

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

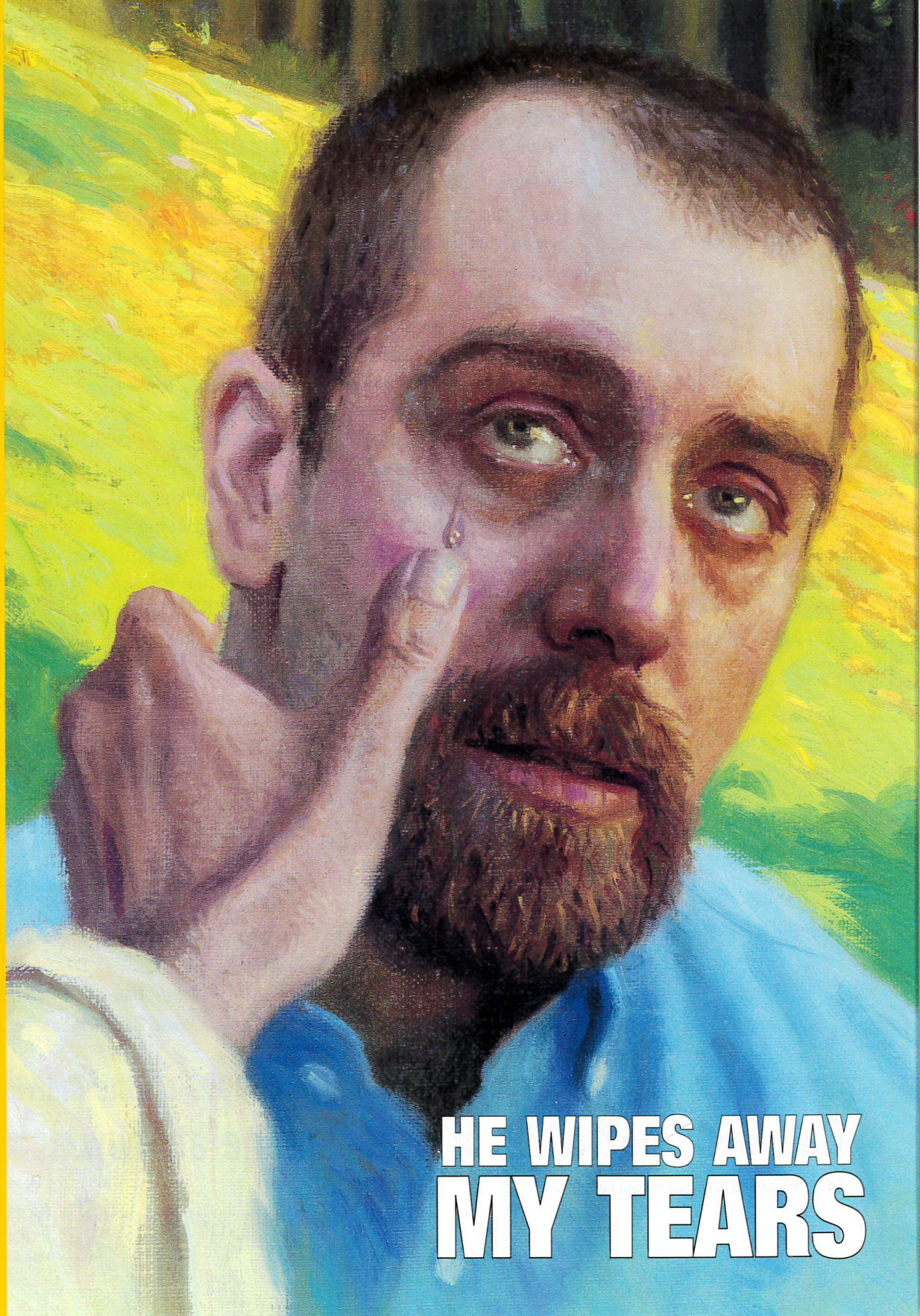
April 2004

The Word from the WELS

God's gift of  
sexual intimacy

*The Purpose  
Driven Life*

Anti-Semitism  
and Christ's  
Passion



**HE WIPES AWAY  
MY TEARS**



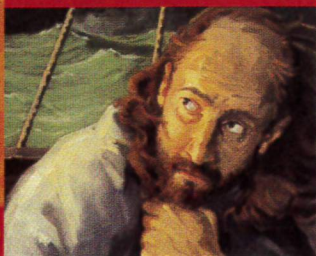
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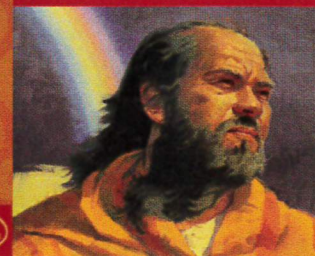
many of God's people today, Jonah resisted the mission and exposed his heart of arrogance, stubbornness, and doubt. Jonah's story needs retelling today. Sometimes God's reluctant messengers are in need of divine rescue every bit as much as the people to whom God has sent them.

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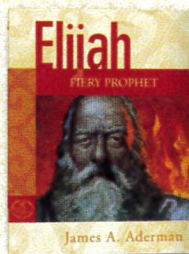
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# Not for nothing

*“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:58*

Stephen H. Geiger

Sea gulls. Sea breeze. Soft sand. And PVC pipe. On an Atlantic beach in central Florida stood rows of white pipe, stuck vertically into the sand, improving the odds. The end of a fishing pole was propped in each, and many lines with tasty lures danced in the breaking waves, tempting the pompano fish.

As I walked past the buckets of 10, then 20 fishermen, only two of the flat, white pompano were to be seen. So many lines, but no fish on most of them. Driving, lifting, walking, casting, waiting—for nothing. Even when fish were caught, after one meal wouldn't there again be nothing?

## Work for earthly goals ends in nothing

There was more of nothing. Close to the coast was view after view of retirement homes. Golf courses. But then, hospitals. So much effort over so many years to gain the pleasure of a happy retirement, yet suddenly sickness strikes. Hard work, plans, dreams—for nothing.

Is all for nothing?

How human disobedience has ruined our world. Sin brought death. Death turns all into nothing. Earthly life, temporary. Fed stomachs, hungry again. Efforts to find pleasure, their moments fleeting.

