



FORWARD IN CHRIST

March 2004

The Word from the WELS

Will spouses
be reunited
in heaven?

Struggling with
schizophrenia

Living out
the Great
Commission
in your con-
gregation

**NAIL YOUR GUILT
TO THE CROSS**

Through life's many stages, one thing remains constant—

the grace and blessings the Lord promises in his Word.

Numbers 6:24-26, commonly known as the Aaronic benediction, is one such example of the Lord's assurance for his people.

In *The Lord Bless You*, author John Braun weaves his description of the benediction around the stages and transitions we experience in life.

During changes such as confirmation, graduation, or marriage, God is still present and active in our lives. The book concludes with a section of personal prayers for a variety of times and situations. This pocket-sized resource makes a great gift.

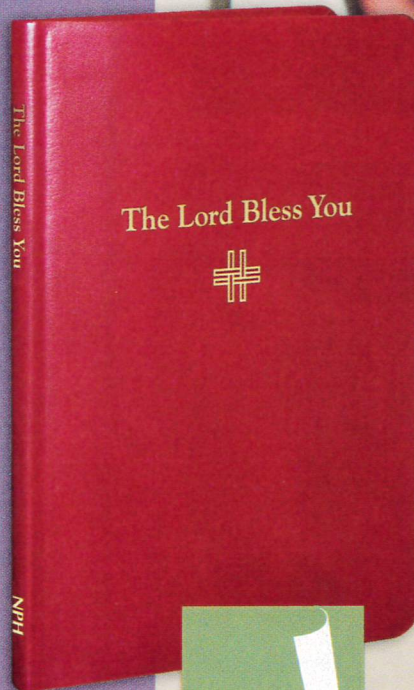
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by John A. Braun

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It is good to wait

“It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.” Lamentations 3:26

Stephen H. Geiger

Cereal selected. Frozen pizza picked out. The last of the groceries finds its way to your cart.

It's time to check out on a busy afternoon. You find the shortest line. Unloading your food, you expect fast service. Then disaster. The customer in front detects a problem with a price. Only one person is ahead of you with items so few, but now your wait will be longer and there's nothing you can do.

We don't like to wait

We don't like to wait for groceries at a store, for health when we're sick, for dreams to come true. We watch our clocks and get frustrated when relief does not come at the moment we desire.

The writer of Lamentations longed for relief. The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem. There were no lines to buy food because there was no more food. Appearances suggested that God was finished with his people, never again to love.

“Salvation is coming,” God said, “but it's good to wait.”

Wait? Why not bring relief right now?

Do you ever think that? You know God's promises. You wonder why he's asked you to wait. You don't understand, and soon you feel doubt, frustration, complaint.

So easily we persuade ourselves that because we don't understand God's timetable, his timetable must not be best. So easily we assume that we'd do a better job if we were



in charge. So easily our sinful flesh persuades us that it has the right to be God.

It's important for us to wait

This is why it's important for us to wait. Waiting reveals the lie. If our flesh was correct and had the power to be God, then our flesh should have the power to make things happen as we desire. Yet I do not have the power to change with certainty even the smallest detail of my future. I can't even make a grocery line move. Waiting reveals my inability. Waiting unmask the lie of human pride.

How I deserve for God to finish the unmasking and let me see the judgment I deserve.

Yet in the Lord we don't see the desire to condemn. As sinners tremble at their evil, the Lord invites us to wait, but not for judgment. “It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”

For the writer of Lamentations, the wait may have seemed very long. The wait was not forever.

At just the right time, God sent his Son, our Savior. As our Savior, this Son became our substitute. He became our substitute even in waiting. God asked his Son to suffer, to have to wait, to experience the passage of difficult times before his ultimate triumph. Jesus' wait was perfect, without frustration. His wait was quiet, without complaint. He hung for hours, refusing to come down. He trusted his Father, and, sure enough, salvation came. Sin's

punishment was paid. Resurrection arrived. Forgiveness is now assured, covering all of our impatience and every one of our doubts.

Christ has come. Salvation has been won. Yet still we have to wait. Moments of time, their number unknown, lie yet in the future before heaven, our home.

Your flesh may question the goodness of a God who asks you to wait.

Recall at that moment the great blessing of a wait. Waiting reminds us of our inability. Waiting gives opportunity to trust God's great ability.

It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Stephen Geiger is pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton/Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, South Dakota.

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The last thing Jesus wants us to do is to hang on to our guilt.

bits & pieces



Some people view Lent as a time to give up something for God. After all, God did give up his own Son for us. But instead of renouncing chocolate or red meat, Mark Cares encourages us to give up something much more dangerous to us—our guilt. Read more in “What to give up for Lent” (p. 8). Then continue your Lenten meditation by turning to the back page, where Daron Lindemann encourages us to turn to Jesus and the sure fact of his death and resurrection instead of relying on luck or chance.



WELS has chosen the theme “Every church is a mission” for the first year in our four-year commitment to North American outreach.

- Mark Paustian reminds us how Jesus’ Great Commission still relates to us today and encourages us in our outreach to our North American neighbors (p. 18).
- Learn how members at Living Word, Johnson City, Tenn., share the Word in the Bible belt of the United States as we continue our series on 12 different congregations in our WELS family (p.14).
- Not only can every church be a mission but also every person can be a missionary. Beth Leverence shares how her son, who is suffering from schizophrenia, expresses his faith to the many people he encounters every day (p. 10).
- Rennie Heuer compares the Christian to a buoy—we should always be letting our light shine so we can lead weary travelers to the safe haven of heaven. Read more in “Be a good buoy” (p. 21).

—JKW

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Pantheism



Concerning the billboard message “You can harley get to hog heaven without David’s son,” [“District news,” Nov. 2003; Readers forum, Jan.], it’s obvious that dictionary definitions do not always keep up with common usage. Frequently people use the word “hardly” to mean “not at all,” perhaps with a touch of sarcasm. In my Christmas Eve sermon I asked the question: “Did Jesus come to start a new religion? Hardly.” And I’m sure everyone in the congregation knew I meant, “No way.”

Risen Savior, Milwaukee, should be commended for using this eye-catching slogan, which I’m sure was well understood by passing motorists.

Mark Porinsky



Dexter, Michigan

It is not “trouble and confusion in public worship” to object to the conceit that the worship traditions and music, which have been preferred by millions, are somehow today impeding further salvations [“Let worship work,” Dec. 2003]. By this reasoning, the faithful risk being labeled intolerant bigots if they do not yield to every silly and vulgar modernism.

By intimating that our traditions and music hinder the development of faith in others, Prof. Tiefel characterizes today’s supplicants as dimwits unable to learn as we have, stubborn malcontents unwilling to adopt the customs of the group they propose to join, or people so propagandized by error that their spiritual blindness ordains heroic overtures. Either that or he indicts his own profession—teaching—as incompetent.

What has happened to the idea that it is up to the seeker to taste and discover if what is proffered is for him? It is not incumbent upon us to change our worship customs to attract alien appetites and blissful ignorance into our midst. Our customs and music were meant to highlight the awe-filled reverence with which we are to approach the Trinity. How could it be less important to get this right than to attend to the manufactured discom-

forts of uninitiated petitioners? By what authority is it presumed that the Spirit who has blessed our traditional Lutheran worship has changed his mind and desires us to exchange our reverence for enlarged membership?

We need Christ-centered reasons for introducing various foreign rigors into our worship, and Prof. Tiefel has provided none. The all-too-common complaint “I don’t get it”—for whatever reason, in whatever language, and from whichever cultural potpourri it issues, reveals a deficient, juvenile grasp of the concept “serious.” It decrees a better, more remedial approach to newcomers and more thoroughly thought out instruction methods—not the full-scale upheavals of the worship traditions, customs, and music of the faithful.

Gary Stevenson

Shakopee, Minnesota

There has been an ongoing discussion about new methods of worship [“Worship that works,” Nov. 2003; “Let worship work,” Dec. 2003; “Blended worship that works,” Jan.]. I think we need to take a long look at our worship methods and start working on some that meet the needs of our younger members.

I can already hear the cries about losing “our Lutheran heritage.” I certainly respect our current forms of worship. However, we need to look at what’s happened the past few decades and put our worship styles in perspective.

Right now we have a generation of children raised with fast-paced TV shows. Compound that with computers, where learning is interactive, and we have a generation that is not going to be held by a sit-down style of anything. . . .

To take people raised and educated in that environment and have them try to appreciate our current liturgies is a frustrating exercise, and we are boring them right out of church. Whether we think that should be their reaction or not, that is the case. What is important is that to try to deny it and keep going on as we have is a recipe for the death of a synod—specifically ours!

Nowhere in the Bible is our form of worship dictated. The only guidelines are that “all things be done decently and in order” and that God’s Word be taught in its truth and purity. Beyond that we are given latitude in what worship is and is not. After all, “where two or three are gathered in my name . . .”

I don’t think we should stop using traditional liturgies, but we certainly need to look at alternative forms of worship, music, presentation styles, and instrumentation. Use this as a method to garner more involvement in creating and presenting a worship service among your membership and as a tool to get youth involved. The possibilities for member involvement and church growth are immeasurable!

Joel Stensberg



Appleton, Wisconsin

Re: Blended worship that works [Jan.]. I am reminded of a professor under whom I studied 50 years ago. Coming to America from a former Communist-ruled country with state-controlled radio, the professor was not accustomed to commercial radio as broadcast in the United States. He marvelled that “at one moment you have the splendor of Beethoven and the next moment you have soap!”

Over the years I have suffered through endless episodes of so-called blended worship—and not one of them can approach the confessional and biblical integrity, theological validity, doctrinal clarity, solemnity, dignity, spirituality, and sheer beauty of the historic traditional Lutheran service. Let us avail ourselves of the “splendor of Beethoven” and relegate “soap” to its intended purpose.

Michas Ohnstad

North Branch, Minnesota

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



The value of a witness

Thomas J. Jeske

A TV series, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, has captured America's attention. CSI showcases the teamwork between a sharp investigator, fast computers, and forensic medicine.

A law-enforcement team sifts a site. Often it is met with dismayingly scant and scattered evidence: two seconds of a cell-phone conversation, an impression left by a hard object in a softer material, a thread held in a tweezer, a speck of DNA. The clues must substitute for a speaking witness.

CSI: Miami might be able to answer in 60 minutes, "Who left the body on the beach?" A real-life case that won't go away as easily is, "Where did this planet come from?"

Investigators working on this case observe, catalog bits of information, and form hypotheses. When the question is, "How did the earth get here?," a detective works backward from the evidence. In this quest we are working without a witness. Answers found under the scientific method will always be tentative. Conclusions are subject to revision, pending new evidence or the appearance of a witness.

All of this hits home as I am standing on an observation deck at the rim of the Grand Canyon. Someone in a khaki uniform is explaining how this great gash in the earth "was shaped over a long period of time." Wind and water are at work carving the canyon today. We can even measure how much of the canyon floor is scoured away each year by the Colorado River. Get out a calculator, divide the rift's one-mile depth by that measurement. In a straightforward way the investigator discovers knowledge: the canyon is x-years-old.

A shuttle-bus full of German and Japanese tourists and I are indirectly asked to accept several assumptions: a) that the volume of water moving through the Grand Canyon has

always been constant, and b) that the earth started out smooth, like a marble.

Reflect on that first assumption. If the Bible is correct when it speaks of a great flood, then one conclusion its reader may draw is that the volume of heart-stopping whitewater running through the Grand Canyon of the Colorado has *not* always been the same as it is now.

The second assumption of our National Park Service employee seems to be that the earth started out smooth. According to this theory, canyons (and mountains, presumably) were formed later under current conditions.

Viewing CSI with its labs and computers can leave one with the feeling that scientific inquiry must be left to professionals. But a fair question for a Christian—tourist, high school student, subscriber to *National Geographic*—to consider is, "But what if God created a canyon?"

If he did, then what appears to have been worked only by water and wind would actually have been carried through by the Word of God. Then you and I could easily be fooled by what is before our eyes. While our method of working backward allegedly discovers a very old canyon, in reality the canyon may be (geologically) young, mere thousands—not hundreds of millions—of years old. "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Psalm 33:9).

The Bible claims to be not discovered knowledge but revealed knowledge. It presents information about God's creating activity that is not open to scientific proof. No human being was there to observe it. And without the Scriptures, even that ace CSI team won't discover the truth on this one by working backwards.

Tom Jeske is pastor at Living Hope, Omaha, Nebraska.

The Bible
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What to give up

Last year a sad thing happened at our Good Friday service. As people entered the chapel, they each received a large nail. In the front of the chapel stood a large cross with hundreds of holes drilled in it. Toward the end of the service I invited the worshipers to come forward and place their nails in the cross. While they were doing that I encouraged them to think of any guilt that was burdening them and symbolically nail that guilt to the cross.

One woman who came forward was a Mormon friend of a member. From my vantage point in the darkened chapel I could see that she was emotionally affected as she lingered at the cross. As she placed her nail in the cross, I prayed that the gospel she heard that night would remove her heavy burden of guilt. Later I learned that as she was leaving church, she went over to the box in the front hall containing the nails and took one home with her.

Jesus gave his life for us

How many of us have done the same thing? How many of us have gone to Christ's cross to leave our guilt there only to pick it up again as we walk away? Guilty consciences still gnaw at us. Guilt, like acid, still eats away at our relationships. Guilt still keeps us awake at night and can even keep us away from the Lord's house. As a Mormon leader once wrote us, "Guilt is the gift that keeps on giving."

Worse yet, how many of us think that this is what the Lord wants? It's

for Lent

It's difficult leaving all of our guilt at the cross and walking away. But that's the beauty of God's love for us.

Mark J. Cares

easy to think that it's normal and even a sign of Christian maturity to have some guilt. We might even conclude that something is wrong with believers who don't feel guilty. As strange as it sounds, have you ever caught yourself feeling guilty for feeling good in the Lord?

Jesus came to remove our guilt from us. Lent is not about our giving something up for God. On the contrary, during Lent we remind ourselves of how much God gave up for us! We marvel at Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. We breathe a sigh of relief as we see God intervening at the last minute to spare Isaac. But when it came to God sacrificing his Son, nobody intervened. "He . . . did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). To free us from guilt God gave up—he sacrificed—his precious Son.

