachers roar.

Once when I was laughing at one of these struggles over the ball, I

heard the coach shout from the dugout a one-liner that has become a motto for me as a Christian. He shouted at the top of his lungs, "Same team! Same team!" The players spun and looked at him. Then one gave up the struggle while the other threw the ball into second base. It was a little late to stop the runner from getting home, but those two little words from the coach communicated volumes to the budding athletes.

"Same team!" It says a lot, doesn't it? It isn't just true for T-ball teams. It's true for God's church, too. Paul wrote about it in his letter to the Ephesians. Their congregation was made up of Jews and Gentiles.

Because they came from two different cultural and historical backgrounds, their differences always presented opportunities for them to separate from each other. Like a coach shouting from the dugout,



“Same team!” Paul reminded them that God had put them together as one church in his grace. Look at Ephesians 4:3-6: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Paul says, “Same team!” Just like T-ball, Christianity is a team sport. God gave us the same jersey in our baptism; a beautiful jersey made white in Christ’s righteousness with red letters embossed by his blood. The hat we wear is the helmet of salvation. It guarantees that each of us will get the free cola at the end of the game when we go to heaven. The jersey and hat remind us that we are on the same team. As believers we realize that this unity as God’s team is more important than individual success.

We are in a team sport, not a boxing match where you enter the ring alone and slug it out with the enemy until one or the other drops in defeat. If the team doesn’t finish together, then it has failed. If everyone doesn’t show up to play together, then the entire team has to forfeit. We are a team. Teams play together, or they don’t play at all. Jesus said it was how all men would know that we are his disciples. They would know when they saw us love one another. They would know when we play as a team.

Sometimes we Christians look a little humorous as we try to play the game of life together with our teammates. We are like those children in

their first few games of T-ball. We have heard all the rules, but we don’t always remember to put them into practice. Sometimes we look like the little guys standing in the outfield fighting over the ball. That’s when God reminds us from his Word, “Same team!”


When we act as if we are the only ones on the team that can do God’s work effectively, he shouts “Same team!” to us.

When pastors from neighboring churches get their feelings hurt because a member moves from one church to the other, God shouts, “Same team!” When a pastor stands up at a conference and points to the dirt on another pastor’s uniform, God shouts, “Same team!” When church leaders manipulate things to go their way, God shouts, “Same team!” When a member leaves a voter’s meeting angry and bitter that he didn’t get his way, God says, “Same team!” When members of the same church see their fellow believers as competition rather than as friends and family, God says, “Same team!”

My son’s T-ball coach used this “Same team!” mantra for many situations. Once he had a starter sit out so another player could get some game time. The starter began to pout. He was reminded that his

replacement was on the same team. Sometimes God has us sit out of the game so another believer can play our position. That’s when we need to remember, “Same team!” Then we will stop pouting, get off the bench, go to the fence, clench it with our little hands, and cheer on our teammate as he does his best for the Lord.

I once saw a shortstop who would catch the ball and then try to run it to first instead of throwing it. He had no confidence in the first baseman. Guess what his coach shouted to him. You got it: “Same team!” When we act as if we are the only ones on the team that can do God’s work effectively, he shouts “Same team!” to us, too. We have teammates chosen by the Lord to work with us. He wants us to play the game together. Will the other teammates drop the ball? Sometimes—but it is more important to work together with fellow believers than to do everything perfectly by ourselves. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” In other words, “Same team!”

The object of the game is to learn together as a team, to play as a team, to win and lose as a team, and to come together as a team at the end of our season to join our heavenly coach at the team party in heaven. “Same team!” from first to last. 

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

WORK
while it is day

WHATEVER

The earring

A shaking earring brings home a lesson we've all heard before—live every day like it's your last.

Matthew Eich

“Simple things amuse simple minds” was the first thing I thought of while staring at the flashing object two pews ahead of me. The light from the stained-glass windows had caught the earring just right, so that when the woman wearing it shook her head, it flashed and caught my attention.

That's when I noticed that her head didn't stop shaking. She is an older lady in our congregation whose age is starting to show. Whether it is just age or something more serious, she has developed a slight, uncontrollable shake, which made the earring flash.

As I was staring, I heard my dad (who's the pastor of our congregation) say in his sermon, “You never know when it's the last possible day.” It was a lesson we have all heard before—live every day like it's your last. But it never struck me as hard as it did as when I was staring at that shaking earring.

I'm a high school senior, waiting for graduation to go out into the world and start a life of new and exciting experiences. Where will I go to school? What will my career be? How will I support my family? So many questions need answers before I attempt my jump into the “real” world.

Or do they? I think many times at our age we get caught up in those questions. Sometimes it's caused by stress or worry, and sometimes it's pure excitement. But do all those questions need answers right now?

In the movie *Office Space*, the main character, caught up in the stressful world of climbing the corporate ladder, goes to a hypnotist to get rid of some stress. During the procedure, the hypnotist suddenly dies before the man is “unhypnotized.” The main character turns from a high-stress worker trying to get somewhere to a laid-back,

live

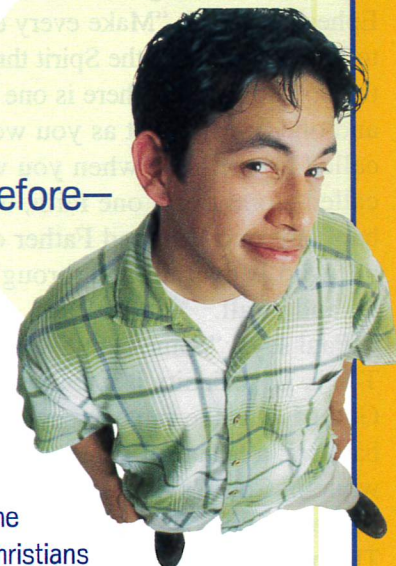
“live in the moment” type. His life goes remarkably better afterwards; he even takes his boss's job.

This is obviously an extreme example, but what can we Christians and, especially, we young people learn from it? Many times we are caught up in thinking about tomorrow and where our life will go. But what are we missing? Maybe it's the friend who needs comfort and guidance, or the coworker at our summer job whom we could've witnessed to instead of filling out that college application. But what do we gain from thinking only about tomorrow? With that type of thinking, you will never be as good as you could be tomorrow, and it only brings disappointment.

One day most of us will be there in that pew with our walkers, canes, or shaking earrings . . . is that the day we're looking forward to? When we are physically forced to slow down enough to appreciate every God-given opportunity?

Does it really matter if you work as a businessman or a gas station attendant? Only in a society that doesn't use God's priorities as its guide. Do we conform our lives for that society or for our real purpose? When you're sitting in that pew 60 years from now, will your prayer be “Lord, I'm sorry for mixing up what's really important” or “Lord, thank you for helping me to make use of every opportunity”? The second is what we are striving for—to be living every last possible day with that attitude of thanks.

Matthew Eich, a member of Good Shepherd, Alma/St. Louis, Michigan, is a senior at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan.



Getting to know God's story

Randy K. Hunter

Isn't it fun to watch a master at his craft? A potter at her wheel? A figure skater on ice? A chef in his kitchen? God keeping his promises?

The Lord had promised Abraham, "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). But how? As only the Lord could work it out. A shepherd boy would become a mighty prince, and a mighty prince would

become a shepherd. Joseph and Moses never met. Their lives were separated by 300 years, but their stories are bookends of God's masterful ways.

You can read them in the time it takes to watch the evening news. Joseph's story spans 14 chapters, Genesis 37-50. The next 14 chapters, Exodus 1-14, tell the early stories of how Moses led the Israelites from captivity to freedom.