Sin also has eternal consequences. Yet its effects are felt on earth. So much human effort, and for nothing.

Is all for nothing?

God owes us nothing more: futility here, abandonment forever.



Yet 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 speaks not of God's abandonment. "I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Death may still strike. You may still feel the futility of a world cursed because of sin. But in Christ, sin's curse was reversed. Death's grip could not hold him. He died for your sin. Then he rose to assure you that death has been beaten, that you stand innocent before him.

Rejoice. Believe. And understand how a death that is defeated changes your perspective on life.

## Work for the Lord is never for nothing

To know that death isn't your end

is to see as deception that frustrating scramble to gain pleasures so temporary. Through Jesus you have life forever and pleasures eternal.

What reason to live this life in light of forever!

Do this by standing firm. Know that the world will try to distract you, promising lasting wealth and pleasure. Know that your flesh will try to frighten you at the thought of sacrifice, poverty, or pain. Know that Satan plants doubt, suggesting that his lies are more trustworthy than divine promises sure to be kept. Don't be moved. Stand solid on God's certain Word.

Stand firm, but refuse to stand still. For whatever moments remain in this life, do the work of the Lord. Search the Scriptures for commands to follow. Pray for strength to honor and obey. Fight your flesh with serious rebuke. Comfort your spirit with forgiveness in Christ. Lead and follow, offering your gifts as thanks to your Savior.

To this give yourself fully. Make God's will your goal. For finally you have something to work at that you know is not for nothing.

You can work hard for fish but fail. You can work hard for retirement only to get sick. Hard work for earthly goals always ends in nothing.

But hard work for the Lord is never for nothing.