To free us from guilt the Son willingly went along with his Father's plan and gave up his life. "[Jesus] gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice" (Ephesians 5:2). Each Lenten season we come away shaking our heads in awe at Jesus' love for us. As we revisit the details of his passion and see the pain he suffered for us—the death he died for us—our hearts again overflow with love for him.

We give our guilt to Jesus

So how are we to respond? By giving something up for Lent? Yes! By giving up our guilt. In so many different ways, that is what God in his Word encourages us to do.

Amazingly, the most common biblical description of believers is not "sinners" or the "guilty ones," but the "righteous." Over and over again, approximately 180 times, that is what God calls believers in his Word. It's obvious that he loves to us that.

Righteous is his favorite term for us because it emphasizes what he has done for us. It highlights the stupendous fact that he has declared us righteous (i.e., justified us) through Christ. God has stated that with great formality and legality. The judge has spoken. In Christ we are justified. We are acquitted. In Christ we are not guilty.

How many of us have gone to Christ's cross to leave our guilt there only to pick it up again as we walk away?

Think of how people react when a judge acquits them of a major crime. Cheers break out in the courtroom. Relief and joy wash over the face of the accused. Loved ones are hugged. Lawyers are congratulated. The acquitted throw their arms up in victory. They hold a victory party. They celebrate.

Now imagine how odd it would be if instead of reacting that way they shuffled out of the courtroom with resigned looks and slumped shoulders. We would wonder if they heard the verdict correctly. We would ask them, "You heard you were found

not guilty, didn't you?" Imagine how the person who worked tirelessly and sacrificed immensely for their acquittal would feel. He would not think it just odd. He would take them by the shoulders, shake them, and tell them to rejoice.

Friends, in Jesus we are not guilty. Jesus came and took our guilt from us. He now puts his arm around us and tells us to rejoice. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). The last thing Jesus wants us to do is to hang on to our guilt. Continuing to act guilty does not please or honor him. In reality, it dishonors him. When we hang on to our guilt, it calls into question his work for us. When we hang on to our guilt, people can honestly wonder if Jesus has truly saved us. In love for Jesus, give up your guilt.

That's not easy to do. It's difficult leaving all of our guilt at the cross and walking away. After all, we have so much to be guilty about. But that's the beauty of God's love for us. That's the beauty of having a Savior who did everything for us. That, my friends, is the beauty of Lent. Always remember what Paul wrote: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Remember that and praise Jesus this Lent by celebrating your acquittal. Praise Jesus this Lent by leaving your guilt at his cross. Praise Jesus this Lent by giving up your guilt.



Mark Cares is pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.

A different field

I questioned God's plan for my son, who had wanted to be a missionary, when he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Beth Leverage

Like many children, my son, Aaron, thought about many professions while he was growing up. When he was very young he wanted to be a farmer. That gave way to an artist. Over time he aspired to be a writer, a journalist, or maybe a missionary. Over time he leaned more and more toward sharing God's Word with the less privileged through mission work. It's because of Aaron's aspirations that I so often hear myself asking, "Lord, why? Why would you allow Aaron to become so ill? How can he serve you now? Couldn't he serve you better if he were well?"

If Aaron had continued to progress through life as I thought he would, he might be halfway through his sophomore year at Martin Luther College, on his way to being a missionary some day. Instead he's sleeping on a plastic bed in the hallway of a mental health hospital. Aaron's plans and my plans were not God's plans. When I'm questioning God's plans, I reflect on Jeremiah 29:11, " 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' "

I remember the day vividly. It was a sunny afternoon in September 1998. I was in the kitchen with my family, gently confronting my children about some printed material I had found near the family computer. Printouts of our church's Internet home page had been stuffed neatly into envelopes—about a half-dozen of them. I couldn't understand why one of my children would want to print so many copies of our church's Internet home page. I thought it bordered on wastefulness. What was the purpose of this? Which one of my three children had done this?

Aaron heard voices, voices that no one else could hear.

When I asked the question, my oldest son, Aaron, openly admitted that he had printed out copies of Christ the Lord's home page and stuffed them into envelopes. When I asked why, he told me that he would tuck the envelopes into the waistline of his shorts while he was out running. When he would pass someone on the street he would ask them if they had a

church home. If they responded that they were "homeless," he would invite them to come to Christ the Lord and then hand them an envelope that contained the address and the service schedule of the church.

Upon hearing Aaron's answer, my concern over the wasteful consumption of paper and ink was replaced with pride and joy that I was blessed with such a special son.

However, in the spring of 1999, Aaron started to show symptoms of mental illness.

One morning after several sleepless nights, we woke up to find Aaron unable to speak to us. We made many phone calls to Aaron's pediatrician and psychologist. After evaluating Aaron, they determined that he should be taken to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee for tests. He was at Children's for hours, subjected to many tests—MR scans, an EEG, and a painful spinal tap.

Throughout these tests Aaron wasn't able to speak. However, he was able to sing. He lay in the emergency room all day, singing his favorite hymns: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," "I am Jesus Little Lamb," and "Beautiful Savior." Over and over again he sang these

hymns. Many people made positive comments to my husband about Aaron's singing that day. I have often asked myself whether someone in Children's Hospital needed to hear those hymns just then.

When all the tests came back negative of any kind of physical illness, Aaron was sent to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist didn't quite know what was wrong with Aaron either. Since no tests can be run to diagnose a particular mental illness, doctors are forced to look at the symptoms and assume what illness the patient is suffering from. Maybe Aaron was suffering from depression. Maybe it was obsessive-compulsive disorder. Our doctor was led in a different direction by one underlying symptom: Aaron heard voices, voices that no one else could hear. Our doctor assumed that Aaron was suffering from schizophrenia—though he wouldn't make a diagnosis for many months.

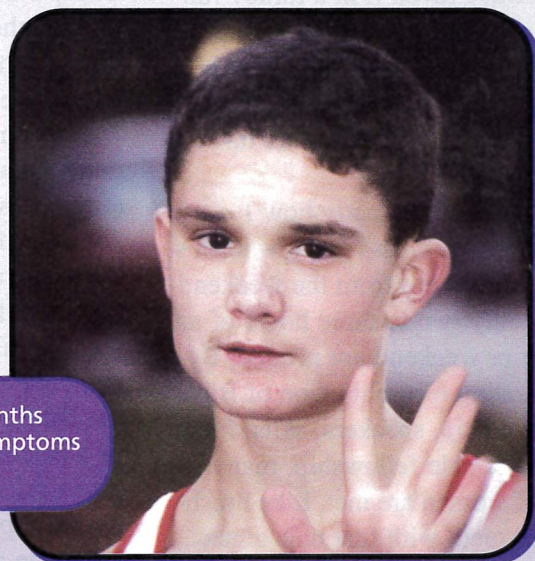
Almost two years passed with Aaron getting along okay on the medications the doctor in Milwaukee was prescribing for him, but we wanted to see Aaron doing much better. From a friend in St. Louis, we heard about a doctor who specialized in schizophrenia. We contacted the doctor and asked if he'd examine Aaron. He agreed to see Aaron in February 2001.

An elderly woman sat across from Aaron and me while we were waiting to see the doctor. She was visibly upset about something. Aaron asked her what was bothering her. She explained to Aaron that the doctors weren't providing her with good care and that she was considering suing them. Aaron calmly told her that before she brought a lawsuit against the doctors she should pray about it to determine if it was God's will.

Then he asked her if she went to church. She told Aaron that she was Jewish, but didn't attend church very often. Aaron asked her if she knew about Jesus. She told him that she did not know who Jesus was. Aaron went on with joy in his voice to share the good news of Jesus and the love that Jesus had for her, and how that love drove him to suffer and die for her on the cross. I often wonder if I might see that elderly woman in heaven some day because of the seed Aaron was privileged to plant.

While many treatments have been tried in the years since Aaron was diagnosed

Aaron in 1998, about five months before he started showing symptoms of mental illness.



with schizophrenia, none have proven to be effective. Aaron has been in and out of hospitals repeatedly.

But wherever Aaron is, a Bible goes along with him. He will often read from the Bible to other patients. Several of those patients have come up to me to tell me what a special son I have. They often tell me how much Aaron's open expression of his faith has helped them get through a crisis in their own life. These comments give me much joy and also cause me to pause and think—maybe God's plans and Aaron's plans are not as different as I might think. The mission field that Aaron is serving is just different from what I expected.



Beth Leverage is a member at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.

More information

To learn more about this disease, go to <www.schizophrenia.com>, or ask your physician for more information.



A MINGLING OF FLAVORS

An assortment of gifts from godly women can blend together for a memorable infusion when you have a women's event at your church.

Jane Schlenvogt

I recently discovered coriander. I liked it in Indian curried chicken. But I loved it in a turkey rub where it had been blended with pepper, salt, turmeric, and orange peel. As your server in a fine restaurant would describe, it became an infusion of flavor!

An infusion is exactly how I would describe what I call a women's "event." Different from the weekend retreat, only two to three hours of an evening or weekend are needed. By incorporating a combination of Bible study, worship, speakers, skits, food, fun, and female fellowship, many needs of women are met. Like brushing your teeth with that new cinnamon toothpaste, it's high impact!

Studying God's Word

The educational aspect of the event provides Bible study. What scriptural principle will you teach or what application will you make

for the day-to-day lives of women? How will this lesson best be shared? Group study or guest speaker? Game or worksheet? Plan carefully so that your teaching is clear and women take home the lesson in their hearts.

Who among your women has demonstrated teaching skills? What a marvelous opportunity for her to use her gifts to share insights and biblical truths. If she is teaching Scripture for the first time, she will want to talk the lesson over with someone experienced in teaching the Bible, either another teacher or a pastor. Using those with God-given gifts to teach and plan will ensure a positive experience for everyone at your event.

Keep in mind that events provide opportunities for women to teach each other. Studies have shown most women learn best by discussing topics with others, analyzing the teachings, applying them to life,

and receiving affirmation from peers. By providing interactive Bible study, current life issues are held up to God's Word, and comments and concerns can be aired in an informal atmosphere where there is clarification of thoughts from other women and feedback is immediate.

Applying God's Word

Next, plan time for application following the study. At a recent event women spent an hour cycling through four sectionals following a Bible study on prayer. They discussed praising God in prayer and journaling prayers; made a calendar of specific prayers; and walked through the church, praying for worship leaders. The lessons were compact, high impact, and practical.

Skits are easy to incorporate into events. Whether the drama portrays a biblical event or humorously applies a scriptural teaching, retention of

learning is increased and variety is added to the program. A high school girl who loves drama might portray teenage Mary as the mother of Jesus. "Hannah" could tell her story from 1 Samuel. If you are studying confession and repentance, a fun-loving gang would get a kick out of overacting a make-up commercial to demonstrate the futility of covering up sin. Be creative, but maintain integrity. Don't simply entertain, but rather keep a clear purpose to your drama.

Worship time at an event can include a devotional thought, Scripture reading, or several songs correlated to your lesson of the day. Give several women the opportunity to read Scripture or relay it "reader's theater" style. Soloists or small groups can prepare special music, both vocal and instrumental. Use the opportunity to teach others a new song, based on your theme of the day, while including an old favorite.

Maybe an activity ties into your teaching idea. In an afternoon called "Water Your Roots," one group enjoyed a salad luncheon, studied Psalm 1, then decorated clay pots for spring flower planting. How

about teaching lessons from the Bible on healthy living and going on a walk together? Call it "Life: A Walk in the Park." The opportunities are limitless!

Sharing God's Word

Opportunity abounds for inviting friends to events as well. What a marvelous time to share your Savior—and your friends—with someone! Don't forget to make numerous introductions—you never know what connections the Lord will use to plant the seed of his Word.

When is the best time to gather everyone together? Saturday mornings work well for many. Sunday afternoons find fathers at home to watch children while moms are away. Some churches are finding weeknights suit women who like to keep weekends for family time. When meeting in the evening, keep in mind the "Miss Daisies" in your midst and provide carpools. Also offer childcare as often as possible. If you hold three to four events during the year, vary your times so as many as possible may attend.

In the planning of an event, you will begin to realize more fully the many gifted women in your midst.

Some women love to plan, while others will pray for the planning. Those with craft skills will help create prayer journals, while someone else stands ready to lead the group in prayer. Your musicians will eagerly choose songs, while others prepare and lead the Bible study. Women with graphic arts experience can put out a lovely invitation or assemble a PowerPoint presentation.

Opportunities exist for women of all ages at a gathering of this type. I recently witnessed a 12-year-old begging her mother to attend an evening worship for women. Young women of confirmation age can be involved in music and dramas, can pour coffee, or can read the Scriptures. Slightly younger girls love to care for infants and children. Women of all ages play instruments, create culinary delights, or ham it up in a funny skit. Keep opportunities open and involve as many as possible. You will find that an assortment of gifts from godly women of all ages blend together for a memorable infusion!



Jane Schlenvogt is a member at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.



IS A WOMEN'S EVENT RIGHT FOR YOUR CONGREGATION?

Coordinating a women's event may be a good idea if women in your congregation are looking for

- a way to broaden their circle of friendships and deepen their relationships with other women;
- further Bible study;
- an avenue to share Christ with a co-worker, neighbor, or friend; or
- a way to fit some "girl-time" into their busy schedules.

LIVING WORD

JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE

The “Just Do It” congregation

Laura C. Warmuth

Free from concerns about trespassing on territory or breaking tradition, men and women alike enter the church kitchen at Living Word to prepare for a potluck. Coming from a congregation that “committed everything to death,” David and Terry Ensminger were refreshed by this scene. This young congregation isn’t much for meetings and agendas, and its traditions are still being formed. If there is a task at hand, members step forward to get it done. That’s just one reason that Jim Malone, a member who transferred from a large Midwest congregation, labeled Living Word the “Just Do It” congregation.