- Joseph's brothers were worried after they buried their father. "What if Joseph was just being nice to us for Dad's sake?" they thought. So Joseph reassured them of his trust in God's ways. He said, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20). Recall three other Bible stories that demonstrate the truth of Joseph's words.
- List three events from recent world history or from your own life that demonstrate the truth of Joseph's words.
- Joseph was second only to Egypt's Pharaoh. He provided royally for his family and their descendants. But 400 years later, "a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt" (Exodus 1:8). This king saw the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Joseph's father) as a threat. As leaders often do when threatened, he retaliated by making life hard for God's people. Read Exodus 1 and list four ways God's people were oppressed.
- As a grown man, Moses prophesied about the Savior, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Compare and contrast the birth of Moses (Exodus 2) and the birth of Jesus (Luke 2).
- The prince, Moses, became a shepherd by the end of Exodus 2. Tending sheep in Midian, he might have thought God was done with him. Then Moses heard a voice call his name. Read about Moses' encounter with God in Exodus 3. List the words of the LORD from the burning bush that would have made Moses excited and grateful. List the words of the LORD that would have frightened him enough to make him shake in his sandals.
- A spotless lamb became the only hope for millions—an object lesson in God's grace. That lamb was their only way out of certain catastrophe. Read about the Passover meal in Exodus 12. Determine the meaning of the Lord's instructions for the Passover.
- Almost 1,500 years later, John the Baptist would point at Jesus and say, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus' blood would now provide hope for millions. As Jesus celebrated the Passover according to the instructions given to Moses, he changed the formula. "Take and eat," he said, "this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). "Drink from it, all of you," he offered. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:27,28). From Jesus' words, explain two differences between the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper.

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

Find this article and possible answers on-line. Go to <www.wels.net/sab/fm-nl.html> and click on "current issue." Then click on "Getting to know God's story." Answers will be available after March 5.

Creation & promise

Patriarchs

Freedom from captivity

Wandering

Promised Land

Kings

Major prophets 1

Major prophets 2

Minor prophets

Returning home

Wisdom books

Preparation for the coming Messiah



Martin Luther College graduates

On Dec. 18, 2002, 13 students graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.



Carol A. Burow
Milwaukee, Wis.
B.S. in elementary education



Patrick D. Christian
Lomira, Wis.
B.S. in elementary education



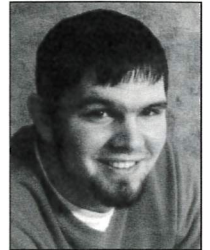
Carrie L. Dietlein
Midland, Mich.
B.S. in elementary-early childhood education



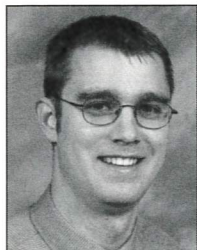
Tracy A. Leintz
Appleton, Wis.
B.S. in elementary education



Christine V. Martin
Oakfield, Wis.
B.S. in elementary-early childhood education



Joshua K. Nielsen
Apple Valley, Minn.
B.S. in elementary-secondary education



Michael T. Vlieger
Rapid City, S.D.
B.S. in elementary education



Kari A. Wegner
Maribel, Wis.
B.S. in elementary-early childhood education



Jessica L. Zahrt
Lafayette, Minn.
B.S. in elementary education

Not pictured

Ann Kom
Bismarck, N.D.
B.S. in elementary education

Keith T. McClellan
West Salem, Wis.
B.S. in elementary education

Andrew H. Rosenau
Milwaukee, Wis.
B.S. in elementary-secondary education

Jonathan S. Westphal
Saginaw, Mich.
B.S. in elementary education

Assignments for MLC graduates:

Leintz, Tracy A., to Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Vlieger, Michael T., to Prairie, Gibbon/Fairfax, Minn.

Perusing WELS publications

Need some good reading material? Why not check out WELS publications. There's something for everyone. This series will introduce you to the various publications so you can discover which ones will benefit you.

Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly

In 1904, three professors—Adolf Hoenecke, J.P. Koehler, and August Pieper—started a theological journal called the *Theologische Quartalschrift*. Its motto—"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (then, in German)—continues as the theme for the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, a full 100 years later.

"Though the wording of the motto has changed, the goal of the *Quarterly* remains the same," says Prof. John Brug, managing editor. "The chief purpose of the *Quarterly* is to help pastors of our fellowship, as

well as all of our other readers, hold to Christ's teaching."

About 1,800 readers (including libraries and institutions) subscribe to this in-depth theological journal. Here they learn what's going on in the religious world today and where our synod stands on these beliefs and issues. That hasn't changed in 100 years.

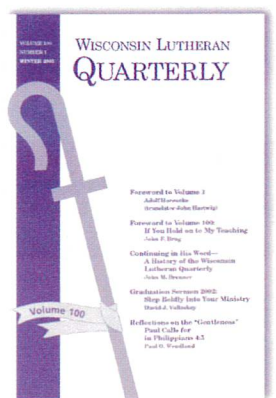
"The pages of the *Quarterly* are a record of the challenges that our synod, its pastors, and the congregations have faced during that time," says Brug. "The *Quarterly* stands as a public testimony of what we have believed and taught."

Articles, mostly written by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary faculty, cover topics such as doctrine and practice, preaching, teaching, worship, church history, and the Lutheran confessions.

Book reviews, sermons, and news from the seminary and the world round out the publication.

Though some things have changed for the *Quarterly* over the years (from German to English and a move to become self-supporting), its testimony to our beliefs remains constant.

Want to subscribe? Go to <www.nph.net> and search for Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly under periodicals. Or call Subscription Services, 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8. Milwaukee, 414/615-5785.



Seek and keep

Seek the lost. Keep the found. That pretty much sums up the purpose of the Seek and Keep grant program, which was started in 2001 with the remaining \$2.1 million in the WELS Gift Trust Fund, previously established with gifts from Marvin Schwan. Any WELS congregation, individual, mission, or organization with an idea for sharing the gospel with the lost or keeping believers close to their Savior may apply for a Seek and Keep grant.

A Seek and Keep grant helps congregations start ministry programs that they wouldn't otherwise have the means to carry out. It is especially meant to fund creative or innovative programs that involve laypeople and emphasize personal contact. Grants in varying amounts have been awarded twice annually since 2001.

Valley Lutheran, an exploratory mission in Sheridan, Wyo., had many prospective members who knew little about the Bible and were uncomfortable attending church services. Pastor Peter Zietlow noticed that many of the devotion materials available were too advanced for these new souls. In May 2002 Valley received a grant to help the congregation buy books, videos, and CDs that would draw

these families into God's Word on their own level. Members delivered these materials and often sat down with the families for a devotion to familiarize them with studying the Bible in their home.

A "Living Christmas Card" in Cinco Ranch, Texas, was made possible by a grant awarded in November 2002. It took Pastor Nathan Buege and all of Victory of the Lamb's 28 members to advertise, sew costumes, provide animals, and set up lighting for the live nativity scene. The event took place the Saturday before Christmas on the empty lot where this exploratory mission eventually hopes to build. All 400 people who visited received handouts about the church and a thank-you card in the mail on Christmas Eve.

Because of synod budget shortfalls, it's uncertain whether the Seek and Keep grant program will continue to fund these innovative programs, but don't hesitate to apply for a 2003 grant. Contact your Seek and Keep district chairman or e-mail <SeekandKeep@wels.net> for an application and return it by April 1. The Synodical Council will decide (possibly in April) whether the remaining \$1.1 million in the fund will be used for Seek and Keep



Emma McCormick, David Patterson, and his son, Travis, pose as soldiers for the Living Christmas Card at Victory of the Lamb in Cinco Ranch, Texas.

Grants or elsewhere. Other proposals range from applying the entire amount to the Board for Ministerial Education's current year deficit to designating \$750,000 as incentive for congregations to place unassigned pastors and teachers.

Laura Warmuth

New two-year theme announced—

The synod's two-year theme for 2003-05 is "Peace through Jesus: Know it. Live it. Share it."