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



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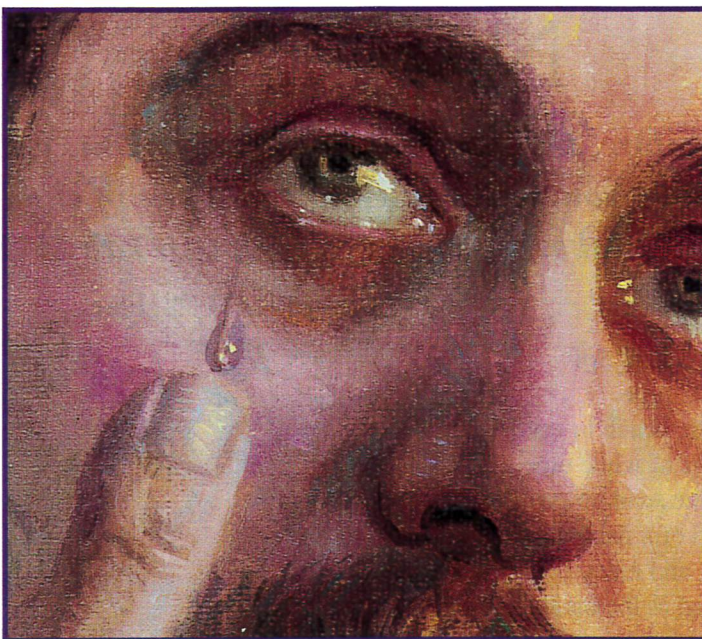
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My Redeemer  
lives to wipe  
away my tears.

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## bits & pieces



This Easter many of us will sing the famous hymn "I know that my Redeemer lives." But do we always remember the importance and the outcome of these words? Mark Braun reminds us in "I know that my Redeemer lives" (p. 8).



Some recent best-selling books cover religious topics. Should we be reading these books or keeping our distance? Can they offer benefits, or will they just create problems? This month we offer a look at *The Da Vinci Code*, a mystery by Dan Brown (p. 11), and Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*, a self-help book that is supposed to help readers discover, develop, and fulfill God's purpose for their lives (p. 32). We hope the articles offer you a look at what everyone is talking about and some advice on discerning what's good and what's bad about these books.



Two series end this month.

- Jane Schlenvogt concludes her practical series on developing an active women's ministry with some ideas for expanding your menu of offerings to women. Don't miss "Recipes for women's ministry" (p. 12).

- We thank Theodore Hartwig for taking us on a walk with St. John as he delved deep into the fourth Gospel and shared his insights on each chapter. In his final article Hartwig covers Jesus' resurrection and his appearances to his followers (p. 16).



Sex. Many people blush just hearing that word. Or they think of the many ways people abuse it. But God gave us sexual intimacy as a gift—as a way to express oneness between husband and wife. Read more about the wonderful blessings of sexual intimacy within marriage in "Making music and sipping fine wine" (p. 18).

—JKW



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**The January cover was one of the most creative, attention-grabbing covers ever.** The matching article was also well done and related the encouraging news that WELS churches can and are using traditional and contemporary music to give glory to God.

Sue Fink

 Manitowoc, Wisconsin


**There must have been a misstatement in John Eich's article "Stop! Look! Listen!" [Jan.].** The article stated, "God doesn't create us crippled. He doesn't put us together with handicaps or with hang-ups. Sin does that."

"Sin does that" is the misstatement. What does sin do? What is the "that"? Looking at the previous two sentences, the "that" has to refer to "create us crippled" and "put us together with handicaps or with hang-ups."

But sin cannot "create." Sin cannot "put [people] together."

You must have meant to say, "God created the world's crippled people, but he is not to blame for their being crippled. Sin is to blame."

Christopher Doerr

 Waupun, Wisconsin

John Eich responds:

*I agree sin does not create anything.*

*Your suggested statements are clearer, to a point. However, I hesitate in saying God created me crippled. I prefer to say that God permits me to be created crippled. In my experience the "God creates me crippled" statement leads to accusing God of being malicious in his actions. God permits the natural processes to put us together in a "defective" way, but then gives us the grace and place to live a special life with him.*

**I was quite upset upon reading the article on parish assistance ["Just what the doctor ordered," Jan.].**


Especially shocking was "Leaders are trained to think like God thinks and develop strategies to accomplish his work in their midst." Surely this is simply a poor use of language, I thought.

Then I noted that the information came from the Parish Assistance Web site. There I found: "Parish Assistance places special emphasis on training and equipping leaders on God's way of thinking."

Next I consulted God's Word. Isaiah 55:8,9: " 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' " That assured me that no man can think like God.

All sorts of people read this publication. If I saw "Leaders are trained to think like God thinks," I would immediately question the doctrine of this Lutheran publication.

Barbara Schmidt

 Vesta, Minnesota

Ron Heins, director of Parish Assistance, responds:

*God expresses his thoughts and will in his Word. We attempt to help God's people mirror God's priorities and values.*

**I want to commend you for an excellent issue [Jan.], and especially for "A Lutheran view of science."**

Within our church body I have rarely encountered such clear encouragement to pursue a career in human science as a way of living to glorify God.