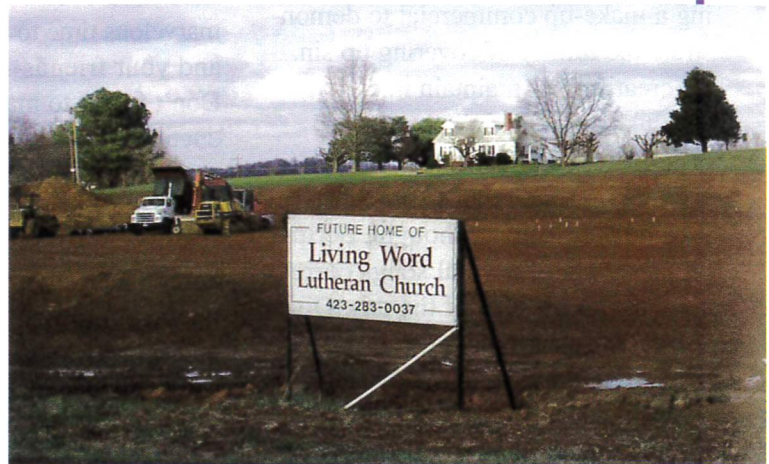
Just share it

Johnson City, Tenn., is a predominately Baptist, Bible-belt town where Lutherans are either unheard of or thought of as “something like a Catholic, right?” In the late 1980s when Dick Conger and several other WELS members began gathering in a visitor’s center, he remembers being asked, “What’s that cult you’re a part of?”

Since the Board for Home Missions assigned Pastor Thomas Kock to start Living Word in 1992, the congregation has been demonstrating to the community that being a Lutheran means being firmly rooted in God’s Word. Lutheranism is not just “Catholic lite” as one visitor understood it. And no, you don’t have to be from Wisconsin to belong to the Wisconsin Synod.

Living Word began sharing the gospel with six to eight months of aggressive outreach. Members personally knocked on hundreds of doors and phone canvassed over 4,000 homes with the help of St. Mark, Watertown, Wis. Members continue to do a large canvass four times a year and send mailings to prospects for holidays, vacation Bible school, and Friendship Sunday. Kock explains, “I’ve yet to meet a person who went to a church he’d never heard of.” A Travel Canvass Witness team helps once a year too.

“Outreach is hard work,” Kock shares, “but it isn’t difficult to understand. You just keep going back and going back and going back. . . .”



Living Word is in the process of building its first church facility. Until now, members have rented a church for their services.

No matter how many times you knock on a door, though, it is God’s power that calls souls. One man came to worship at Living Word because of a commercial he had seen—but Living Word had never advertised on TV. Another couple became interested in Lutheranism after taking a “Reformations of the 16th Century” class for which they read Luther’s *Bondage of the Will*. In this way, God led David Ensminger, a former pastor in both the Methodist and Disciples of Christ churches, and his wife, Terry, who was raised Catholic, to Living Word. They appreciate the solid teaching, definite boundaries, and adherence to law and gospel at Living Word.

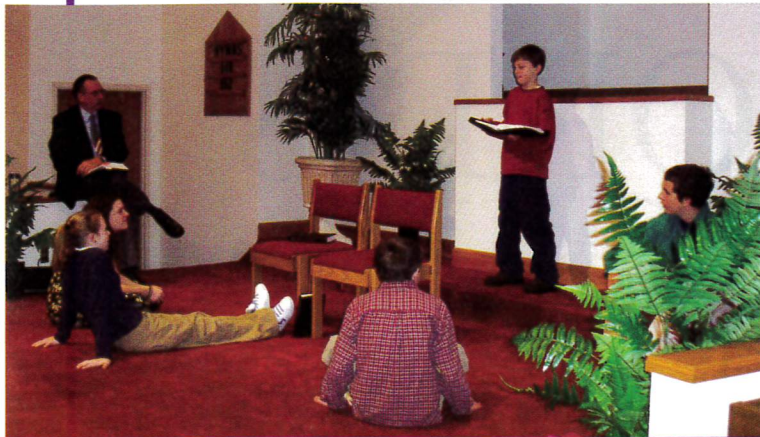
Just learn it

A firm foundation in God’s Word is this and every congregation’s greatest asset. That’s why Kock emphasizes adult Bible study as the single most important hour in a congregation’s week. “As we study the Word,” Kock says, “God himself motivates us to share the Word with others, to love each other, and to be wise stewards of the gifts he has given us. So we seek to aggressively grow in the Word of God.”

Sunday is a two-hour event at Living Word—worship and study. Fifty of the 75 worshippers stay for Sunday school. Opportunities are also available for Bible study three nights a week. Twelve members are enrolled in the

congregational evangelist program, which covers topics ranging from the life of Luther and the Catechism to Christian leadership and proper application of law and gospel. Finally, by holding vacation Bible school in the evenings, adults and children alike can come to learn about their Savior.

“Living Word is unabashedly biblical,” Terry Ensminger says. “They are compassionate and understanding, but they won’t change their standards because they make some people uncomfortable. Having been in churches where those standards have gone by the wayside, we felt like we came home to a solid, secure place at Living Word.”



Sunday school students rehearse a skit in a class led by member Dave Ensminger.

Just live it

The name Living Word describes not only this congregation’s message, but also its many messengers. As the living Word works in members’ hearts, they are motivated to live the Word.

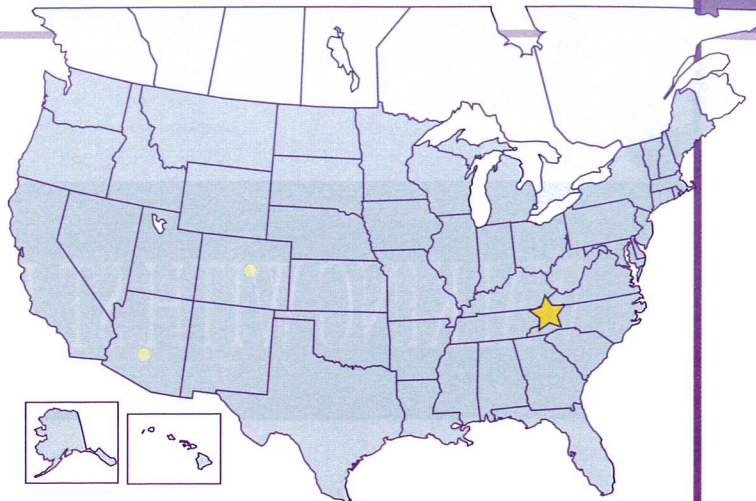
Living Word tries to equip each member to live the Word, whether that’s teaching Sunday school or playing the trumpet, serving on the board or attending LW Squared (Living Word Lutheran Women).

Sometimes living one’s faith requires a bit of encouragement. When opportunity arose to lead Sunday morning worship at an assisted living center, Kock, of course, had other obligations. With a bit of encouragement and guidance, member Joe Hicks prepared sermonettes and led the residents in worship. Now six men from the congregation share in this ministry.

From intensive care nurses to stockbrokers, Living Word is full of talented and busy members. They give their time generously to the work of the church.

God bless it

When God gives the opportunity to “just do it,” he blesses the efforts in his way. One physical blessing for the congregation is being constructed right now: their first facility. The stem of the “T”-shaped building



★ Featured congregation ○ Congregation already featured

QUICK FACTS

Living Word:

- has 100 communicant members.
- has 138 baptized members.
- called Thomas Kock as the first pastor in May 1992.
- held its opening worship service in March 1993.
- rented worship space from the Johnson City Seventh Day Adventist congregation since its beginning.
- is made up of mostly adult confirmands with a variety of church backgrounds.
- is in a city of around 300 churches, including about 200 Baptist.
- has members who travel up to 75 minutes to get to worship and Sunday school each week.

will be a gymnasium suitable for both worship and fellowship. The wings will include classrooms, offices, bathrooms, and a kitchen. About a year after its completion, members hope to open a preschool and/or daycare center. Optimistic that the Lord will continue to bless their growth, they are building for easy expansion.

With growth come new challenges. The congregation has taken on a large debt to put up its facility, but members know it is worth it to expand their ministry. Also, in their transition from being a small church to a mid-sized church, Kock says that they are “trying to keep the blessings of smallness (i.e., family atmosphere and the ability to keep a close spiritual watch on each other), yet continue to grow in numbers and strength so that we can bring the Word of God to more people in more ways.”

That’s what this and every WELS congregation is all about—getting the Word of God to sinners. They just share it. Just learn it. Just live it. And when they “just do it” with his pure Word, God blesses their efforts.



Laura Warmuth is a member at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.



WALKING WITH ST. JOHN



CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5

OUR LORD'S PASSION

The Lord's passion and resurrection give the entire Gospel history its reason for existence.

Theodore J. Hartwig

John's Gospel, like the other three, culminates in the history of our Lord's passion and resurrection. The culmination has higher significance than bringing Jesus' life on earth to its close. Without the passion and resurrection, the rest of his life would mean little more than the story of a remarkable person. Without the passion and resurrection, it is quite possible that his name would have receded into oblivion. Without the passion and resurrection, his apostles could never have declared to their persecutors, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The Lord's passion and resurrection give the entire Gospel history its reason for existence.

In writing of these final events, John again supplies details omitted in the other Gospels. Here is another silent testimony to the trustworthiness of his work. Liars resort to

vagueness. Details would trip up their claims of truth-telling. But John pours on the details, 16 in the passion story not recorded elsewhere. He was there.

In writing of these final events, John again supplies details omitted in the other Gospels.

His record also leads hearers to larger truths behind the events that he witnessed. We see people unwittingly fulfilling God's plan for the kind of death Jesus must suffer and for the safekeeping of his dead body from exposure to birds of prey. We also see him who at the beginning of this Gospel is called the Lamb of God now put to death in close connection

with the Passover festival. Thus he fulfilled what all Old Testament Passover lambs foreshadowed.

No one takes my life from me (18:1-27)

The author's record of events at a place that he alone calls an olive grove centers on two vital truths about Jesus. In the first place, he is totally in charge of all the proceedings. He chooses the garden where Judas will be sure to find him. He approaches the formidable posse heavily armed to arrest him. He demonstrates by the sheer power of his word how easily he could thwart their designs. He proves, as stated in John 10:18, that no one takes his life from him, but that he lays it down of his own will.

Secondly, Jesus provides for the protection of his own. He requests that his friends be allowed to leave in



peace. Jesus' words to sword-wielding Peter, who here alone is identified by name, apply to personal relationships. It is the government's responsibility, not the individual's, to mete out retribution, even more true in this case where government is the heavenly Father's will. To renounce all use of the sword, as some people with a fuzzy-minded notion of sin interpret Jesus' words, is to invite social chaos and catastrophe.

The arraignment before Annas, past and future holder of the high priest's office, could indicate deference to the real power behind the cabal of politicians who dominated the Jewish high council. Jesus' reply to Annas exhibits the impudence of the man's questions. Jesus' teachings were out in the open. His fellowship was no secret society nor subversive agency, as future enemies would charge. His honesty, however, provokes unwarranted abuse. The slap by one of Annas's underlings primes the pump for all the craven maltreatment Jesus endures after that.

True to form, John does not identify himself as the unnamed disciple on familiar terms with the high priest. Because of what happened to Peter, John must have commiserated his part in securing his friend's entrance into the courtyard. Yet the story of denial needed telling on

account of Peter's boast at the Last Supper and of his reinstatement after the resurrection.

I find no basis for a charge against him (18:28–19:16)

The trial before Pilate receives its most thorough treatment in John's Gospel. The Lord not of this world stands before an agent of this world's presumed lord. John tells the story as a series of testimonies regarding Jesus and of frustrations on the part of his judge. The testimonies highlight the Scripture-ordained method of Jesus' execution, the otherworldly nature of his kingdom, and the exalted purpose of his ministry. The frustrations include Pilate's two attempts to pass the buck, his incomprehension of Jesus' calling, and his scheme to play on the people's sympathy. Each private interview convinces him that Jesus is innocent, each public announcement of this fact hardens the Jews in their obduracy.

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled (19:17-42)

The skull-reminiscent place of execution and the sign in three languages invite meditation on truths that John did not want overlooked. The four spoils-sharing soldiers under the cross are balanced by the four grieving yet courageous women near the cross. That Jesus committed the care of his mother to John implies that the Lord's siblings had not yet

committed themselves to their older brother. His cry for refreshment is another testimony that he would meet his last hour of his own accord and would not let death overtake him by stealth.

John then invites his readers to note how these final calamities which began in a garden also end in a garden, how Jesus is buried in a manner befitting a king, and how Jewish burial customs, which left the body intact, are strictly followed. All this in preparation for what would happen three days later.



Theodore Hartwig, a member of St. John, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a professor emeritus at Martin Luther College, New Ulm.

More on John's Gospel: The movie *The Gospel of John* is available on VHS or DVD. It recreates the entire Gospel word for word in a free translation. This movie is useful for church libraries, Bible studies, meetings, worship. Nearly three hours long, it can be shown in smaller parts. It is highly authentic, although the producers curiously put Mary Magdalene at the Last Supper and at Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. To order, go to www.gospelofjohnthefilm.com.

The Great Commission

From the rolling greens and shimmering blues of Galilee to the hustle in 21st-century North America, Jesus' Great Commission has not lost

Mark A. Paustian

“**T**herefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matthew 28:19,20).

What did it mean to be the Christian Church just then? The question is designed to erase the 2,000 intervening years as if nothing at all, to return us to the thing itself, to what all this has been about from the start. What did it mean to be a gathering of disciples just then, to stand on that mountain above the rolling greens and shimmering blues of Galilee, to look into that face, lately drained of all life . . . but, Lord, not any more . . . and to hear that Great Commission? From this high place, by the holy breeze blowing through the words, it opens.

The cloudless worldview of the one who made the world. This worldview that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to this God, this Galilean man. That this very Jesus who willed his own crucifixion for you, only for you, can do whatever he wants in heaven and whatever he wants on earth.

What he wants more than anything else are disciples called out from every nation on God's earth. It is the very reason the world turns at all. No one is exempt from the need, nor was any sinner left out of the sacrifice of Christ or excluded from his desire. He would wash them down to their very souls by pure baptismal water, holding them in the costly

embrace of the Father who made them, the Son who redeemed them, the Spirit who sanctifies them. All nations. You never have to ask about any Muslim or European, any Asian, or for that matter, any American, “For this one?” Yes, this one.