The theme stresses an important truth, especially in the unsettling times of the world today.

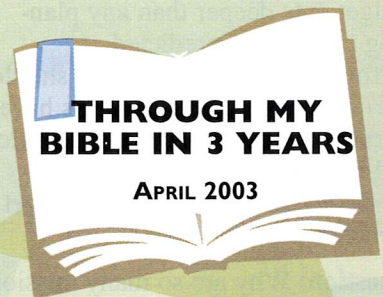
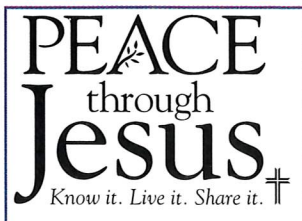
"Peace. Everyone wants it, whether it is personal or world peace," says WELS President Karl Gurgel. "But it's always elusive until, by faith, it's found in Jesus Christ alone."

The theme is based on John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do

not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

The theme will kick off at the synod convention, July 28-Aug. 1, at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Logo sheets and banner instructions have been mailed out to every congregation and school. You can order more at <www.shopwels.net>. Logos will also be available on the WELS Web site <www.wels.net>.



- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Numbers 33-36 | 16. Mk. 8:1-26 |
| 2. Mark 1:1-15 | 17. Mk. 8:27-38 |
| 3. Mk. 1:16-34 | 18. Mk. 9:1-29 |
| 4. Mk. 1:35-2:12 | 19. Mk. 9:30-50 |
| 5. Mk. 2:13-3:6 | 20. Deuteronomy 1 |
| 6. Mk. 3:7-19a | 21. Dt. 2 |
| 7. Mk. 3:19b-35 | 22. Dt. 3 |
| 8. Mk. 4:1-20 | 23. Dt. 4:1-40 |
| 9. Mk. 4:21-34 | 24. Dt. 4:41-5:33 |
| 10. Mk. 4:35-5:20 | 25. Dt. 6 |
| 11. Mk. 5:21-6:6a | 26. Dt. 7 |
| 12. Mk. 6:6b-30 | 27. Dt. 8 |
| 13. Mk. 6:31-56 | 28. Dt. 9:1-10:11 |
| 14. Mk. 7:1-23 | 29. Dt. 10:12-11:32 |
| 15. Mk. 7:24-37 | 30. Dt. 12, 13 |

Answers to your WELS budget questions —

WELS Vice President Wayne Mueller answers your questions about the current revenue shortfall.

Question: What steps are being taken to make sure, from a purely financial perspective, that the synod doesn't repeat the same mistakes or create new pitfalls in financial planning?

Answer: Our financial planning did anticipate the current difficulties and worked to moderate them. Two years ago the Synodical Council put into effect a plan for budget cuts and revenue enhancement through a church-wide stewardship effort that would have averted the worst of what we see now.

But two months ago something happened that was not only unforeseen, but which the best fiscal planners could not have averted. A major donor told us that he would have to cut his gift to the synod for the current budget year by \$2 million and reduce his gift another 30% for the next two years. That event, coupled with the gradual downturn in other major revenue sources, made the budget cuts deeper than any planning could have predicted.

You are right in saying we should learn from this. Synod leaders have learned that they must set a direction and priorities that prevent across-the-board downsizing when budget crunches come.

Question: Why are so many missionaries being cut while there are almost no cuts in administration staff?

Answer: All areas of ministry were asked to make cuts at the same time and in the same amount at the November 2002 Synodical Council meeting.

The Board for Home Missions may not have to close any home missions but may have to cut a few home missionaries. The Board for World Missions projects that fewer than a dozen world missionaries will lose their posts. All the world

mission fields will remain open, and the world missionary staff, after cuts, will be 25% larger than it was a decade ago.

Administration budget and staff will be cut back as low or lower than all other areas of ministry. Two administrators, one in Communications and one in Support Services, will not be funded. Our Telecommunications/Technology director has retired as of Jan. 1 and will serve part time. We have five fewer gift planning counselors, and only two are slated for replacement. The Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council also cut their budgets the same amount as other areas of ministry.

The last \$2 million of revenue was reallocated to help areas of ministry that were most hurt by the across-the-board cuts. Most went to Home and World Missions and to Ministerial Education. Another \$300,000 was allocated to the Conference of Presidents' Support Fund to help those affected by the cuts.

Question: These are huge decisions—why are just a few making them? Why not wait until synod convention or have the convention early?

Answer: Scores of people have been in on this decision-making process. The majority making budget-cut decisions are locally elected people, making decisions for their own districts. Local district mission boards, Board for World Missions administrative committees, and the boards of control of our worker training schools have wrestled with these cuts for months.

Synodically-elected area of ministry boards and the Synodical Council itself have wrestled with these decisions. In January, a joint meeting of the Synodical Council and the Conference of Presidents worked on prioritizing one ministry over another for budget allocation.

Both the Synodical Council and the Conference of Presidents are elected by and act on behalf of WELS members.

The "few" administrators have authority only to carry out the decisions of their governing boards. They can plan budget cuts, but they cannot implement them without their board's approval. Finally, delegates to the synod in convention will give final approval to the budget. The convention has the authority to reverse any or all of the Synodical Council-proposed budget and make the Synodical Council decisions retroactive.

Only the Conference of Presidents has the constitutional authority to call a special convention. An early convention is a possibility, but logistically it would be extremely difficult to carry out and would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is unlikely that one could be organized more than six or seven weeks before the regular convention.

So far \$767,786 (as of Feb. 7) in special offerings has been sent to the synod. If you would like to contribute, send money to WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222. Please indicate that it is a special gift to relieve the budget shortfall.

Find out the latest on the WELS revenue shortfall at <www.wels.net>. If you have a question about the budget, e-mail <budget@wels.net> jump word "budget." Answers will be posted on the Web site.



Wayne Mueller

There still is work to do

Details from the joint Conference of Presidents and Synodical Council meeting in January.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have just gone through some hard and distressing weeks in our synod. Not all the news has been good, but God's promises and love have remained unchanged.

You may know that the Conference of Presidents and Synodical Council met together Jan. 10-12 to assess the present situation and its implications for the future. At that meeting we were able to consider the many comments we've received from God's people in WELS, taking them to heart and speaking them to each other during our discussions.

Since our meeting, we have received some good financial news. As of Jan. 14, special offerings sent directly to the synod total \$449,000 [as of Feb. 7, \$767,786]. Nearly half a million dollars, what a blessing! Secondly, Congregational Mission Offerings for the first half of the 2002-03 fiscal year are well on the way to meeting the revenue projection for this year.

There still is work to do. The synod's revenue is made up of several components, nearly all of which were lower for the past year. Interest income, proceeds from bequests, as well as major foundation gifts were down, some of them significantly.

Briefly stated that means that our present situation is as follows:

- \$4.3 million is the shortfall for the 2002-03 fiscal year because of the above,
- \$3.0 million in cuts reduced the shortfall to \$1.3 million, and
- \$1.3 million in additional revenue is still needed for the balance of the 2002-03 fiscal year.

Consequently, the joint meeting of the Conference of Presidents (COP) and Synodical Council (SC) concluded that budget reductions were necessary. All areas of ministry worked to reduce their budgets by 9% for the

fiscal year ending June 30. For fiscal year 2003-04, they are seeking to budget at 80-85% of last year's previously adopted budget.