However, there are (at least) two points unmentioned by the authors which I believe are important when contemplating "divine science" and "human science."

First, while evidence from human science cannot lead someone to faith, it can be useful for strengthening the faith of a believer and for removing obstacles to faith for an unbeliever. For example, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 cites as evidence for the resurrection the empirically verifiable appearances of Jesus to over 500 people.

Second, while it is important not to confuse truths discovered through fallible human science with truths revealed by direct revelation, the

article's portrayal of divine science and human science misses something important. While divine science is certainly infallible, its investigation by humans (i.e., theology) is certainly prone to error, just as human investigation of the physical world can be.

Kyler Kuehn

 Irvine, California

**In her review of Pastor Lauersdorf's devotion books for those who are grieving ["Words of comfort," Jan.], Terry Stetzenbach noted that similar themes surface in the four books.**


That was by design and highlights one of the strengths of these devotions.

The concepting team for this project included a grief counselor, a pastor who daily ministers to the dying, two seminary professors who teach counseling, and the author. All recognized the common themes that surface in the emotional struggles experienced by those who face death. Richard Lauersdorf addresses those issues head on, devoting one book to those who are dying, one to those whose loved one is dying, one to those whose loved one has died, and one to those who are grieving as a result of other challenges they are facing. In all cases, he helps those who grieve to see Jesus—even through their tears—and to know the truth that not even death can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus.

It was Northwestern Publishing House's original intention that pastors, churches, and loving family members might give to the grieving person the book that best applies to the cause of that person's sorrow.

Ray Schumacher

Northwestern Publishing House editor

 Johnson Creek, Wisconsin

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# Jesus hasn't moved

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

An elderly couple was driving in their car. The husband was on the driver's side, both hands firmly on the wheel, looking straight ahead. His wife was on the passenger's side. They came up behind a young couple in a pickup truck. The wife said, "Look at those two lovebirds sitting next to each other. Isn't that cute? How come we don't sit together like that anymore?" With his hands firmly on the wheel and his eyes straight ahead, he replied, "I ain't moved!"

Do you feel that as the years have gone by and things have changed in your life that the Lord isn't as close to you as he once was? Well, the Lord assures you, "I haven't moved! I still love you. I still forgive you. I still want you."

In a survey, some five-year-olds shared their views on what love is. One said, "Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents for a minute and look around."

Often if you just stop focusing on the wrong things, you'll see love all around you. During this Lenten season, focus your thoughts not on your problems in life but on the cross. There you'll see love. Take time to hear the message of a Savior who loved you enough to die on the cross for you and who won't let anything—not life or death, not things present or things to come—separate you from God's love. Despite what may have changed in your life, Jesus hasn't moved. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That means he still loves you.

And he still forgives you.

Prior to bringing his crusade to a city, the famed evangelist Billy Sunday wrote the mayor, asking him to send names of individuals he knew who had spiritual

problems. He was surprised when he received the city's telephone directory.

We all have spiritual problems. Scripture says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Maybe things don't seem the same between you and the Lord because of sins that are bothering you. But Jesus hasn't moved. No matter what may have changed in your life because of what you have done or have not done, Jesus has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That means he still forgives you.

And he still wants you.

An hour or so after putting her little one to bed, a mother heard a loud "thud" in the bedroom. She went in, and her son was on the floor with a surprised look on his face. "What happened?" she said. "I don't know," he replied. "I guess I stayed too close to where I got in!"

Many people's relationships with Jesus aren't the same anymore because they stayed too close to where they got in and never grew in their faith. In fact, they may think that they've outgrown the Christian faith. You can outgrow many things as life goes on, but you can't outgrow your need for heaven. You can't change the voice of the Lord who says, "I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20). Despite the fact that you may think you have outgrown the Christian faith, Jesus says, "I still want you in heaven with me."

If you don't feel as close to the Lord as you once did, rest assured that Jesus hasn't moved. He still loves you. He still forgives you. He still wants you.

*Doug Engelbrecht is pastor at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.*

You can't  
outgrow  
your need  
for heaven.



# I know that my Redeemer lives

Jesus is our living Savior, Lord, and friend.