Every last thing the Teacher said remains to the end, never to be unsaid. His every command is meant to echo to all the poor in spirit. To listen to him. To trust him. To love as we are loved. To rejoice that our names are written in heaven. To take up our cross and follow him. To serve. To abandon worry. To pray and never give up. To let the children come to him and to love our enemies and to forgive every brother from the heart. To eat the bread often and drink the cup. To remember him, and not to be afraid. We are his body, and these are the impulses that come from Christ our Head.

Teach them to obey everything. “And I” he says so emphatically seizing and filling our gaze, “am with you always,” literally, “the whole of every day.” And this, to the very completion of time. You never have to ask, “Today?” “Even now?” Especially now.

Call it the “God-so-loved-the-world view,” all that is made so crystal clear again and so certain on that mountain in Galilee where he told us to meet him. To encounter the risen Jesus is to become aware of every

thought that needs to be rethought and every aspect of life that must be looked at fresh in the light of salvation. That people are souls bought by the blood of God's Son. That this present age, the time of grace for the world itself, is ending. That these numbered days are made for calling the lost ones out of darkness to his wonderful light.

Then comes eternity. What life itself is all about . . . because of Christ in Galilee.

So let's take a fresh look at ourselves and at the places we scattered disciples now congregate, here at the far end of the age. Have you ever driven through a mission field in some increasingly pagan region of the world, where most people, God help them, do not believe? Were you overwhelmed by the spiritual need? Did the local customs you witnessed—the false gods the natives adored and the level of their chilling devotion—both fascinate and horrify? Have you ever worshiped at a beleaguered mission outpost purposefully plunked down by Christ in the middle of a Christ-less society? I submit that you have, every one of you who reads this. Though you've never left the boundaries of North America, you “therefore go” on your way in one of the “all nations” that is always held in the mind of Christ.

The Great Commission, the noble purpose that is no less urgent in the

ion—then and now

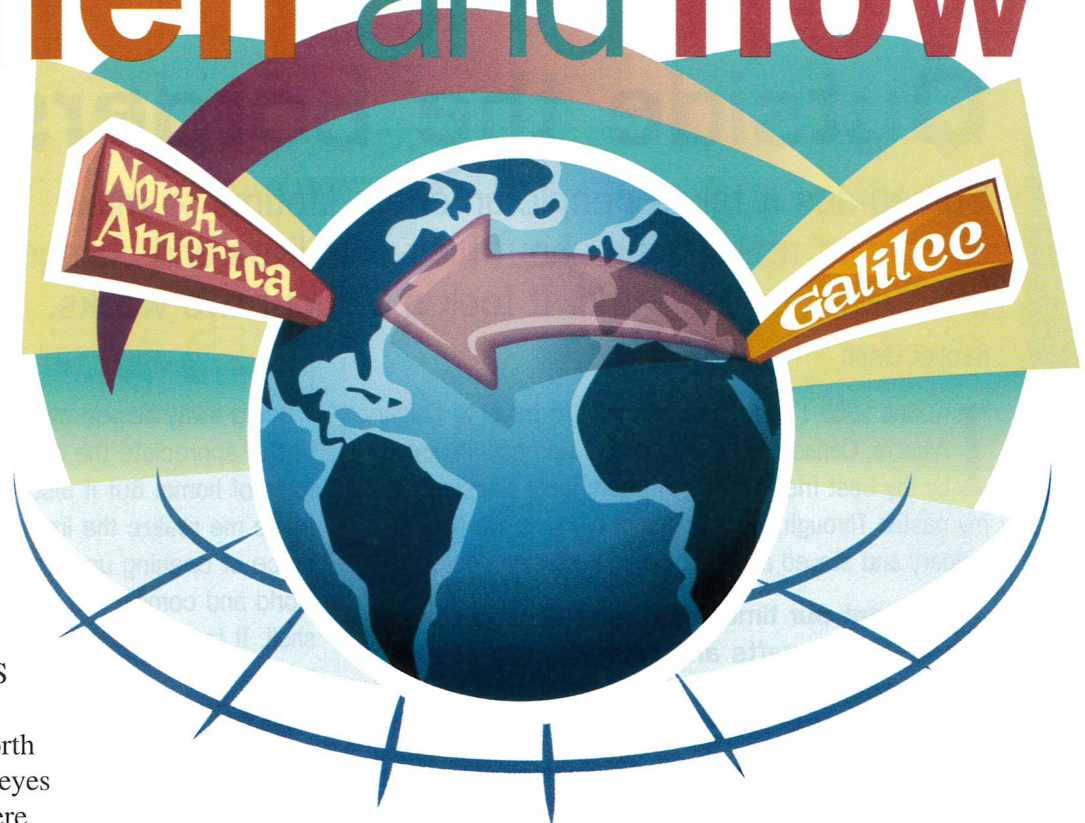
le and bustle of life
its urgency.

United States than in India or Cameroon, belongs also to your home congregation. The love of Christ compels you, such as you are, right where you are, to work together with other believers in your fellowship to make disciples for your Lord.

Indeed, “Every church is a mission.”

That is the theme we in WELS have chosen for this first year in our four-year commitment to North American outreach. Turning our eyes toward the work of the gospel here at home does not mean turning away from our mission to the rest of the world. That’s not what is in our hearts.

We long to seize the opportunities in North America and to give serious thought to our church body’s declining membership at home, in part, because here is the base of support for our mission to the world now and in years to come. The gifts for that work are largely given here, if at all. Future missionaries, we fervently pray, are growing up around our own kitchen tables. The United States is still the great cultural tapestry that people of “all nations” seek out more than any other place in the world, to take back with them whatever we have to give. And here, where we are 400,000 strong, what a difference it will make, the more we see every WELS church as a mission-arm.



What it means for your congregation specifically is that you will be visited by someone in leadership from your district who will facilitate an important conversation: how might your local church participate in this emphasis on North American outreach? Unhinge your mind. Speak freely. How can you at fill-in-the-blank Lutheran Church more aggressively pursue your own spiritual growth in Jesus, for the sake of your own souls and for those nearby who will need you to be strong? And what do you want to do, in your own congregation, to hold out the Word of Christ?

Of the 10,000 possibilities that come from a gracious God for serving the work of the gospel and for pleasing him, which will you choose? In all the nations of the world, how

will you clearly display the signs in this one, that you remember Galilee?

Let’s have this heart to heart in all the congregations of our dear synod. Let’s *do something* for our God to bless as he will, and let’s do it in utter dependence on his Word, in that blending of sorrow and gratitude that is our Christian life.

For the big facts of Jesus and salvation are not touched by budget shortfalls nor diminished by a world of institutional woes. All authority is his. His eye is on all nations. *Every* word he ever said still holds.

And he is with us . . . the whole of every day.



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

WHATEVER

Outside the borders

Sometimes it takes people an entire lifetime to make **significant realizations** about their own lives and **change** their **views** on the world. It took me about two weeks.

Rachel Dehn

In June 2003 I had the opportunity to travel to Calgary, Alberta, Canada, for two weeks. I was accompanied by my best friend, two guys from local churches, and my pastor. Through WELS Kingdom Workers, we flew to Calgary and stayed at the home of a mission pastor.

We spent our time organizing vacation Bible school (VBS) crafts and lessons, canvassing, and distributing flyers. We knocked on hundreds of strangers' doors to speak with them about the church we were helping. It was an instant shock to discover that a vast majority of the population had never been to church and was not interested in attending one in the future.

It made me realize that we have a subconscious tendency to shut ourselves into our own little world, whether we realize it or not. We pay little or no attention to those who may not be like us. We confine ourselves to this false reality that the entire world consists of people like us, and when we come into contact with people who defy our system of thinking, we cannot comprehend the differences.

Many children attended VBS, where we had the opportunity to tell them about Jesus and God's Word. For most of these children, the idea of any sort of religion was entirely new. This rewarding experience made me realize what it felt like to be the one on the giving side instead of the receiving end of having an impact on someone's life.

We also had a chance to go hiking in the mountains with other teenagers from area churches. We journeyed up the mountain with complete strangers, and we came down with lifelong friends. These people really had a lasting effect on me, and I will never stop cherishing them. The 10-mile hike itself was a challenge, but I learned that with the support of people I had just met, I could do it.

new

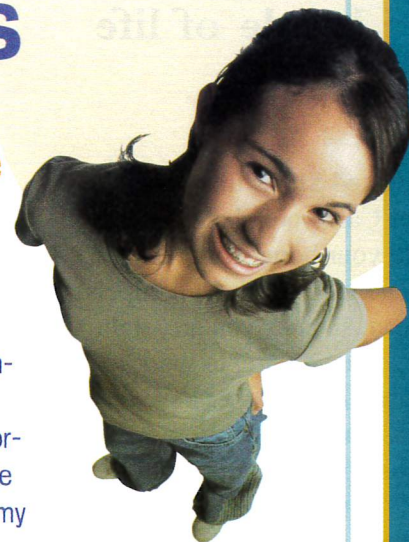
Being away helped me better appreciate the comforts of home. But it also made me realize the importance of opening up to the world and coming out of my shell. It taught me to be more open-minded and accepting of other people.

I have realized that every new experience is like a test. Whenever I go through something new, it questions everything I have known and believed before. It changes my takes on life, friendship, religion—my views on the world as a whole. I have learned that sometimes the most rewarding times in my life are not when I do something for myself but when I help others.

No matter where people are, they seclude themselves. Whether in school, work, church, or neighborhoods, certain people or groups will be shut out for one reason or another. This world is made up of so many types of people and cultures, and it is a blessing to observe one that is not familiar or common and to share the Savior, who is common to all.

This trip helped me to also better appreciate my faith and the confidence I have in my Savior. Now I have seen how many do not know him and how sometimes it is an overbearing challenge to get through to people. Those two weeks drastically changed my views and understanding of the world and the people who have had an impact on me.

□ Rachel Dehn, a senior at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wisconsin, is a member at Mount Olive, Appleton.



experiences

Be a good buoy

We need to be flashing the light of the gospel and clanging the bell of salvation through Christ, as we guide the weary traveler to safe haven and home.

Reynold Heuer

The captain piloted his vessel over the rough and unforgiving waters. Now, near the end of his journey, he longed for the open sea where he could gaze from horizon to horizon and fantasize that his was the only ship on the face of the great ocean. Clear sailing and a straight course.

Such was no longer the case, for as he came closer to port, winds grew in force, the harbinger of a storm that was fast approaching. The waves and wind battered his ship, threatening to drive him off course. Coming closer to land the water became shallower. Sandbars and shoals waited on either side of the narrow channel ready to ground his ship, or worse, rend its hull and send it to the bottom. Only the trusty and ever present buoy stood between port and certain disaster. Solitary and steadfast, the buoy marked the safe passage home.

Christians are like buoys

Ever think about this lowly servant of the seas? This lonely, never tiring, road sign? Ever wonder why they are where they are and how they manage, through storm and tide, to always be there, ready to guide the tired sailor safely into port? After all, who would want to be a buoy?

Actually, you should.

A Christian has much in common with this trusty servant. Like the buoy we often find ourselves being tossed to and fro on the sometimes tumultuous

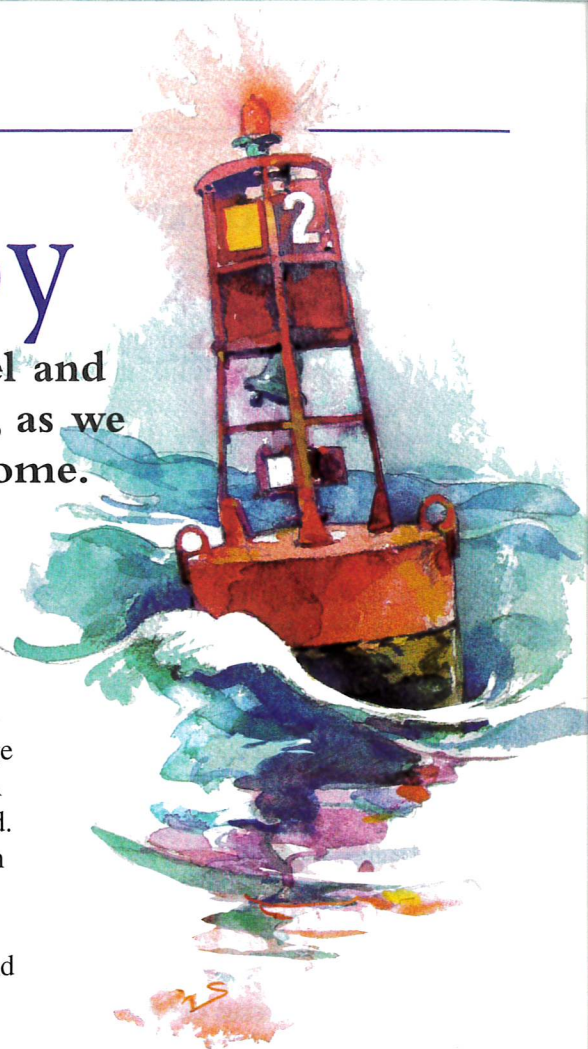
sea of life. Our service can be calm and serene, but more often it is challenging, or seemingly impossible, as we are tossed about on raging seas. A buoy manages to maintain its position because it is chained to a huge anchor firmly seated on the seabed. A Christian's anchor is the Word of God. His chain is the chain of faith through Christ, holding us fast to the Father's Word. He keeps us firmly attached to our anchor, steadfast in our beliefs, and able to withstand the storms of life.

As Christians we must be the buoy—firmly chained to our Lord and anchored in his Word.

We need to shine during adversity

In calm seas under clear skies the buoy seems an unnecessary guidepost. However, in darkness or in stormy waters the buoy is a welcome and important escort to safe harbor and home. Its clanging bell and flashing lantern are sweet music and guiding rays of light to the weary traveler.

Is it not the same with Christians? If the world were a quiet, calm, and peaceful place, we might seem to be unnecessary—preaching peace to a world of calm. But this is not the case. The world is a place of unrest—a place where sin has taken hold—where storms and troubled seas



surround us. At such times the buoy becomes invaluable. As Christians we must be the buoy, firmly chained to our Lord and anchored in his Word. We are to be stationary and steadfast while the seas around us seethe and churn. The higher the seas the louder our bell, and the darker the night the brighter our beacon. We need to be flashing the light of the gospel and clanging the bell of salvation through Christ to the lost and floundering, as we guide the weary traveler to safe haven and home.