The joint meeting of the SC and COP arrived at the following points by consensus:

- The love of Christ compels us to proclaim the gospel so that the lost may be saved and the saved may be strengthened.
- Mindful that the workers we train must be equipped to meet the outreach and nurture needs of our congregations throughout the world today, maintaining a biblically sound and academically excellent worker training system is essential to our work as a synod.
- The SC should seek to stabilize the Board for Ministerial Education budget by providing additional dollars (\$1.2 million was suggested with the expectation of a significant reduction in the number of personnel cuts in ministerial education.)
- The COP would work to find alternate ways of using the growing number of trained workers who may not receive regular divine calls.
- The SC will seek to minimize the number of workers withdrawn from world mission fields so that the process of indigenization (creating an independent national church) is not harmed. (Indigenization plans call for withdrawing from world mission fields as a strong, national church emerges.)
- Ongoing stewardship training in our congregations is very important.
- We need to practice good stewardship of the offerings of God's people by conforming our synod's ministry program to the available financial resources.
- We will implement the new compensation program, recognizing that it will need to be phased in.
- The Special Support budget will

be provided with additional funds (\$300,000 was suggested) to help called workers in transition.

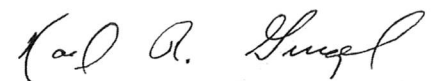
- We appreciate the work and cooperation of the administrators and the boards they serve.

The Synodical Council meets at the beginning of March. At that meeting the council will prepare and propose to the synod convention a budget that is in keeping with our income. Check the WELS Web site, <www.wels.net>, for interim updates and additional information.

We believe the Lord will bring good out of this, because he has promised "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

In the meantime, it's important that we reflect on the rich blessings God has given us in the past; on how we have used those blessings; and on how we will use the gifts he gives to us in the future. It's also important that we earnestly encourage each other in the practice of Christian stewardship of finances. Above all we need to remain committed to the task the Lord has given us—proclaiming his saving gospel in all the world—trusting that God will both bless its proclamation and provide us with the resources necessary for this work.

Serving the Lord with you,



President Karl Gurgel
For the Conference of Presidents



Karl Gurgel

District news

Southeastern Wisconsin



On Oct. 13, 2002, St. Peter, Kekoskee, Wis., honored Joyce Otto for her 50 years of service as church organist.

Minnesota

Faith, Austin, Minn., has changed its name to Beautiful Savior to avoid confusion with two other churches in Austin whose names are "Faith."

Arizona

First, Prescott, Ariz., recently completed a retirement facility offering eight two-bedroom units.

South Central

Volunteers from across the United States have been working hard at **Shiloh Lutheran Retreat Center in Pittsburg, Texas**. In October, Pastor John Koelpin and youth group members from Calvary, Dallas, participated in a workday at the retreat center. Builders For Christ is currently constructing five cabins there, and other volunteers have been busy remodeling existing facilities.

South Atlantic

Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla., dedicated its new 2,500 square ft. "Family Space" addition on Jan. 19. Christ the King, which boasts 135 members, was granted mission status in 1994, built its first building in 1996, and gained self-supporting status in 2000.

On Dec. 22, 2002, **Beautiful Savior Exploratory, Clarksville, Tenn.**, held its second German service. Ten German families who are members at Beautiful Savior planned the majority

South Atlantic



New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla., broke ground for its new addition of a fellowship hall and two classrooms on Dec. 15, 2002. Builders For Christ is helping New Hope with this project.

of the service, which was attended by 192 people.

Trinity, Castries, St. Lucia, conducted a Christmas vacation Bible school that 60 children attended.

Pacific Northwest

On Nov. 24, **Beautiful Savior, Beaverton, Ore.**, celebrated the grand opening of its leased ministry center. For the past five years, Beautiful Savior's members have worshiped in a local elementary school.

South Atlantic



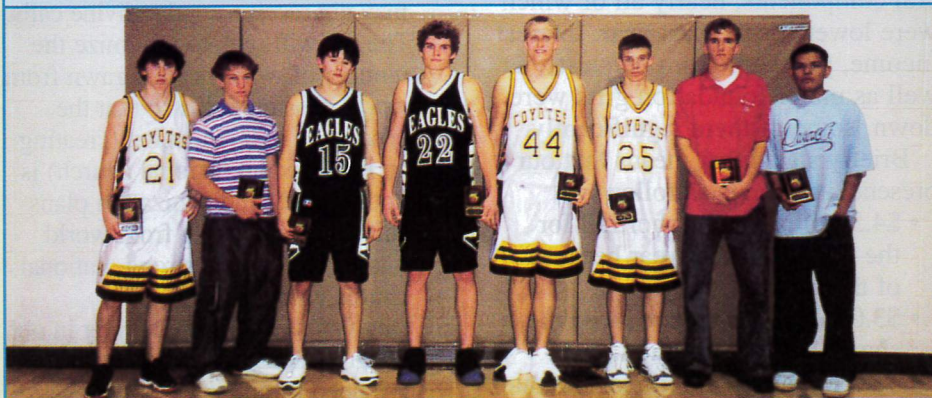
Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga., hosted a Christmas for Kids on Nov. 30, 2002. Ten of the 21 children who attended were church prospects.

Happy anniversary!

DM—St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D., celebrated its 60th anniversary on Dec. 15, 2002.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Kenneth Pasch; DM—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

Arizona



Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, hosted its third annual Great Western Lutheran Shootout on Dec. 5-7, 2002. The varsity girls and boys basketball teams from California Lutheran High School, Wildomar; Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des Moines, Wash.; East Fork Lutheran High School, Whiteriver, Ariz.; and Arizona Lutheran Academy all participated. The players also participated in a joint chapel service. Shown here is the All-Tournament boys team.

Where are they now?

In *Forward in Christ* magazine, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now?" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

"Fellowship—European style," an article about the European civilian chaplaincy ministry ran in July 2000.

Here's a recap

The Military Services Committee of the Commission on Special Ministries calls one full-time chaplain and one retired pastor (for short periods of time) to minister to WELS military personnel and WELS civilians throughout Europe. In 2000, the chaplain held church services in six locations (including Germany, London, and Zurich) as well as traveled extensively to serve those who couldn't be at the services. Quarterly retreats brought members of this far-flung "congregation" together for worship and fellowship.

So, where are they now?

"Historically [this ministry] was a nurture ministry. We were there to serve our military people. It has changed in two respects. One is that we have more civilians there now than we have military. Also the opportunity for outreach has really demonstrated itself," says Pastor Bob Hartman, vacancy chaplain in Europe in 2001-02.

When Chaplain Michael Schroeder came in August 2002, Hartman, supported by the Commission on Special Ministries, turned his attention to outreach in Europe.

The plan was to reach out to the large population of English-speaking civilians who live in Europe, especially in large cities that serve as business centers. It was decided to start in the Frankfurt, Germany, area because of the core group of WELS members there.

But the idea wasn't just to invite non-WELS members to existing services. That was already happening. The plan, instead, was to start a congregation that would eventually become self-supporting and call its own full-time pastor. That congregation would consist of WELS members as well as other English-speaking people in the area.

Starting regular weekly services at one location was the first step. Finding that location was difficult. Finally a German Protestant church in the nearby town of Wicker rented its building to the ministry on Sunday mornings.

The first service of the Confessional Lutheran Christian Ministry (the local congregation is still to be named) was held Oct. 20, 2002, with a core group of WELS and ELFK (our sister church in Germany) members from the area.

A leadership team has been put together to help with children's ministry, technology, music, and outreach. This team and the core group are relying on advertising in the military and German newspapers, on word of mouth, and on "booth ministry" (setting up booths at the



Some of the leadership team for the Confessional Lutheran Christian Ministry: (from left) Charlie Schwertfeger, Pastor Carl Ziemer (Special Ministries administrator), Chaplain Michael Schroeder, Pastor Bob Hartman, Geoff Jahnke, Al Woldt (former Special Ministries administrator), Scott Britt, and Pastor George Enderle (retired pastor).

many festivals in the area) to reach English-speaking people. The congregation will also be featuring events to draw people in.

"Civilians yearn for fellowship with English-speaking people," says Hartman, who will serve with Schroeder as the congregation's pastoral team until spring. "The Word of God will then draw them in and hold them."