Mark E. Braun

“**P**astor,” the church organist said, “this must be a mistake.”  
“What’s that?”  
“You picked an Easter hymn for Sunday.”  
“Yes, I know.”  
“But Easter was *three weeks ago*.”

A seventh-century proverb lamented: “Easter, so longed for, is gone in a day.” Are we better at observing Lent than we are at celebrating Easter? For six long weeks, and again during Holy Week, we review the details of our Savior’s suffering and dying. But Easter seems to be a day that quickly passes, and the season gets pushed aside by confirmations, graduations, and (eventually, in the Midwest) nicer weather.

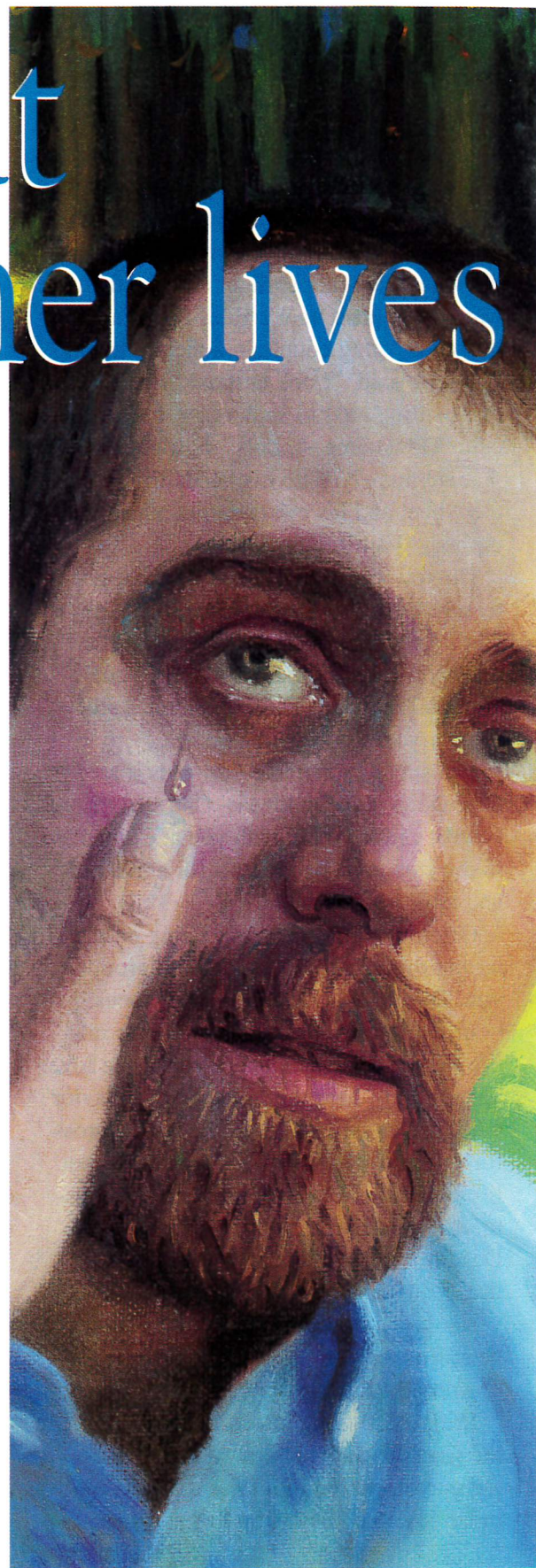
In Paul’s great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, there is a nuance in his opening words not easily rendered in translation: Christ *died* for our sins (past) and *was buried* (again, past), but he *was raised* on the third day (past, but with significance that endures in the present). Once he died and was buried, but he lives forever.

Samuel Medley, in his hymn “I know that my Redeemer lives,” expresses that truth; Jesus not only rose from the dead but is still our living Savior.

## He lives . . . to silence all my fears

Weightier than any of our other worries is our concern about our relationship with God—or it should be. Does God love me? Does he know I exist? Our guilty consciences demand relief, and acquiring a clearer understanding of his commandments only increases our discomfort. We may seek others with whom to compare ourselves, hoping God grades human behavior on a cosmic curve. But some days we can hardly stand ourselves; how could God accept us?