Give thanks for stormy seas and dark skies! Who needs a buoy when the sea is calm and the sun is shining? Stand fast in a sea of adversity. Ring your bell. Shine your light. Be a comfort and a guide to the lost. Be a good buoy!



Rennie Heuer is a member at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.

The best outreach opportunity in 2,000 years?

You've imagined it in your mind's eye hundreds of times. Every Lenten season you spend weeks focusing on it. Yet you've never seen it like this.

The Passion of the Christ, created and directed by Mel Gibson, depicts the last 12 hours of Jesus' suffering on earth. From the Garden of Gethsemane to the top of Golgotha, you follow Jesus on his journey to the cross. Along the way, Gibson does not spare viewers from the graphic brutality that characterizes this event. Although this makes the movie visually disturbing, it also makes it real and meaningful.

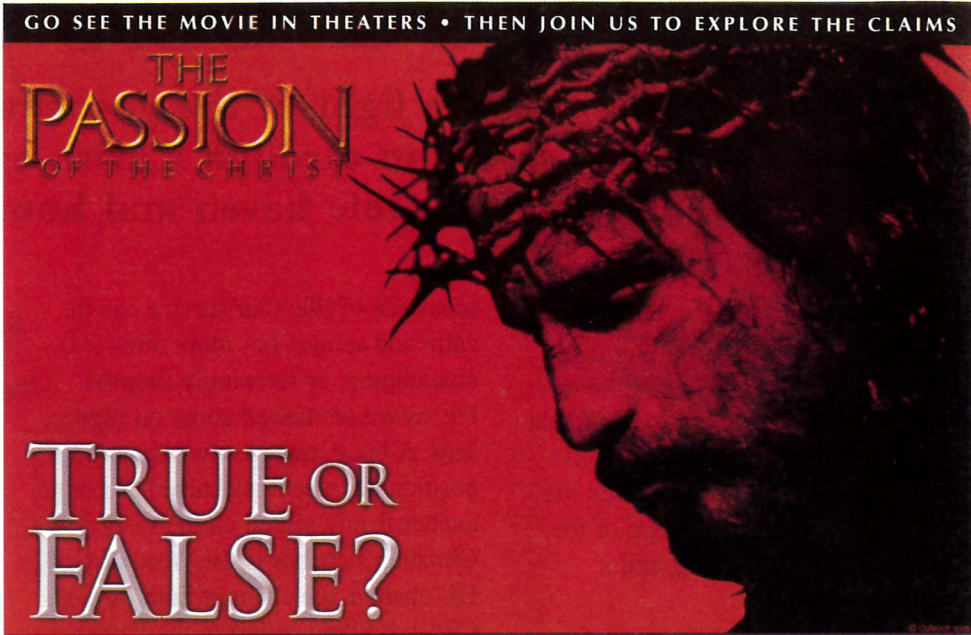
"You can't see this movie without being moved to tears," says Richard Kogler, pastor at St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif. "Jesus' sacrificial death for you comes across clearly throughout the entire movie."

"This movie will help people better appreciate what Jesus did for us," explains Dan Schroeder, pastor at Risen Savior, Chula Vista, Calif. "It's an intense movie, but it is thankfully broken up by flashbacks about Jesus' ministry, which really bring out the gospel message."

It is that deeper appreciation for Jesus' sacrifice and the way in which the movie reminds you of your part in his suffering that make the graphic brutality endurable. The movie is rated R, though—and rightfully so.

Primarily because of Gibson's fame, the movie will receive extensive media coverage. It opens in major theaters across the United States on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 25). Hailed as "perhaps the best outreach opportunity in 2,000 years," by Outreach, Inc., *The Passion* is likely to leave non-Christians with questions—which is where Outreach, Inc., believes that Christian churches should come in. Outreach, Inc., a Christian marketing provider, is encouraging churches to use the film as a way to start a dialogue with unbelievers

GO SEE THE MOVIE IN THEATERS • THEN JOIN US TO EXPLORE THE CLAIMS



THE
PASSION
OF THE CHRIST

TRUE OR
FALSE?

In Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, Jim Caviezel (pictured above) plays Jesus. This postcard, produced by Outreach, Inc., is one of the many resources available to congregations to promote the movie as part of their Lenten outreach campaigns.

about who Jesus is and what his life and death mean for us.

WELS pastors who previewed this movie vary in the ways that they plan on using the movie in their congregations. Robert Balza, pastor at Eternal Love, Appleton, Wis., is cautious about promoting the movie to his members. "The gospel was proclaimed in it—there's no doubt about that," he says. "But it is very graphic, and there were a couple of additions to the Gospel accounts that I'm concerned about."

On the other hand, Schroeder is excited about using it as an outreach opportunity in his community. He is planning on using some of the movie's outreach materials to spark interest in attending Risen Savior's Lent and Easter services. Using the theme "True or False?", Schroeder plans on answering moviegoers' questions about Jesus' Passion in a sermon series that will run three weeks before Easter and culminate with his Easter sermon.

Joel Schulz, pastor at Cross of Life, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, is probably taking the most popular route. He is organizing a group outing to see the movie for Cross of Life's members and prospects. After the film, moviegoers will discuss what they saw. Schulz is also encouraging members to take unchurched friends to see it and then go out afterwards to answer their friends' questions about the movie and about Christianity.

After viewing the movie myself, I am confident that anyone who sees it will approach this Lenten season with a whole new outlook on Jesus' suffering and death. I can still hear the hammer pounding the nails into Jesus' hands. Each time the hammer struck iron, I knew that it was my sins that drove those nails into Jesus' hands. Living my life for him seems even more important after witnessing what he sacrificed for me.

For more information, go to www.thepassionofchrist.com.

Nicole Balza

Bulgarian missionaries to be withdrawn

The WELS Board for World Missions decided to withdraw the current expatriate missionary team from Bulgaria by the beginning of the next fiscal year (July 1, 2004). Unresolved issues over administrative matters, budget concerns, and field planning all contributed to the decision.

This decision affects 3.5 missionary positions. One of these missionaries, John Roebke, has already accepted a call to a state-side congregation. Two others, Michael Bartsch and Paul Metzger, will return no later than the end of June 2004. Retired Pastor Gary Haag, who worked half-time in the seminary program, will also return.

Enough budgetary money has been retained to allow for continued spiritual assistance to the field. The Administrative Committee for

Japan Europe Asia Missions intends to call a "Friendly Counselor" to Bulgaria to provide support and guidance to the national pastor and church leaders during this transition. This pastor will mentor the national leaders, supervise doctrine, monitor ministry activity, work to resolve trust issues between WELS and the Bulgarian Lutheran Church, and assess current and future ministry needs so that long-range plans can be determined.

"We are grateful for the dedicated pioneer work done by all our missionaries in Bulgaria," says Pastor Dan Koelpin, administrator for the Board for World Missions. "The Lord makes it clear that any labors for him are 'not in vain.'"

He continues, "Working in former communist countries like Russia, Bulgaria, and Albania continues to

be a new and learning experience for WELS World Missions. We make plans, but the Lord often shows us through our setbacks that he has a better one. Confident in the power of his Word, we remain open to his leading in changing circumstances and hope for the best."

If WELS had maintained the Bulgarian field at present strength, the progressing fields of Zambia and Malawi would have faced missionary withdrawals due to the need to balance the budget at a time of escalating costs.

The Bulgarian Lutheran Church, registered in 1994, had as many as five missionaries and 190 members. In recent months the average weekly attendance has dipped under 100.

Meet the editorial staff—uncut—

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

Sent to serve

"Yes, I'm from Milwaukee, where so many of us are from," admits Tom Jeske, *Forward in Christ's* newest editorialist. His roots may be in the dairy state, but Jeske soon experienced Rocky Mountain highs and Grand Canyon lows as he went from Arizona to Colorado to Nebraska, serving WELS.

"Wherever you go, you run into God's people," says Jeske, "and they will be grateful that you have shared [his Word] with them."

One year after graduating from the seminary in 1984, Jeske married soil scientist Liz Malone. Six years passed without the pitter-patter of little feet, and "we didn't really

think we were going to have any children. We were getting used to that idea." Think again.

First God sent Matthias, then August, Peter, and finally Hannah, a Korean orphan the Jeskes adopted in 2000. "When we heard about Hannah's need for a family, we thought, 'How hard can this be? We'll just set one more cereal bowl on the table.'"

Currently, the Jeskes reside in Omaha, Neb., where Jeske serves Living Hope, a small congregation of around 100 members. His hobbies? "I used to have some, but it's getting harder and harder to remember what they were! I spend time picking up Legos and putting puzzles and books back on the shelves. There's also a canoe in the backyard with a hole in the hull."



Tom Jeske and his family. Back row (from left): wife Liz and son Matthias. Front row (from left): daughter Hannah and sons Peter and August.

He may not be prepared for a spontaneous canoe trip, but Jeske is prepared to serve God's family, no matter what the coming years may hold. As he notes, "the Lord Jesus protects and provides, even when events are unsettled or the future is unclear."

Elizabeth Hudock

Looking back—

In this, the magazine's 90th anniversary, we bring you articles and news from previous issues.

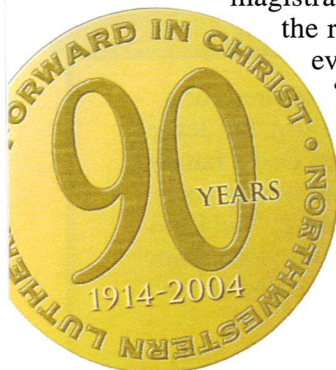
From the Nov. 21, 1937, issue— *Radio and crime*

"The whole nation for some time has been stirred by the 'crime wave' that is sweeping our country. . . . Those who because of their peculiar office must deal with it daily—the judges of our courts—are especially interested in its 'cause.' Needless to say that most of the 'crime specialists' disregard the one basic cause of crime—the corruption of the human nature through sin, the flesh 'in which dwelleth no good thing.'

"Recently Circuit Judge William F. Shaughnessy of Milwaukee, speaking before the Knights of Columbus in South Milwaukee, listed the radio among the four principal causes for juvenile delinquency and crime. The other causes mentioned by him are, 'lack of parental attention, divorce, and movies.' Judge Shaughnessy will have no trouble finding hearty agreement among those who have given this matter any thought.

"When the honorable judge stresses 'lack of parental attention' as one of the causes of crime, of course, he has included every other cause. If this were not the case all the other contributing causes would have little chance to influence the children. But—Judge Shaughnessy is, to our knowledge, the first civil

magistrate to impugn the radio and its ever increasing 'crime programs.' Parents may well weigh the words of the judge and very seriously ponder them."



Congregation Mission Offerings reach almost \$20 million

In 2003, WELS congregations gave nearly \$20 million for the worldwide mission and ministry of WELS.

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) totaled \$19,799,705 in 2003, an increase of more than \$1 million from 2002 (5.7 percent) and more than \$1.9 million (almost 10 percent) from 2001.

"We thank the congregations for their increased support," says Pastor Ron Roth, administrator for the Commission for Communication on Financial Support. "They have taken to heart the message of God's Great Commission and have been willing to support this with increased dollars."

Congregation Mission Offerings is the largest, most important income source for the synod's ministry program. Other income comes from tuition and fees from our ministerial education schools, bequests, individual mission offerings, Mission Partners, and foundations.

A recent revenue forecast for our current fiscal year (July 1, 2003-June

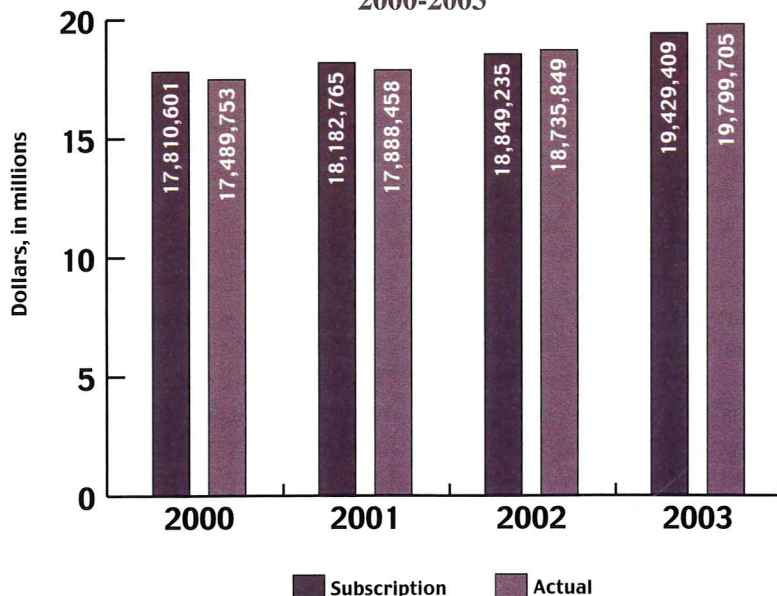
30, 2004) shows that bequests are behind by \$300,000 and that tuition and fees are holding steady. Mission Partners has raised over \$1 million in the past six months, but still has a way to go to meet its \$3 million goal. The Schwan Foundation has increased its support in this fiscal year by \$600,000.

The synod is working to hold its spending to two to three percent below budget for this fiscal year. Financial challenges will continue into the next fiscal year (July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005) as WELS continues to phase in the called worker compensation plan, deal with increased health care costs, and factor in inflation.

Says President Karl Gurgel, "While we see the challenges, with the eyes of faith, we focus on the Lord's promise to bless every effort to proclaim his Word in the world."

For current, in-depth financial statements, go to <www.wels.net>, jumpword "fin."

Congregation Mission Offerings
Actual vs. subscription
2000-2003



WELS news briefs

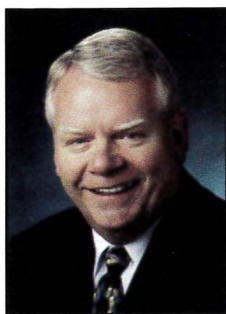
These updates are from the offices of the synod administration building. You can contact these offices and administrators at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Support Services

414/256-3250

Support Services is continuing its search for a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for WELS, as directed by the synod convention. An offer was extended to a WELS member, but was declined in December.