After Hartman leaves, the Commission on Special Ministries plans to send a retired pastor to help Schroeder serve WELS members scattered throughout Europe and those at the Confessional Lutheran Christian Ministry.

Obituaries

John Everitt Oldfield 1914-2002

John Oldfield was born April 22, 1914. He died Dec. 25, 2002.

A 1946 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC), New Ulm, Minn., he also served at DMLC (now Martin Luther College).

He was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth. He is survived by two sons, two daughters, 11 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

Arden Louis Wood 1925-2002

Arden Wood was born Dec. 4, 1925, in Tigerton, Wis. He died March 8, 2002, in Arizona.

A 1950 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, he served congregations in Hague Township and Willow Lake, S.D., as well as Immanuel, Black Creek, Wis.

He was preceded in death by one brother. He is survived by his wife,

Jean; one son; two daughters; five grandchildren; one great-grandson; and one sister.

Correction: There are several corrections to Gerald Berger's obituary [Jan.]. He was preceded in death by only one brother. He is survived by one brother and two sisters as well as his wife, Marie; three sons; three daughters; and 15 grandchildren.

Change hits Jesus Cares Ministries—

Change. We all learn as time goes on that it is inevitable—but that doesn't stop us from fearing it. Those involved with Jesus Cares Ministries recently experienced a change in their ministry that has left many of them reeling.

The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn., Jesus Cares Ministries' parent organization, announced on Jan. 9 that eight of Jesus Cares Ministries' 15 team members would be laid off between Feb. 7 and May 31. This means that some of the services that Jesus Cares Ministries offers to those with developmental disabilities and their families will be temporarily curtailed. The Lutheran Home Association (TLHA) hopes that a strong network of volunteers will keep core ministries going, especially because recent growth has demonstrated a strong need for these services.

TLHA reduced staff positions for these programs because of a lack of funding from individual donors and the generally poor economy, two factors that are affecting many non-profit organizations in the United States.

Michael Klatt, president and chief executive officer of TLHA, says, "We must live within the financial blessings that the Lord has blessed us with. We will continue the programs that Jesus Cares Ministries has established with less administration, but more volunteers. Lay participation has always been the backbone of these ministries. We will rebuild the programs as we are able, and they will be stronger because of the experience that we have gained from these changes. Within two to three years we will have much stronger programs."

Work done by Jesus Cares Ministries will continue through its district coordinators in the Southeastern Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin, and Minnesota Districts. The Inclusion Program, which helps create plans of action so that children with special needs can attend WELS schools, will continue its work until the end



Volunteers will be crucial to Jesus Cares Ministries now that the number of paid staff members has been reduced. Here volunteer Jamie Johnson dances with David Koss at Jesus Cares Ministries' Winter Carnival.

of the school year. It may continue on a consultant basis after that. The Wisconsin Lutheran Special Needs Resource Center, which provides special-needs information, materials, and resources to people around the world, can still be contacted through its toll-free telephone number—877/505-3675—and its Web site—www.jcministries.org/resources/resources.html.

Carl Ziemer, WELS Special Ministries' administrator, says that the Special Education Services Committee will continue its work to the developmentally disabled in the same way that it has for the past 30 years. "Jesus Cares Ministries is an important partner in our work with the developmentally disabled," he notes. "Whenever it is deemed beneficial, we will continue to work together with Jesus Cares Ministries."

Ziemer adds, "So what happens now? We look to our Lord for his guidance and blessing. We storm the gates of heaven with our prayers on behalf of those whom he loves. And we work—work hard while trusting the promise that his Word will not return empty."

To find out more about working with Jesus Cares Ministries to serve people with developmental disabilities, contact 888-600-8542.

World news —

LCMS and ELCA renewing talks— The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are renewing theological talks and having more frequent top leadership meetings.

The Committee on Lutheran Cooperation (CLC), which consists of six members from each of the two church bodies, agreed in November that they would pursue discussions of issues that divide the two church bodies. They also agreed to meet twice a year instead of once.

[LCMSnews, Dec. 6, 2002]

LCMS cuts missionary positions—

The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod World Mission had to eliminate 28 overseas missionary positions (one-quarter of its career-missionaries) as well as 17 full- and part-time office staff members because of budget difficulties.

A decline in donations to missions caused World Mission to cut about \$3 million from its current budget and an additional \$6 million from its proposed 2003-04 spending plan.

About 78 percent of the World Mission budget comes from special gifts, while 22 percent comes from Sunday-morning offerings. The bad economy is the expected cause of the decline in donations.

[LCMSnews, Dec. 26, 2002]

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.

DEFINING RELIGION

Forgive: to pardon or not count a person's sins against him. When God forgives us, he justifies us or declares us not guilty, he frees us from sin's guilt and punishment, and he "remembers our sins no more" (Isaiah 43:25).



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Cortez, Kevin L., to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.
Ehlers, John P., to St. Luke, Jackson, Mich.
Gierach, John P., to St. John, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Schmiege, Paul A., to Good Shepherd, Girard, Ohio
Semro, Jonathan M., to English, Viroqua, Wis.
Steinbrenner, Aaron P., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Zimdars, Thomas E., to California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.

Teachers

Haack, Jacqueline H., to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.
Heckendorf, Mark T., to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
Koepsell, Kristen, to St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis.
Lowery, Sarah M., to St. John, Baraboo, Wis.
Plocher, Michael D., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
Rathje, Ryan J., to Holy Cross, Madison, Wis.
Reinemann, Dave H., to Northland LHS, Mosinee, Wis.
Sazy, Marie C., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Schneck, James A., to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.
Sebald, Sandra K., to Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis.
Sell, Jeffrey R., to Shepherd of the Hills, Greeley, Colo.
Strand, Dawn C., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Uher, Jennifer R., to Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis.
Weihing, Paul R., to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.

Staff minister

Ruddat, Jonathan A., to St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis.

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.

ANNIVERSARIES

Phoenix, Ariz.—Arizona Lutheran Retirement Center. Mar. 2. Open house, 3 to 4 PM. Remembrances, 4 to 4:15 PM. Food served, 4:30 to 5:30 PM. Tours until 6 PM. 602/995-2541.
Phoenix, Ariz.—Arizona Lutheran Academy (25). Mar. 23. Service, 4 PM. Meal to follow. 602/268-8686.
Appleton, Wis.—Fox Valley Lutheran High School (50). Apr. 5. Community open house, noon-6 PM. Festival worship in gym, 4 PM. Social gathering at Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, 7 PM-midnight, \$5 per ticket. David Wenzel, 920/739-4441.
Sebewaing, Mich.—New Salem (150). Apr. 6. Service, 10 AM. Meal to follow.
Jacksonville, Fla.—Good Shepherd (25). Apr. 27. Service, 4 PM. Meal to follow. 904/778-1491.
Fairmont, Minn.—Shepherd of the Lakes (25). Sept. 28. Service, 3 PM. Luncheon to follow. 507/238-1269.

COMING EVENTS

Dedication service for school expansion project—First, La Crosse, Wis. Mar. 2. Service, 2 PM. Tours and light refreshments will follow. David Niemi, 608/784-1050.
Lenten concerts—joint choir from Good Shepherd, Jordan, and Woodlawn, West Allis,

Wis. Sharon Klinger, 414/321-2126.
 Mar. 9, 8 & 10:15 AM, Jordan
 Mar. 16, 8 & 10:30 AM, Woodlawn
 Mar. 30, 7:45, 9:15 & 10:45 AM, Good Shepherd
Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women—Apr. 4-6. Radisson Plaza Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-3945.

Cascade Lutheran Chorale Passion concert—Apr. 13, 4 PM. Grace, Portland, Ore. Joy Williams, 503/493-0465.

Eighth Biennial WELS Kingdom Workers National Convention—Apr. 25-26. Sheraton, Brookfield, Wis. Neil Hankwitz, 800/466-9357.