“I want to remind you of the gospel,” Paul wrote. Repeatedly, we need that reminding! “By this gospel you are saved,” so of course this good news is “of first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). Jesus lived without sin in our place. Then, because the wages of sin is death, he died as our substitute. His resurrection stands as living proof that





the Father has accepted the payment his Son made for us and has declared us “paid in full.” The resurrection is our receipt.

Don’t worry. He lives to silence all our fears.

### **He lives . . . to wipe away my tears**

The last time Peter saw Jesus, he had just finished calling down curses on himself, swearing he had never known Jesus. Later, he wept bitter tears. The initial elation Peter felt at hearing of Jesus’ resurrection must have been quickly replaced by deep dread. How terrible he felt. What would he say to Jesus? Would there be more tears?

In a few weeks, Jesus would publicly reinstate Peter as his apostle, but before that the risen Lord “appeared to Peter” alone. No record contains the words that passed between these two that day, but Jesus must have assured Peter that he did not rise from the dead to get even with Peter for his failure. Jesus lived to tell him, “I forgive you. My Father forgives you. You still belong to me. I still have much for you to do.”

Every day Jesus reminds us that we still belong to him, too, and that he can still use us to serve him and one another. He lives to wipe away my tears.

### **He lives . . . to calm my troubled heart**

All the disciples were troubled that Sunday night. They had been convinced he was the Messiah and had hoped he would redeem Israel. But their Passover supper together became instead their final meal with him. Soon he was arrested to endure a series of sham trials and a brutal execution. Their visions of personal glory evaporated as they considered the real possibility that they could become the next target of their master’s enemies.

What good could a dead Messiah do them?

But then “he appeared to the Twelve,” which by now had shrunk to “the Eleven” with the death of Judas. He appeared to two as they walked toward Emmaus, to 10 with Thomas absent, to 11 with Thomas present, and to seven along the seashore. Later he appeared to 500, to his brother James, and to the Eleven on a mountain in Galilee and near Bethany in Judea.

## **Jesus lives to wipe away my tears.**

Before he appeared to them, his followers left his empty grave trembling and bewildered. Reports that he had been seen alive sounded like nonsense. We call Thomas “doubting” for his refusal to believe without empirical evidence, but none of his first followers believed unless they saw him for themselves.

His appearances calmed their troubled hearts. They were overjoyed when they saw him, and their hearts burned within them as he opened the Scriptures to them. Even after he withdrew his visible presence at the ascension, they believed his promise that he would be with them always. They went back to their lives with great joy, and those lives would never be as they once were.

### **He lives . . . all blessings to impart**

“Last of all,” Paul wrote, “he appeared to me.” The others had believed in Jesus before he died, but Paul was a different case. “I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” He used to hate Christians,

hound them, hunt them down. Breathing out murderous threats, Paul was on his way to Damascus to root out the Jesus movement there when Jesus interrupted his journey, changed his heart, and redirected his life. “This is my chosen instrument,” Jesus said of Paul, “to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings.”

Decades later, Paul refused to forget how he had once been “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.” But he praised the grace that restored him to the Father’s family and blessed him with a hectic, dangerous, but uniquely fruitful ministry. “I worked harder than all of them,” he said, with no hint of pride, “yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” Paul’s life, once a reality show of sin and unbelief, had been transformed into an infomercial. “I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him” (1 Timothy 1:16).

A tour guide in Tokyo once told me that the Japanese have no word for “religion.” So why had we spent the last three days visiting a dozen Buddhist and Shinto shrines? “We go to these temples,” he said, “the way Americans go to the Washington Monument.”

Okay, but we Christians do not go to church the way we go to the Washington Monument. That and other monuments commemorate the achievements of dead heroes. Jesus is no dead hero. He is our living Savior, Lord, and friend.

Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives: “I know that my Redeemer lives.”



*Mark Braun is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*



## What a difference

**We all have our days when everything seems wrong. But now we also have that Friday and that Sunday to hang on to, to lift us up.**