Meanwhile Carl Rudolph, a recently retired member of Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis., is serving as interim CFO. A long-time employee of Aid Association for Lutherans, he most recently served as Chief Financial Officer for Thrivent Financial for



Lutherans. He also is a financial consultant.

Carl Rudolph is acting as WELS' interim Chief Financial Officer while the search continues for a permanent CFO.

Conference of Presidents

414/256-3201

This fall WELS received a request from President Gerald Kieschnick of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to pursue doctrinal discussions.

After prayerful consideration by the Conference of Presidents and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, WELS declined the invitation to meet at the present time. Says WELS President Karl Gurgel, "From a distance, humbly but without hesitation, we hold out the inspired, errorless truth. We long for the day when, on the basis of God's revealed truth alone, we can seek to reestablish a biblically supported fellowship."

District news

North Atlantic

On Nov. 23, 2003, members of **Shepherd of the Bay, Lusby, Md.**, dedicated the land where they are planning on building their worship facility. The congregation numbers more than 110 souls.

On Nov. 23, 2003, **Christ Redeemer, Trumbull, Conn.**, hosted a free sacred autumn concert. About 80 people attended, half of whom were not members.

On Dec. 20, 2003, **Messiah, South Windsor, Conn.**, held a Christmas carol sing-a-long to "slow things down" during the rush-filled holiday season. Messiah's members also provided food and hot beverages for community members. The event was publicized in the local media and Messiah plans on making this a South Windsor tradition.

Northern Wisconsin

At 6 PM on Tues., Jan. 6, a one-inch water pipe burst in the west side of **St. Mark, DePere, Wisconsin's**, worship area. Approximately 10,000 gallons of water rained down on padded pews, carpeting, flooring, and light fixtures. The DePere fire department stopped the flow of water approximately 14 minutes after it started. Professional cleaners extracted all the water from the church by 11 PM. Church services were held at the regular times the next weekend.

Dakota-Montana

Our Savior, Brookings, S.D., held its third annual Christmas for Kids in early December 2003. Many staff members were college students from South Dakota State University who participate in the WELS campus ministry there. Over 40 pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade students attended, including 28 non-members.

Happy anniversary!

NA—On Dec. 14, 2003, **Tree of Life, Cary, N.C.**, celebrated its fifth anniversary.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: D-M—Wayne Rouse; NA—Harland Goetzinger; NW—Joel Lillo.

North Atlantic



Tree of Life, Cary, N.C., conducted a "virtual Bethlehem" Friday and Saturday evenings in December 2003. Members converted six rooms to display Adam and Eve in the Garden, Gabriel coming to Mary, the Roman taxation, the angels coming to the shepherds, the nativity, and the visit of the wisemen. Visitors toured these rooms with an audio narrative from one of five perspectives: an angel, Mary, Joseph, a shepherd boy, or a village girl. More than 620 visitors experienced this virtual Bethlehem, 550 of whom had never been to Tree of Life before. Tree of Life received a Thrivent Financial for Lutherans grant from the Commission on Evangelism to help support this outreach effort, in which 85 percent of Tree of Life's members participated.

REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

In this section you'll hear news from missionaries that came via e-mail.

From Wayne Oblender, missionary in Russia:

There were a lot of changes in our mission field in Russia in 2003. At the beginning of the year, it was announced that one of our missionaries had to return to the States because of the synod's budget cuts. In response, the remaining missionaries were shuffled around, and it was determined that our family should move from Novosibirsk to Omsk.

We moved in August, and I immediately began serving St. Philip's Lutheran Church in Omsk. At first it seemed strange to worship in a new setting (where our organist is a computer and the congregation is my family and three or four others), but we are adjusting to it. Members are active in coming to church and love to sing praises to God. We pray that over time the congregation will grow in size and in its faith as we hear and study God's Word together.

I also make monthly visits to a group of believers located about an hour-and-a-half drive from Yekaterinburg. Twenty communicant members get together in a member's apartment for Bible classes and worship. To visit these people has been an adventure (a 12-hour train ride, one-way) and a wonderful experience (five baptisms and three confirmations).

Moving from Novosibirsk to Omsk meant finding a new school for our children. We found one not far from home that is similar to the one in Novosibirsk. Like the previous school, our children are at school from 8:30 AM until 6:00 PM. For the first few hours of the day, Nicholas (second grade) has lessons like math, Russian, science, phy-ed, English, and French. In the afternoon he takes part in various types of activities (dance, singing, piano, chess, and art). Zachary (kindergarten) follows a similar schedule. Even Natasha (preschool) is kept busy with dance, singing, and art. Our children have



Betsy, Peter, Zachary, Nicholas, Natasha, and Wayne Oblender.

made the adjustment to their new school and seem to like it.

God has given us the opportunity of offering weekly Bible classes to the 20 first and second graders in Nicholas's school, and the children seem to love the lessons. We also received permission to go to a German school in Omsk on Dec. 25 to talk to them about Christmas. We pray that the director will allow us to come regularly to this school so that we can conduct Bible lessons in English to its 31 students.

Sharing new ideas

"I can't believe there are so many exciting things going on in WELS," says Barry Spencer, a lay leader at Immanuel, Medford, Wis.

Spencer found out about these exciting things from Church and Change, a three-day conference in November when 180 WELS members—men and women, called workers and laity—came to share ministry ideas, encourage each other, and celebrate God's grace through Word and sacrament. It was funded by a grant from WELS' 150th anniversary thankoffering.

This was the fourth and final conference that was hosted in connection with the Board for Parish Services for WELS members who are carrying on innovative ministries. Its purpose? To encourage and enable WELS congregations

and individuals to better serve their Savior.

Cheryl Nelson from St. John, Minneapolis, Minn., appreciated that encouragement. "Church and Change has given me ideas and tools to take back to my congregation," she says.

Church and Change is more than a once-a-year conference. It's a clearinghouse for workable ministry models. Its Web site, <ChurchAndChange.org>, lists descriptions of hundreds of innovative approaches to ministry along with contacts for more information. Ideas on the Web site range from renting storefronts for conducting teen ministry to having members act out sketches before the sermon to prepare people for the answers that God's Word pro-



Participants at the 2003 Church and Change conference were given practical examples of programs they could do in their own churches. Here they had to line up chronologically 12 figures (that were inside "Easter eggs") that represented events of Holy Week.

vides to offering a "ladies' power hour" that combines Bible study with aerobics.

Idea sharing also happens year round on the organization's e-mail listserve.

James Aderman

Discover Taizé—

Sitting in silence, worshipers await the first melody from the cantor. As the song begins, they join in: some singing melody, some harmony, some in an entirely different language. Over and over again, the short song is repeated until the congregation eventually fades back to silence. . . .

Welcome to worship—Taizé style.

Since its inception in 1940 by a monastic of the Reformed tradition, the Taizé community has become recognized around the world for its reflective worship and music style. Taizé texts are based simply on the words of Scripture along with traditional liturgical phrases.

Atonement, Milwaukee, began offering once-a-month Taizé services in 2003. “We thought it would be a nice way to end the work week and still not take up people’s whole evenings,” says Mary Prange, director of music at Atonement. The 30- to 45-minute services allow for personal reflection and meditation, and attendees can immerse themselves in simple truths of God’s Word.

A Taizé service typically begins with one or two songs of praise followed by a psalm, readings, silence, prayers, and more songs. “It’s an easy service to plan,” says Fred Schmelzer, chairman of Atonement’s worship committee.

Worshippers light candles from the Christ Candle, signifying that Christ is the light of the world. At the end of the service, the candles return to the front of the sanctuary so the focus of the light is once more on Christ.

Atonement’s Taizé services have averaged 30 to 35 people each—from college students to retirees—according to Schmelzer. In September 2003, at a special Taizé service in remembrance of Sept. 11, one-third of the attendees were from outside the congregation.

Taizé worship at Atonement is planned through June 2004. For more information, contact Mary Prange at <mjprange@aol.com> or 414/973-9105.

Elizabeth Hudock

Obituaries

Donald E. Kolander 1925-2003

Donald Kolander was born March 17, 1925, in Marshfield, Wis. He died July 17, 2003, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1949 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served congregations in Valley City, N.D.; St. Paul, Minn.; Grand Blanc, Mich.; Pewaukee and Milwaukee, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Marlene; one daughter; and two brothers.

Winfred A. Koelpin 1919-2003

Winfred Koelpin was born June 18, 1919, in Shirley, Wis. He died Oct. 21, 2003, in Michigan.

A 1944 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served a mission in Toledo, Ohio; Immanuel, Mosinee, Wis.; Arlington Ave., Toledo, Ohio; and St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; two sons; two daughters; 14 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

Frederick A. Manthey 1911-2003

Frederick Manthey was born Sept. 20, 1911, in Milwaukee. He died Nov. 10, 2003, in Little Chute, Wis.

A 1932 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.; First German, Manitowoc, Wis.; Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.; Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie du Chien, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Irene; five daughters; a son; nine grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.

Arden R. Stuebs 1917-2003

Arden Stuebs was born May 13, 1917, in Kewaunee, Wis. He died Nov. 29, 2003, in Onalaska, Wis.

A 1941 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Christ, Denmark, Wis.; Immanuel, Town of Easton, Wis.; St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.; First Portland, Portland, Wis.; Trinity, Brillion, Wis.; and Grace, Le Sueur, Minn.

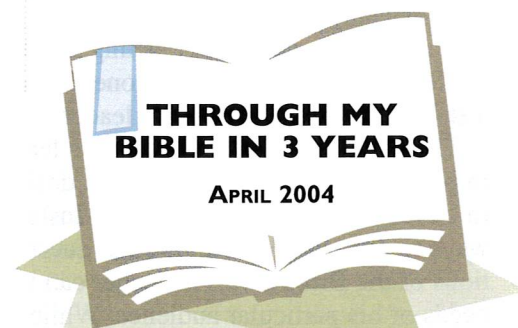
He is survived by his wife, Ora; two sons; three daughters; 21 grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren.

Carol E. Berg 1954-2003

Carol Berg (nee Malchow) was born June 23, 1954, in Eugene, Ore. She died Dec. 15, 2003, in Fond du Lac, Wis.

A 1976 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Grace, Pueblo, Colo.

She was preceded in death by her mother and is survived by her husband, Stephen; her father and stepmother; two sons; one daughter; one granddaughter; two sisters; one stepsister; and two stepbrothers.

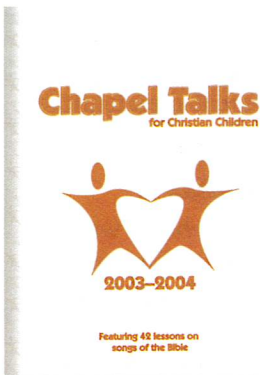


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|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Matthew 22:1-14 | 16. Matt. 28:1-20 |
| 2. Matt. 22:15-46 | 17. Jeremiah 26 |
| 3. Matt. 23:1-22 | 18. Jer. 27, 28 |
| 4. Matt. 23:23-39 | 19. Jer. 29 |
| 5. Matt. 24:1-31 | 20. Jer. 30:1-31:26 |
| 6. Matt. 24:32-25:13 | 21. Jer. 31:27-40 |
| 7. Matt. 25:14-46 | 22. Jer. 32, 33 |
| 8. Matt. 26:1-16 | 23. Jer. 34 |
| 9. Matt. 26:17-29 | 24. Jer. 35 |
| 10. Matt. 26:30-56 | 25. Jer. 36 |
| 11. Matt. 26:57-75 | 26. Jer. 37, 38 |
| 12. Matt. 27:1-14 | 27. Jer. 39-41 |
| 13. Matt. 27:15-31 | 28. Jer. 42, 43 |
| 14. Matt. 27:32-50 | 29. Jer. 44, 45 |
| 15. Matt. 27:51-66 | 30. Jer. 46, 47 |



A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit <www.nph.net> or call 1-800-662-6022.

Teaching children about worship



\$24.99

Chapel Talks for Christian Children helps leaders teach children about worship. This book gives a weekly devotion for Lutheran elementary school chapel services. It may also be used for Sunday School, vacation Bible school, or children's sermons.

Weekly devotions include an object lesson with visual aids, a message from God's Word (called the Bible Truth),

discussion and application questions, and a short order of service. These devotions are based on psalms and biblical songs that correlate to the church year.

Writing devotions for children varying in age from kindergarten through eighth grade can be challenging. The authors strive to reach all these children through the object lessons and visual aids. The object lessons are especially suited to young students. Some of the visual aids are excellent in setting up the Bible truth, while others are forced. Each one, however, does give a starting point for the chapel leader.

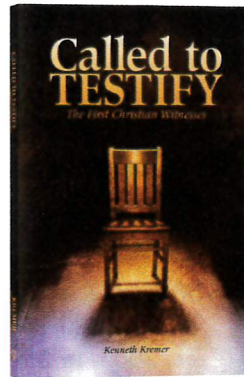
The Bible Truth section gives the leader flexibility in presentation. The authors didn't design the devotions to be read directly from the book. Instead they suggest ways to present the truth through questions and illustrations of the Bible text. The leader can then focus on the needs of his particular audience. While the devotions vary in depth, the focus on the law and especially the gospel is evident in each.

The worship section is this book's strong point. Devotions include copymasters for a short order of service. The Song of Praise repeats for several weeks so all the children can learn it. A hymn, prayer, and a responsive psalm fit the weekly theme. Each service concludes with the Lord's Prayer and the blessing. It is important that we teach children how to worship, and this book helps achieve that goal.

Sue Heinitz

St. Mark, Citrus Heights, California

Bible stories come to life



\$10.99

Imagination and research are two key components of Kenneth Kremer's new book, *Called to Testify: The First Christian Witnesses*.

Kremer masterfully fills in nine New Testament Scripture accounts with rich details that bring the stories to life. Although the accounts do not need these details to carry the Holy Spirit's life-changing power, they help 21st-century readers understand the culture in which the Bible's characters

were living. This understanding helps readers pick up on nuances of the stories that otherwise may not have made sense to them before.