WELS Church Librarian Organization meeting—Apr. 26. Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis. Registration fee, \$7. Includes lunch and all handouts. Joanne Weber, 414/256-3222.

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.

Summer camps—at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. WELS summer camp for grades K-12. June 18-Aug. 13. Trained staff and exciting programs. Family camps during the summer, including Family Fest 2003, an exciting and spiritually renewing musical gathering of WELS performers and entertainers. 920/787-3202.

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

NEEDED

Volunteer couple—to assist at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Six-month commitment, but time is flexible. The couple must have a trailer or motor home, which can be parked on a campsite. Water and electrical utilities provided. Suggested duties include care of grounds, maintenance projects, supervision of volunteers, housekeeping, office work, and campground hosts. Tom Towner, 912 W Parkway Blvd, Appleton WI 54914; <cpxec@yahoo.com>.

Volunteer health care staff—RNs, doctors, or EMTs to work as health care directors for one-week or half-week summer camp sessions at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

Christian couples—to serve at the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi. Three-year commitment. The woman should be a registered nurse, and the man would serve as administrative coordinator. Kathie Wendland, 920/682-5694.

Registered nurses—for medical mission work in Zambia. Kathie Wendland, 920/682-5694.

Newsletter editor—WELS Commission on Special Ministries is seeking a volunteer editor for their SHARE (Special Help and Resource Exchange) newsletter. The quarterly newsletter provides information to parents, teachers, pastors, and other WELS members who are involved in spiritual training of individuals with cognitive disabilities. Bruce Cuppan, 920/922-8672.

Handbells—needed for new handbell choir. Seeking three plus octave set. Doug Carr, 805/967-7418.

SERVICE TIMES

The Villages, Fla.—The Villages Lutherans is an outreach satellite of St. Mark, Leesburg, Fla. Morning devotion service and spiritual growth hour at the church on the square, Town Square, The Villages, Fla., on Thursdays at 9:30 AM. Herb Schaefer, 352/753-7515.

Kasson, Minn.—Our Savior. Sunday worship, 9 AM. Sunday school, 10:15 AM. Dean Gunn, 507/634-4692.

Louisville, Ky.—Hope. Sunday worship, 8:15 & 11 AM. Sunday school and Bible class, 9:30 AM. Steven Lange, 502/423-1211.

Rhineland, Wis.—Zion. Saturday worship, 7 PM. Sunday worship, 8 & 10:30 AM. David Sternberg, 715/365-9357.

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.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Time of Grace ministry. Half-hour television ministry will air Sundays at 8 AM on WB-18. <timeofgrace.org>.

AVAILABLE

50 student desks and chairs—in fair condition. Free for the cost of shipping or pick up from Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio. Dave Knittel, 614/875-1147.

NAMES WANTED

Chattanooga, Tenn.—Jim Turrieff, 256/233-5255.
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.

Europe—Civilian and military people. Services held in London area; four locations in Germany; and Zurich, Switzerland. Need names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Michael Schroeder, <welschaplain@t-online.de>.

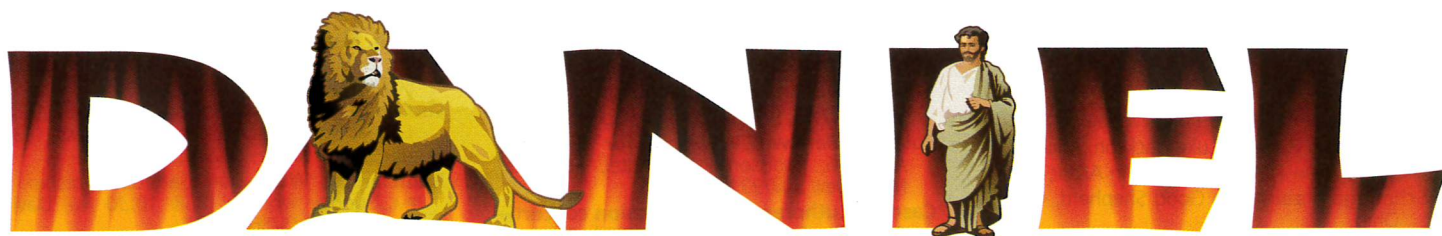
POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Admissions counselor—for Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn. Candidate must have a bachelor's degree or higher, have a high level of communication skills, and be a member of the ELS or WELS or willing to join one of the synods. Promote Bethany to prospective students in churches, high schools, college fairs, and on-campus visits; also through telemarketing and personal contacts. Application deadline is April 15. Send letter of application and resume to Bethany Lutheran College, Don Westphal, dean of admissions, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001; 800/944-3066.

Summer paid staff—Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. May 27-Aug. 13. Counselors, head life-guard, adventure coordinator, Bible study leader, kitchen staff, and junior staff director. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

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.

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



The unstoppable witness

Jesus made you an unstoppable witness when he made you a member of his unbeatable kingdom.

Philip L. Kieselhorst

Late last year *The Lord of the Rings* movie wowed millions of people with the second installment of the trilogy. The epic tale entertains with heroes, villains, beasts, war, fellowships, magic, and new kingdoms.

As we read Daniel 7 and 8, we might feel the visions Daniel describes are an epic fantasy too. The content seems so unreal. Yet we know these visions are not fantasy. “I am going to tell you what will happen later” (Daniel 8:19). The visions given to Daniel describe beasts, heroes, war, fellowships, suffering, kingdoms, and things that will happen. Although these visions are overwhelming in their details, the lasting impression we carry with us is hope.

Boastful beasts

Daniel turned pale as he watched a lion with wings; a beast like a bear; a leopard with four wings and four heads; and a terrifying beast with large iron teeth, 10 horns, and, finally, a horn with the eyes and mouth of a man. The last creature would not stop speaking boastfully.

During the second vision, Daniel became physically ill as he watched goats with strange horns charging back and forth across the earth until one horn crushed them all and brought desolation to the earth.

What made Daniel’s blood run cold more than the creatures’ strange appearances was what the beasts did. They destroyed everything in their way. Nothing could withstand their ferocity and power. These beasts are kings and kingdoms that will reign on earth and bring tremendous suffering as they “oppress his saints” (Daniel 7:25).

One drop of water in baptism, one little word of Jesus’ gospel will destroy every evil foe.

Eternal dominance

What hope can we have? “As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. . . . I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. . . . His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:9,13,14).

Find hope in the Son of Man! The angel makes it clear that the Son of Man will be unstoppable. All of the beasts will fall, never to rise again. All authority and sovereign power will be given to the Son of Man who will rise, never to fall again.

Jesus rose from the dead to show that he has been given authority and power to establish an eternal kingdom. As the angel explained (Daniel 7:27), Jesus then gave his authority and power to his people. Before he ascended to his throne Jesus announced: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:18,19).

Jesus gave his authority and power over every beast to you. He made you an unstoppable witness when he made you a member of his unbeatable kingdom. One drop of water in baptism, one little word of Jesus’ gospel will destroy every evil foe. Take up the power of Word and sacraments and be a hero as you “go and make disciples of all nations” in Jesus’ name. Jesus and his kingdom will never be destroyed. Nothing will stop us from wielding his power.



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



Luther the child

A look at the great reformer's lineage and what Luther's life was like growing up in Germany in the late 15th century.

Richard D. Balge

"I was born . . . at Eisleben, and baptized there in St. Peter's Church. I do not remember this, but I believe my parents and the folks at home." So wrote Martin Luther in a 1520 letter to George Spalatin. He didn't remember the occasion but he never forgot the fact, as his treatments of Holy Baptism in the catechisms and in a number of treatises make clear.

The date of his baptism was Nov. 11, 1483. Martin was just one day old. At that time and place, infant mortality before age one was about 60 percent. People who believed in original sin and in the grace of baptism did not delay.

Luther's parents

Martin's paternal grandfather was a small holder. That is, Heine Luther maintained a title to his small acre-age by paying an annual ground rent on a parcel of land. According to German custom and law, a landholder's youngest son inherited the estate. Hans, Martin's father, was the eldest son and so had to earn his living elsewhere.

Hans moved to Eisleben and began to work as a copper miner. He was sure he could do better at Mansfeld, at that time an important center of copper mining. In Mansfeld he progressed from hired laborer to owner of six mines and two smelters by 1501.

Although the mines and smelters brought relative prosperity to the

family, Martin remembered his parents' earlier struggles: "In his youth my father was a poor miner. My mother carried all her wood home on her back. It was in this way that they brought us up." Nevertheless, in time Hans was elected to a seat on the council of his adopted city and could pay for his eldest son's university education.

Hans Luther was married to Margarete Lindemann, who is also referred to as Margarete Ziegler. The confusion of names may have arisen from her father's occupation. He was a *Ziegler* (brick maker) and so would have been known as "Ziegler Lindemann" or "Lindemann the Ziegler." Some also suggest that the maiden name of Heine Luther's wife was Ziegler, causing or adding to the confusion.

Growing up

Hans and Margarete had 10 children, and Martin was the eldest. People readily remember one of the few things Martin said about his parents' harsh discipline: "My parents kept me under very strict discipline, even to the point of making me timid. For the sake of a mere nut my mother beat me until the blood flowed."

Martin's expressions of appreciation and esteem for his parents, on the other hand, tend to be overlooked. In *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School* (1530), he wrote: "My dear father lovingly and faith-

Want to learn more about Luther's teachings?

Check out these resources from Northwestern Publishing House:

- *As Luther Taught the Word of Truth* (#06N0722) by Richard Lauersdorf. A devotion book on Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism.
- *19 Minutes with Luther* (#22N1093) by Tim Gumm. A Bible study copymaster kit.

To order, call Northwestern Publishing House, 800/662-6022 (Milwaukee area, 414/475-6600). Or order on-line at <www.nph.net>.

fully kept me at the University of Erfurt, by his sweat and labor helping me to get to where I am."

The Luther family attended mass regularly at St. George's Church, where Martin sang in the church choir and served as an altar boy. Near the end of his life Martin remembered that in school and church "nothing at all was taught about the promises [the gospel] . . . Toward the beginning of the revival of the gospel I heard a certain monk saying when . . . he heard and clearly understood the purer doctrine: 'Good God! I never heard anything about the promises in my whole life.' And he congratulated himself from the heart because he was permitted to hear and understand this word 'promise.' "



Richard Balge, a member of Calvary, Thiensville, Wisconsin, is a professor emeritus at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: ANSWERING PRAYER

Question: How does God answer prayer? Is it an encouraging Bible verse that comes to mind when you need comfort? Is it a sermon on spiritual struggles when you've been praying about those struggles? Is it a song on a Christian radio station dealing with the topic you desperately prayed for moments before? Is it a Christian friend saying something that deals with what you prayed about the night before?

Answer: God can be answering your prayers through all of those ways—and many more. After all, our Triune God to whom we pray “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). What an unbeliever may scoffingly chalk up to “luck” or “coincidence” is never that. We trust a merciful God who “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Realize also that many of our prayers will be answered in ways we won't immediately (or ever in our lifetime) grasp as God's answer. Many times we may at first perceive a beautiful “yes!” from God as a disappointing “no!”

As we pray about a struggle in life and ask God to remove it, his answer may be to keep it in our lives to teach us humility, perseverance, or trust. Like our Savior before us, we live under the cross. It is not always God's will to remove every difficulty and trouble.

It is his will, however, to make everything serve our spiritual and eternal good. Look at Paul's struggle against an unnamed thorn in the flesh and God's answer to his pleas (2 Corinthians 12:7). Could it be that one of the wonders of heaven will be realizing how faithfully God did answer every prayer because of his love to us in Jesus?

May I speak one caution, however, from your list of ways God answers prayer? Another Christian may address a situation in our lives about which we've recently prayed. However, we must remember that even a well-meaning fellow Christian may not offer the best advice. If something said contradicts God's Word, the advice given certainly doesn't answer our prayers. Such an “answer” would be a further temptation in the midst of that spiritual struggle. Also, maybe we are praying about something in the area of Christian freedom (for example: whether to accept a new job offer). Just the fact that another Christian addresses that topic does not mean that our conscience must now be bound in that direction. As long as either choice can be pursued to God's glory, we will not have sinned if we choose the opposite course of action. God may use that

Christian's advice to lead us to think through our decision more carefully.

Let me also highlight one of the ways you listed that God answers prayer. The best way to find an answer to prayer is to open our Bibles. Luther spoke about “praying through” Scripture. Bible study gives us the full “conversation” with our God. In his inspired Word we know he speaks to us because that Word is always “living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). As we study the Word, we find

promises to “speak back” to him in prayer. In his Word we find answers to prayer as God reveals his will for our lives. Praying as we study the Word is our personal and intimate conversation with the God whose dying and rising love made us his own.

The best way to find an answer to prayer is to open our Bibles.

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

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



"Our three boys enjoy playing 'Pastor.' They stand on our fireplace hearth with a hymnal and sing, or pray, or pretend to give sermons. In this picture they are ages five, four, and two. The oldest, in the red, was asking, 'Who wants to sing *Go tell it on the mountain?*' That's why the other two have their hands raised high!"

Submitted by Duncan and Kris Blaho

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.

WELS treasure hunt

The WELS Web site is a treasure trove of information. Follow along on this Internet treasure hunt, note the information that is requested, and send the three noted answers to Nicole Balza, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <nicoleb@sab.wels.net>. The first three entries with all the correct answers will receive a small prize and have their names printed in the June issue of Forward in Christ. Entries must be received by April 15 and must include the entrant's name, address, and church.

Go to <www.WhatAboutJesus.com>, the WELS evangelism Web site for those interested in learning more about Christianity. Click on "Life Concerns." Under "Government," click on "Why do I have to pay taxes?" Read the article and note which Bible passages are used as references in the article. At the bottom is a message stating that the site is sponsored by WELS. Click on "WELS." Read the explanation of who WELS is, note what "evangelical" means, and then click on the link to <www.wels.net>. At the top of the page is a set of clickable choices. Click on "Listserve." You will see a list and explanations of each WELS listserve. Read through the choices, sign up for any listserves that you are interested in, and note the name of the e-mail devotion listserve that is sent out on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week. Return to <www.wels.net> and explore at will!

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

At the foot of the cross,
An atheist stands.
He looks up to see
Just a dying man.

At the foot of the cross,
An agnostic exclaims,
"I don't believe
The things this man claims."

At the foot of the cross,
A pagan shouts,
"Where is this power
That he told us about?"

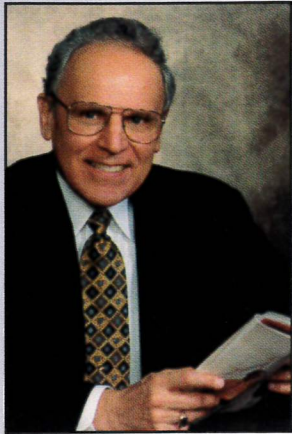
At the foot of the cross,
A soldier spits
In the puddle of blood
That flows from his wrists.

At the foot of the cross,
A believer sighs,
"It's his love for my soul
That today my Lord dies."

At the foot of the cross,
A mother appears
With the disciple he loved,
Both holding back tears.

Looking down from the cross,
His work almost done,
Jesus saw all these souls
And gave his life for each one.

Dan Kleist, a member at Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Illinois, wrote this poem as a senior at Luther Preparatory School. He is now a freshman at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.



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

Although faith and faith alone saves, we cannot separate faith from doctrine.