A perfect example of this is the story of the 10 lepers in Luke 17:11-19. Kremer chooses to delve deeper into the life of the one leper who came back to thank Jesus. The story, told in the first person, describes the leper's life before, during, and after he has leprosy. Kremer helps convey the true horror of a leper's life during biblical times, helping readers to better understand the blessing that Jesus bestowed on these lepers as he healed them.

I believe this book is best suited for those who are already familiar with these Bible stories. I know that I best understood those stories that were most familiar to me, because even though Scripture references are provided for each story, I didn't read the book with a Bible handy.

Before reading the book, I expected it to more directly teach me about how to witness. I wouldn't buy it with that purpose in mind, but I would buy it to gain a deeper perspective on biblical life during Jesus' time.

Nicole Balza

St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Editor's note: This book also comes in a set (\$19.99) with a professionally-recorded audio CD so that you can listen to the book. The audio version alone costs \$12.99.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Kehl, David A., to Commission on Adult Discipleship administrator, Milwaukee
Kober, Michael M., to Gloria Dei, Memphis, Tenn.
Sordahl, Myron F., to Peace, Hartford, Wis. (retirement call)

Teachers

Eckert, Erin R., to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.
Jacobs, Paul S., to Zion, Chesaning, Mich.
Luehring, Jamie C., to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.
Pasbrig, Jonathan R., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Schoeneck, Jonathan R., to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.

ANNIVERSARIES

Flat Rock, Mich.—St. Mark (50). March 7. Service, 11 AM. Meal to follow. 734/782-3726.
Burnsville, Minn.—Good Shepherd (40). March 14. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Noon meal and program to follow. 952/432-5527.
Plymouth, Minn.—West LHS (25). May 8. All school reunion. May 9. Service, 2 PM. School office, 763/509-9378.

COMING EVENTS

Camps—for students who have just completed grades 6-8.

- **Music**—June 14-18. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Two years of keyboard experience required. John Paulsen, 507/354-8221, ext. 352.
- **Music**—June 13-18. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Prof. Randy Bode, 920/261-4352, ext. 129.
- **Science & technology**—July 5-9. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. For students who have a strong interest in science and technology. John Paulsen, 507/354-8221, ext. 352.

Camp—Lutheran camp for kids sponsored by the Chicago Pastors Conference. July 18-23, YMCA Camp Duncan, Ingleside, Ill. 847/438-5018.

Family camps—hosted by Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Spring Family Camp, May 28-31. Bible studies, games, and activities for all ages. Family Fest, June 18-20. An exciting and spiritually renewing musical gathering of WELS performers and entertainers. 920/787-3202.

District youth rallies

- **Minnesota**—July 11-13. Cragun's Resort on Gull Lake, Brainerd, Minn. Cost, \$210. Ron Siemers, 507/232-9868.
- **Western Wisconsin**—July 22-24. Kalahari Resort & Water Park, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. Cost, \$240. Paul Steinberg, 608/847-4108.

Martin Luther College choir tour

- March 1—Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas, 7 PM
- March 2—Good Shepherd, The Woodlands, Texas, 7 PM
- March 3—Calvary, Dallas, Texas, 7 PM
- March 4—Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., 7 PM
- March 5—Mount Olive, Overland Park, Kan., 7 PM
- March 6—Grace, Oskaloosa, Iowa, 7 PM
- March 7—Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa, 10:30 AM
- March 14—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 3 PM

- March 21—St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., 8 & 10:30 AM

Wisconsin Lutheran College choir tour

- March 6—Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, Tenn., time to be announced
- March 7—Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga., 7:30 PM
- March 8—Faith, Tallahassee, Fla., 7 PM
- March 9—Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., 7 PM
- March 10—Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla., time to be announced
- March 12—New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla., time to be announced
- March 13—University of North Florida Fine Arts Center, Jacksonville, Fla., 7:30 PM, hosted by Victory, Jacksonville, Fla.
- March 19—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, 8 PM

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary choir tour

- March 28—St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., 8 & 10:30 AM; Immanuel, Black Creek, Wis., 3 PM
- March 31—Grace, Milwaukee, 7 PM
- April 7—Our Shepherd, Crown Point, Ind., 7:30 PM
- April 8—Lamb of God, Madison, Ala., 7:30 PM
- April 9—Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla., 6:30 PM
- April 10—Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla., 7 PM
- April 11—Ascension, Sarasota, Fla., 9:30 AM; Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla., 3 PM; Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla., 7 PM
- April 12—Risen Savior, Orlando, Fla., 7 PM
- April 13—Our Savior, Port Orange, Fla., 7 PM
- April 14—Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Fla., 7:30 PM
- April 15—Beautiful Savior, Summerville, S.C., 7 PM
- April 16—Grace, Charlotte, N.C., 7 PM
- April 18—Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, 11 AM
- April 24—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 7:30 PM
- May 20—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., 7:30 PM

Luther Preparatory School choir tour

- April 7—Redeemer, Rice Lake, Wis., 7 PM
- April 8—Faith, Reedsburg, Wis., 7 PM
- April 9—St. Paul, Moline, Ill., 6:30 PM
- April 11—Martin Luther, St. Louis, Mo., 8 AM; Good Shepherd, Saint Peters, Mo., 10:30 AM; St. Peter, Savanna, Ill., 7 PM
- April 12—St. John, Watertown, Wis., 7 PM

Martin Luther College study tours

- **Kenya and Tanzania**—June 13-29. Cost, \$4,350 including air, hotels, and meals. Credits, three semester hours.
- **France, Spain, and Switzerland**—June 14-July 2. Cost, \$3,000 including air, hotels, and most meals. Credits, three semester hours.

For more information, contact Martin Luther College's Special Services, 507/354-8221.

Retreats, conferences, or conventions

- **Christian Woman Today**—Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. March 19-21. Maureen Sertich, 262/784-0412.
- **Pathways to Christ**—Hawthorn Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. March 19-21. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.
- **Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women**—March 26-28. Radisson Plaza Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bonnie, 507/931-1866.
- **Lutheran Girl Pioneers and Lutheran Pioneers**—will hold concurrent international conventions, April 24. Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, Wis. Lutheran Girl Pioneers,

608/781-5232. Lutheran Pioneers, 262/534-5124.

- **WELS Church Librarians' Organization**—May 15. St. John, Lannon, Wis. Marilynne Lemke, 262/251-4145.
- **WELS/ELS couples retreat**—Lake Louise Inn, Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada. May 21 & 22. Jack and Stephanie Korfman, 780/460-5410.
- **Special Ministries in Lutheran Education Conference (SMILE III)**—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. July 16-18. For individuals involved in the spiritual training of people with developmental or cognitive disabilities in their homes, schools, Sunday school classes, or Jesus Cares Bible classes. \$100/person (includes meals and lodging). Bruce Cuppan, 920/922-8672.

25th class reunion—of Dr. Martin Luther College class of 1979. June 19. Wisconsin Dells, Wis. If you have not received any information in the mail, contact Sue Ratzburg at 262/644-5302.

AVAILABLE

Lutheran Educator—1970-1980. Free for the cost of shipping. Ronald Winter, 715/675-3751.

Christian Worship hymns—correlated with the easier music of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Free. Rolfe Westendorf, 414/873-5770.

NEEDED

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.

SERVICE TIMES

The Villages, Fla.—The Open Bible, Spruce Creek Professional Center, Hwy. 27/441 (across from Wal-Mart), Suite 502. Sunday service, 8:45 AM. Don Meier, 352/728-8492.

Corpus Christi, Texas—Gethsemane, 3434 Holly Rd. Sunday service, 9:30 AM. James Krause, 361/855-5275.

Waukon, Iowa—King of Grace (ELS), Farm Bureau Building, 14 NE 1st St. Sunday school, 9:45 AM. Sunday service, 11 AM. Harvey Abrahamson, 877/394-2296.

NAMES WANTED

The Villages, Fla.—The Open Bible (The Village Lutherans). Don Meier, 352/728-8492.

Haringen/Brownsville/South Padre Island, Texas—Joel Sauer, 956/968-5228.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Summer paid staff—at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. June 1-Aug. 18. Counselors, head life-guard, adventure coordinator, and junior staff director. A rewarding job for those who love working with kids and enjoy the outdoors. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

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

Our plans change. His promises don't.

Changing circumstances in your life will not alter the amazing fact that God's promises do not change.

Paul E. Zell

It never looks good when a fellow has to change his mind. Just ask the apostle Paul.

We change our plans

Previously he told the church at Corinth he hoped to visit its city twice—once on his way to Macedonia and again on his way to Jerusalem. Factions, false teachers, and faulty views about spiritual gifts, moral issues, and the resurrection plagued that congregation. Paul initially figured that two visits by the founding pastor would be necessary.

But then he was compelled to take another course of action. He sent them the Spirit-given letter that we call 1 Corinthians. He gave them time to admonish one another and repent. He spared them “another painful visit” (2 Corinthians 2:1), praying that when next he set foot in Corinth he would find a group fully united by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those false teachers in Corinth used Paul's decision to discredit him. “He says ‘Yes and No’ at the same time,” they claimed. “He cannot be trusted.” We can easily imagine their complaints. Anyone who has had to announce a change of plans might hear similar criticism today. After months of deliberation Mom and Dad decide against purchasing a more comfortable house; the kids howl in protest. The high school senior changes his choice for

college; classmates call him “wishy-washy.” Elected leaders at St. Paul's postpone a much-anticipated building project; disappointed members question the leaders' integrity.

God keeps his promises

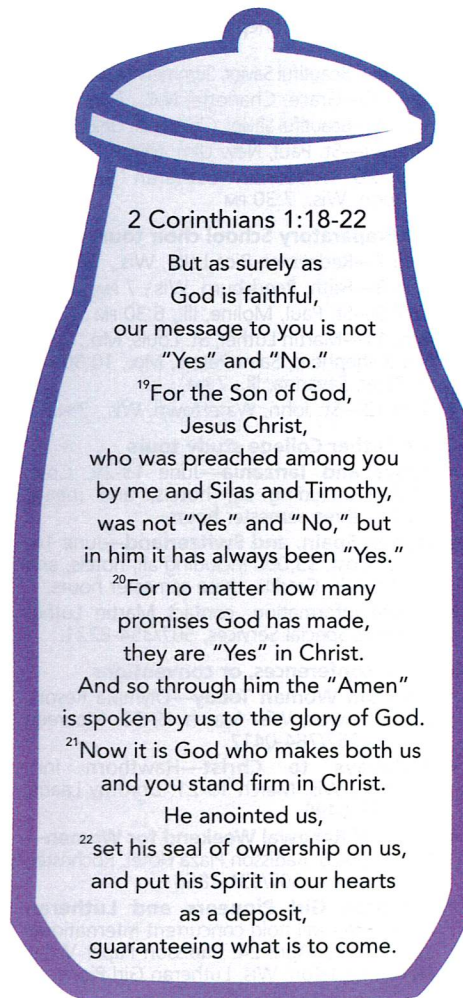
Since human planners “do not even know what will happen tomorrow” (James 4:14), even our best-laid plans may have to change. Paul

acknowledged that. So he reminded his readers of his good reputation (2 Corinthians 1:12-14). He explained his decision plainly (2 Corinthians 1:15,16; 1:23,24; 2:1-4). Then he set his change of plans in contrast to something truly amazing: God's promises do not change.

“He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” That's your baptism that Paul is describing. Did you notice how firm and unchanging it is? Through Baptism God set you apart for service to him. Through Baptism he wrote his signature on you, claiming you as his very own possession for eternity. Through Baptism the Father put the Holy Spirit into your heart like an engagement ring onto your finger, guaranteeing a glorious wedding on the day the Bridegroom Jesus returns. Changing circumstances in your life will not change that.

Did God graciously give the baptized believers at Corinth all that they needed? Will he not graciously do the same for us? Will he always hear, always bless, always forgive, always protect, always make strong, always come to rescue and restore? Count on it. “No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”

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



Fulfiller of
promises

Mighty Savior

Merciful Savior

Son of God

Savior of all

Liberator

Righteousness
of God

Bringer of joy

Mediator with
the Father

Sacrifice for sin

Word of life

Faithful witness

It's all about Jesus

Mark J. Lenz

Many artists over the years have attempted to capture the likeness of Jesus. Warner Sallmann painted him with perfect features, with every hair seemingly in place. Not so Richard Hook. Hook's portrait depicts Jesus with disheveled hair and a generally less than tidy appearance. But something about the eyes and the smile draws a person to the painting. There's a compassionate, patient, forgiving look that seems to say, "I see your sins and your problems. I care about you. I long to help

you. I want you to know what I have done for you." It's a portrait similar to that which the evangelist Luke paints of Jesus.

Luke's Gospel has been called the most beautiful book ever written. Perhaps that's because it portrays the boundless love of Jesus to all sorts and conditions of people: the rich and the poor, the dispossessed and the distressed, notorious sinners and social outcasts, disreputable men and shameful women. It reveals Jesus as the merciful Savior of all people.

- Read Luke 17:11-19. To whom did Jesus show mercy? For what reasons were these people considered social outcasts? See verses 11, 12, and 18.
- In Jesus' day, eating with people could be a way of expressing love and concern for them. Read Luke 15:1,2. With what kind of people was Jesus eating? In the balance of chapter 15, Luke records three parables of Jesus. Identify them. What connection do these parables have with the incident recorded at the beginning of the chapter? Read Luke 19:1-10. Why do you suppose the man in the sycamore-fig tree was considered disreputable? How did Jesus show his love for this man? Which verse in this account might serve as the theme for Luke's entire Gospel? Why? What purposes do you think Jesus had in relating the parable recorded in Luke 18:9-14?
- In Bible times women were often treated as second-class citizens. Normally men would not even be seen speaking with them in public. Jesus, however, not only spoke to women but also showed special concern for them. Read Luke 7:11-15. In what ways does Jesus show concern for the widow of Nain? Read Luke 7:36-50. How did the Pharisee react to the woman's actions? How do Jesus' words to the woman reveal his mercy? Read Luke 13:10-17. What words and actions of Jesus reveal his tender kindness to the crippled woman? Read Luke 23:26-31. How do Jesus' words reveal his compassion for the women who were wailing and mourning?
- As you scan the following portions of Luke's Gospel, identify other people to whom Jesus revealed his mercy: 4:31-37; 4:38,39; 5:12,13; 5:17-25; 6:27-36; 7:1-10; 8:26-39; 8:40-56; 9:10-17; 9:37-42; 13:34,35; 18:15-17; 18:18-25; 18:35-43; 24:13-32; 24:36-49.
- Even as Jesus suffers on the cross, his mercy for people shines through. For whom does he pray in Luke 23:34? For whom does he show pitying love in 23:42,43?
- What was Luke's profession (Colossians 4:14)? Because of this, what details does Luke mention that are not referred to in parallel accounts? Consider Luke 4:38 and Mark 1:30; Luke 5:12 and Mark 1:40; Luke 22:44 and Mark 14:39; Luke 22:50,51 and John 18:10,11.
- Luke paints a beautiful portrait of our merciful Savior. What specific application does Ephesians 4:31-5:2 invite you to make in your life?