Doctrine builds faith

“We don’t emphasize teaching doctrines so much as teaching faith,” says the pastor of a small Lutheran church* that serves a number of denominations (reported by Religion News Service). The church, consisting of Arab Christians, has an intriguing story to tell of isolation, persecution, and belonging. I cannot feel indifferent about its plight.

Still, I puzzle about what it means to teach faith, not doctrines—a concept that others, too, have embraced. If it means that trusting in Jesus is more important than knowing how many days God took to create the world, you won’t get any argument here. One of the vivid memories of my early ministry was my visit to an unchurched, semi-conscious man on his deathbed.

“Do you realize that you have sinned and deserve to be condemned for it?”

He indicates “yes.”

“Do you repent of your sins and trust that God’s Son, Jesus, has died to forgive you and wants to take you to heaven?”

Again, a very weak “yes.”

I assure him of God’s grace, and I pray for him. That night he dies.

You might say that I was at that hospital teaching faith, not doctrine. Simple law and gospel told the whole story. I don’t know whether that man knew any of the teachings as they are laid out in our Lutheran Catechism, but I know he died expressing trust in our Savior.

So, why am I troubled by the idea of teaching faith ahead of doctrines? I’m troubled first because I don’t know what is meant by faith in this case. The devil once tempted Jesus to have faith that the angels would protect him if he jumped from the temple. But Jesus said that kind of faith would be tempting God. I’m troubled because for some, faith means finding the “god” or the Buddha in you. It is self-centered trust. Everyone has faith in something or someone, but if it’s the

wrong something or someone or applied in a wrong way, it can lead to disaster.

We need a faith that trusts God and all his promises. He will not fail us. But to know God and his promises calls for doctrine—teaching who God is and what he has promised and what he’s done to keep his promises.

True saving faith cannot exist without doctrines. Even at the deathbed, I had taught doctrines. I taught the reality and damnableness of sin. I taught the sacrifice of God’s Son for our forgiveness. I taught eternal life through faith in Jesus. And those teachings evoked a response of faith.

Although faith and faith alone saves, we cannot separate faith from doctrine.

Still, we need only a few basic teachings to be saved. Doesn’t “teaching doctrines” imply teaching everything from creation to Christ’s return, from prophecy to prayer? It does, and when you study the doctrines, you see how they all connect to God’s plan of salvation in Christ, and your faith grows.

The creation and the fall introduce us to God, identify the source of sin, and reveal the need for and God’s first promise of the Savior. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper provide means through which God gives and grows saving faith. The details of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection unfold the wonders of God’s grace at work for our forgiveness and eternal life.

Take away some of the teachings in the name of teaching faith over doctrines, and you take away some of the building blocks of faith. The more you take away, the more danger that you will take away the faith itself that gives eternal life.

You don’t need to know all the teachings of the Bible to be saved, but all of the teachings have worked together for your salvation.

Gary P. Baumler



350 years of experience at your fingertips

Assisting you! It's the heart and soul of the work we do in WELS Parish Services, a ministry of your synod.

A highly qualified team of leaders and associates with 350 years of collective experience in all areas of ministry is at your service.

Do we have all the answers? No. But by working with congregational leaders, together we can find ways to enhance the ministry of your congregation:

EVANGELISM: Pastor Mike Hintz - 414-256-3287

WORSHIP: Pastor Bryan Gerlach - 414-256-3265

YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP: Mr. Joel Nelson - 414-256-3224

PARISH SCHOOLS: Mr. Jason Nelson - 414-256-3220

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP: Pastor Bruce Becker - 414-256-3228

SPECIAL MINISTRIES: Pastor Carl Ziemer - 414-256-3240

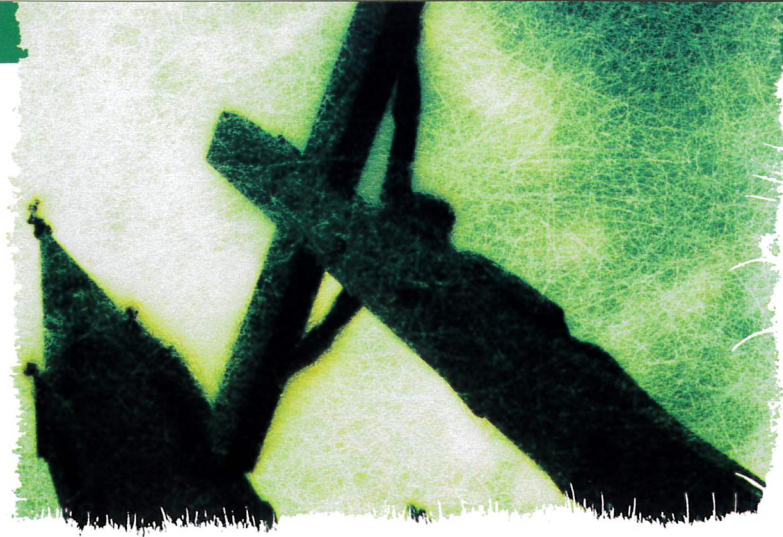
PARISH ASSISTANCE: Pastor Ron Heins - 414-771-1235



WELS Parish Services

... assisting congregations in their gospel ministry.
Write to us at bps@sab.wels.net

Leaders
helping leaders
as iron
sharpens iron



What nailed him to a tree?

Although nails physically held Jesus to the cross, our sins nailed him to the tree, and Jesus' love for sinners kept him there.

Richard E. Lauersdorf

Every tool has its purpose. You cut with a knife, eat with a fork, write with a pen. And a nail? A nail is used to fasten. Though the crucifixion accounts don't mention nails by name, Thomas would tell us they were there. He saw their imprint on his risen Savior's limbs. The question is, "What nailed him to a tree?"

My sins

The Gospels simply record, "They crucified him" (Mark 15:24). But there was nothing simple about it. Splintery wood and sharp nails, torn flesh and screaming nerve endings, constant pain and slow death, such was involved in the process reserved for the worst criminals, the lowest slaves, and God's Son. Far worse were the tortures of hell. All of hell's acid waves that were the wages for the world's sins washed over God's Son, nailed to that tree. Only the devils and the damned in hell can begin to understand. We can only guess at what this involved for Jesus.

There's no guessing, though, as to who pounded those nails through his hands and feet. Rough and ready soldiers left their fingerprints on the

hammer. So did a spineless Pilate and a hate-blinded people. So did Judas with his kiss and Peter with his denials. And so did we! This Lenten season is not going to be what it should until we change the "they" to "we crucified him." Better still, it needs to be, "I crucified him." I and my many sins did it!

I recall the time when in anger I pushed my older sister, causing her to fall on the gravel driveway. I remember how I felt when I saw the blood on her cut lip. My heart ached, and I wished I had never done it. Such a feeling, though much more intense, ought to grip my heart this Lenten season when I realize that with my sins I nailed my Savior to that accursed tree.

His love

How easily God's Son could have saved himself as the enemies taunted him. How easily he could have pulled out the nails and stepped down from the cross. But he didn't. He couldn't. Divine love wouldn't let him. One of Jesus' disciples, after standing beneath his cross, wrote later, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down

his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

That love looms even larger when we stop to realize that it was not for friends that Jesus died, but for enemies. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God's Son died for sinners like you and me, people born in sin, living in sin, deserving nothing less than sin's full punishment in the forever dungeons of hell. How Jesus must love us! How strong the love that held him to that cross!

This Lenten season may God help me look at myself and cry out in true repentance, "Ah! I also and my sin wrought your deep affliction. This indeed the cause has been of your crucifixion" (*Christian Worship* [CW] 98:3). But even more so, God help me look at his Son and again marvel, "In perfect love he dies; for me he dies, for me! O all-atoning Sacrifice, you died to make me free!" (CW 138:5). ✨

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