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

Find this article and possible answers on-line. Go to <www.wels.net>, jumpword "fic," and click on "It's all about Jesus." Answers will be available after March 5.

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: REUNITING WITH LOVED ONES IN HEAVEN

Question: My wife recently passed away. I loved her so much. Will we be reunited with our loved ones in eternity?

Answer: If I understand you correctly, you aren't simply asking if you'll see your wife again. If that was your question, the answer would be: "Yes!"

Consider Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him" (1 Thessalonians 4:13,14).

Those words certainly apply beyond "family." If we live until the last day, we will see loved ones coming with Jesus, gloriously reunited body and soul. Yes, we grieve when a loved one dies. But ours isn't hopeless grieving. Our grief is not permanent because our loss is only temporary.

But your question appears to ask more. Are you asking if you will recognize one another, remembering you were husband and wife? Here we proceed with caution. Scripture veils much because these wonders now exceed comprehension. However, at Jesus' transfiguration there is a clue that we will recognize one another for who we were in this life. Notice Moses and Elijah are still Moses and Elijah. They hadn't become nameless "beings" in heaven. What's even more fascinating is that Peter recognizes them even though he's only "met" them on the pages of Scripture! Doesn't that indicate that we too will recognize one another?

But your question seems to ask even more. By "reunited" are you asking whether in heaven you will live as husband and wife? Here Scripture's answer may at first disappoint you. Remember how the Sadducees—who rejected the resurrection—tried to ridicule the concept of eternal life (Matthew 22). They presented Jesus with a story about a woman who died after being widowed seven times to

seven successive brothers. They believed their hypothetical case ridiculed resurrection hope. Think of the millions of family complications!

But Jesus revealed that they knew neither Scripture nor God's power. "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). The Smiths won't live at 2929 Golden Road with the Joneses around the corner. Marriage and family are rich blessings, yet they are only for this life.

If that saddens us, consider why we treasure our families. Even though their love for us is never perfect, we enjoy the security it gives. Our families stand in sharp contrast to the

many who treat us as little more than account numbers. Our families are imperfect pictures of the loving care of him who calls himself "our Father" because of our crucified Brother.

But what if there's no more "mourning or crying or pain"? What if "the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4)? What if the king-

dom's final glory provides us with brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers beyond counting (Matthew 19:27)? What if God's family operates in perfect Christlike love under his eternal visible care?

When the eternal reality of God's family plays out before us in full panoramic beauty, will we desire a return to the imperfect snapshots of this temporary existence? In many ways, you will have back what you now have lost—only better!

May his present comfort and promised future strengthen you as you wait.

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>. Look on-line at <www.wels.net>, jumpword "qa," for more questions and answers.

Marriage and family
are rich blessings,
yet they are
only for this life.

Bits o' the Bible Try your hand at details from the book of Daniel.

1. What was Daniel's Babylonian name? _____
2. What were the Hebrew names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? _____
3. What were the five materials comprising the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? _____
4. How high was the golden image King Nebuchadnezzar had built in the plain of Dura? _____
5. Which Babylonian king saw the mysterious hand-writing on the wall during a banquet? _____
6. What were the three words on the wall (one is repeated)? _____
7. What was the message of the words? _____
8. Who was the king that had Daniel thrown to the lions? _____
9. Why could the king not change his mind about executing Daniel? _____
10. What were the four beasts of Daniel's dream in the first year of King Belshazzar? _____
11. At the end of the vision of the four beasts, God appeared as judge. What is he called there? _____
12. In the third year of King Belshazzar, Daniel had a vision of what two animals? _____
13. Which two angels are named in Daniel's prophecy? _____
14. Who was the final king mentioned under whom Daniel lived? _____

Results: Count each blank as one point—29 points possible.

1-7: Time to read the book again.

8-15: Surprised at what you remembered?

16-22: Great job.

23-25: Excellent.

26-29: Outstanding. Would you like to teach a Bible class?

Picture this

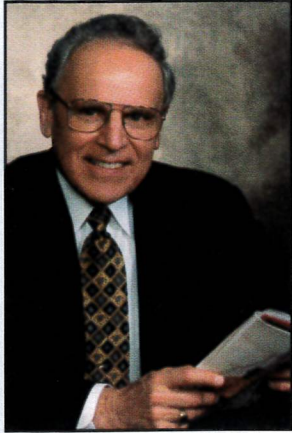


A tremendous display of Christian fellowship and true sportsmanship from last fall, as St. Marcus, Milwaukee, and Mt. Calvary, Kimberly, Wis., gather in a huddle after their soccer match and are led in prayer by one of the young players from St. Marcus.

Submitted by Gerald Evanson

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.

ANSWERS 1. Belshazzar 2. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azarta 3. Gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay 4. 90 feet 5. Belshazzar 6. MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPARSIN (OR PARARSIN) 7. Your days are NUMBERED / you are WEIGHED and found wanting / your kingdom will be DIVIDED 8. Darius the Mede 9. He issued his decree under the law of the Medes and the Persians, which stated that no edict of the king could be changed 10. A lion with wings of an eagle, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four wings and four heads, a beast with large iron teeth and 10 horns 11. The Ancient of Days 12. A ram and a goat 13. Gabriel and Michael 14. Cyrus of Persia



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

God is everywhere

You stand on a clear night at a lookout away from the glare of city lights. The starry sky explodes before you in heavenly splendor. As you absorb its magnificence, what do you see? Do you see the hand of God? Or do you feel you see god?

Increasingly, people are stepping forward who say they see god. They are embracing pantheism—a religion that declares not that God is everywhere, but god is everything. Many intellectuals today favor this religion that has also defined the spirituality of uneducated pagans.

It seems that the smarter we get the less we know—the less we know because we refuse to listen to God in his Word. As the psalmist observes: “The heavens declare the glory of God” (19:1). The pantheists see that glory, but they refuse to believe in a supernatural being whom they cannot see. So, when they cannot believe in what they cannot see, they make what they can see their god.

Nature itself is the god of the pantheist. In nature pantheists see a mystery and a power that transcends human thought and being. They see themselves as extensions of the cosmos, a part of the mystery and power. They are filled with reverence and awe at nature.

Pantheists do not believe

- in invisible entities or supernatural powers;
- in miracles (except the miracle that the universe came into existence by itself);
- in life in a better place after death;
- in the favored status of human beings in the world.

Pantheists, on the other hand,

- love and express an active concern for nature;
- make their wonderment of nature define their spirituality;
- actively work to spread their beliefs;
- are uniting in the World Pantheist Movement.

Novelist Margaret Atwood, a spokesperson for the World Pantheist Movement, says, “God is not the voice in the whirlwind—god is the whirlwind.” That may sound strange, even absurd, to you, but beware.

This movement advances beyond the revelation that some ancient pagans believed that nature was god. It’s a deceptive appeal to everything “natural” in you and in your children. It permeates New Age thinking that is widely promoted among us. It finds its way into movies for children, such as *Spirited Away* and *Star Wars*. (Have you wondered what “the Force” was?) It champions conservation. It embraces all kinds of people everywhere, even atheists (there is no supernatural god). It removes the “burden” of laws and scriptures and elders. It blinds you to the need of the Savior.

In all this, pantheism makes you feel good (at one with nature), which has become the measure of truth in spiritual matters today.

You can, you should, feel good when you observe the wonders of God’s creation. See God’s mighty hand at work and the power of his creating word.

Then turn to his revealed Word to see how he did it all and what he did for you personally, and feel much better. You don’t have to make yourself at one with the universe to fulfill your life. You can live with the sure hope of eternal life. You can live in the love that can be known only in the one God, whose Son became one with us to win our salvation. You can experience the indescribable awe and reverence that come from a visit to the cross where Jesus suffered and died, and then to the empty tomb from which he rose. You can rejoice because, although God is not everything, he is everywhere, also with you through Christ this very day.

Gary P. Baumler

Pantheism makes you feel good (at one with nature), which has become the measure of truth in spiritual matters today.

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to the Next Generation of Church Leaders with
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exist for you
to make a
difference.**

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- ▶ Spread the word about **on-line sermons!** Audio files from WELS campus pastors are available on our Web site: www.wels.net/cm/. Just click on "The Word on Campus" under the Collection menu.
- ▶ **Welcome students** in your congregation! Students are often away from home and seeing a friendly face on Sunday morning is another benefit to weekly worship.
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Know a college student? Fill out the following form and send it to:

WELS Campus Ministry
2929 N. Mayfair Rd.
Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398
Phone: (414) 256-3279



Information can also be e-mailed to: cm@sab.wels.net. An on-line version of the "Free Subscriptions Form" is available on the Campus Ministry Web site under the purple "Registration & Sign up" button.

NAME

Last _____

First _____ Middle Initial _____

Birth Date ____/____/____

Gender Male Female

HOME ADDRESS

City, State, Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

Home Phone _____

Church Name (at home) _____

CHURCH ADDRESS

City, State, Zip _____

Pastor _____

COLLEGE INFORMATION

College Name _____

COLLEGE'S ADDRESS

City, State, Zip _____

Living with parents when college is in session?

Yes No

School Year _____

College Graduation Date _____

Program Major _____

Address while at School

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone No. while at school _____


FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS

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A little bit o' Lent

The season of Lent focuses your faith not on chance or probability or luck, but on fact.

Daron J. Lindemann

 One hot selling item that helps people celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a little bit o' Irish luck is the rabbit's foot. Do you have yours?

Rabbits' feet have been considered lucky ever since ancient times when people believed that the spirits inhabited animals. The rabbit received undue attention. It was considered lucky because of its reproductive prowess. Actually, any part of a dead rabbit's body was considered capable of providing a little bit o' luck, but because the foot dried quickly and was easily carried, it became the popular choice.

Well, there you have it. Because a rabbit was believed to be inhabited by a spirit and because it can produce multiple offspring (not to mention its feet dry quickly and feel fuzzy), good things are going to happen to you if you hold on to a rabbit's foot.

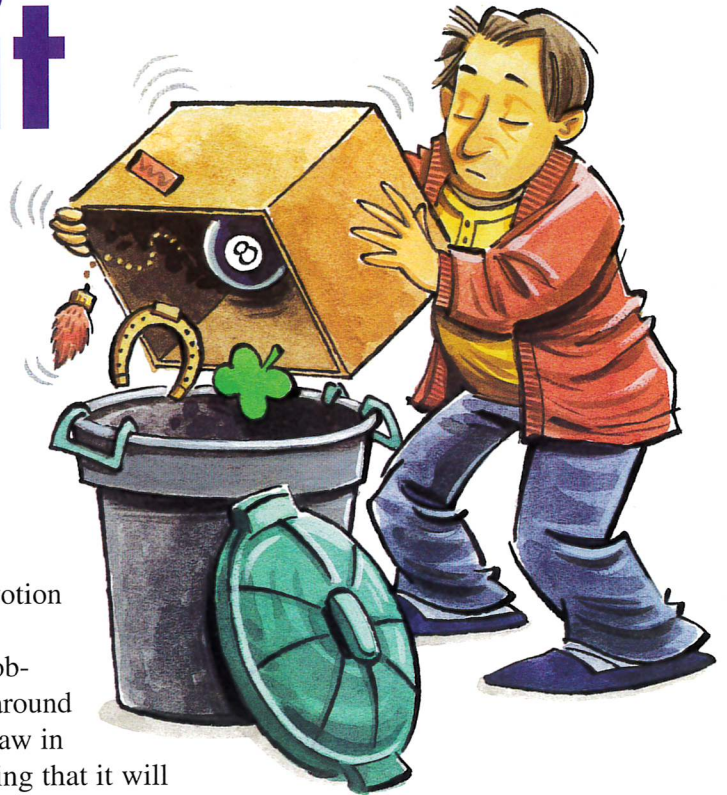
Really? Call me a skeptic but I'd much rather rely on a tiger's paw—tigers are so much more powerful and higher on the food chain. Yeah, I know, a tiger's paw won't quite fit in your purse. Okay, then at least go with a viper's tail or a shark's tooth—other predators much more

worthy of your devotion than a rabbit.

There's a big problem with carrying around Cottontail's right paw in your pocket, thinking that it will make your basketball team win the national championship or convince Prince Charming to sweep you off your feet or help you land that big promotion or solve your rocky relationship. God has a problem with it. Remember him? He's the one whom you don't pay attention to when you get all excited about getting lucky.

God gets jealous when you look for help from a rabbit's foot, your lucky pair of socks, the proper Zodiac configuration, or some other mumbo jumbo of the moment. It means he's paying attention. It means he feels quite strongly that he can give you everything that you think a rabbit's foot can—and much more. Finally, it means he really wishes you'd come to him for help because that's something he loves to do.

No wonder he warns, "Let no one be found among you who . . . practices divination or sorcery,



interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead" (Deuteronomy 18:10,11).

So go find that Magic 8-Ball gathering dust in your attic and toss it out with yesterday's horoscope. God has something better in mind. Look to him with Lenten repentance and see his love.

"Call upon me," he urges. "Come to me," he invites. And God is even further up the power chain than a tiger! If he has given up his only Son to suffer in your place and be sacrificed for you, won't he also give you all good things?

The season of Lent focuses your faith not on chance or probability or luck, but on fact. On history. On certainty. Hear again the old, old story. Put yourself in the picture with Jesus. Weep. Resolve. Believe. And be sure. ✨

Daron Lindemann is a pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.