James L. Hoff

**W**hat a difference a few days make!

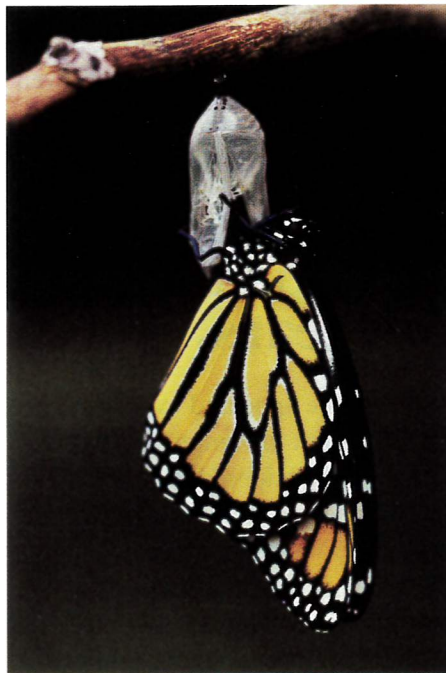
I have a cold; I feel miserable. I think that I'll never feel better. But a few days go by, and I'm my old self. What a difference a few days make.

I have a terrible argument with someone dear to me. I could not imagine life without this person's friendship, but now it seems that it will be no more. Some time goes by. We're both embarrassed and sad that it came to harsh words. Soon we become friends again. What a difference a few days make.

The problem seems too big for solutions. It's the big test coming up in school. It's the big project, the tough boss, and the too-soon deadline. It's pressure like I've never known. I pray. I work. God blesses. I survive. What a difference a few days make.

**It's a Friday we call Good.** I see something terrible. A man hangs on a cross. God means it when he says that he will not be mocked; a man will reap what he sows. It's all so confusing, because this man doesn't deserve any of it. He's pure, sinless, and holy.

If that's how God treats his Son, what will come of me? If I put just one hour of my cruddy life up against that pure life, how angry would God be with me? I could never truly grasp how angry God is over my continued sinning. But I sure get a good taste of that



anger here watching this event on this Friday. Could God ever call me a friend—I who act so unlike his child? What will he do with this rebel?

He speaks to me. They are his words, a letter written to me. He says, "For you." I crushed him for you, so you would not be crushed like that, ever. He died for all, and that means for you too. His death is your death. I count it as your death. You will never be separated from me. "Gone" are your sins. Oh, Satan may look for them, trying to find something for which to accuse you. You may look too—afraid that what I tell you is too good to be true. But I say that they are gone, as far as east is from west.

I think about all this the rest of Friday, into Saturday too. Could it be? Dare I believe it?

**Now it's Sunday.** "He's risen" someone says to me as I walk in the door. I don't know what to say. I hear another "He's risen" and the reply, "He's risen indeed!" People are happy, smiling. Dare I smile too? The pastor reads God's words. "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). "[He is] the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). He lives! I am justified, redeemed, a certified member of God's family. What a difference that Friday and that Sunday make for me . . . for you!

We still have our days when all seems wrong. But now we also have that Friday and that Sunday to hang on to, to lift us up. "Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. . . . Your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

What a difference a few days make!

*Jim Hoff is pastor at St. Paul, Livonia, Michigan.*



# The Da Vinci Code

John A. Braun

Everyone is reading *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. Or, so it seems. More than four million copies are in print. It's an action novel with suspense, mystery, and murder.

But it's more than a novel. What interested me were the ideas in the novel. The novel is about the Holy Grail and hidden documents that—according to the author—would revolutionize the Christian church.

The tale puts us on a quest to discover documents to verify the role of Mary Magdalene in the life of Jesus. According to the story, these documents have been hidden for over 2,000 years and would prove that Mary was the wife of Jesus and bore him a child. We are told that the Roman Catholic Church has suppressed the truth about the “sacred feminine” to maintain that Jesus is true God.

The fancy of this idea brings a smirk to my face. Yet the novel caused me to pause and think. Millions of readers of *The Da Vinci Code* consume the idea that Jesus is just a man and that Christianity is nothing more than the creation of some historical struggle. Today our society believes that the truth is somehow different from what we always believed the Bible says. The novel suggests that the truth is actually locked up by some secret sect with mysterious documents.

The book works as a page-turning mystery, but I heard another voice calling to me as I read it: “Has God really said?” Perhaps that whisper drew only my attention, but I doubt it. Anyone who reads this book might hear it. One might wonder if the Bible really does give us all we need to know.

Books challenging Christianity and the Bible have been written before and will be published in the future. The challenge of this book hisses between the lines of

an engaging and exciting story. So many things are disturbing. The distortions of history and New Testament scholarship come across as historical fact. Those distortions seem so logical when they come from characters whom we are led to believe are truthful and reliable. But the distortions are still only distortions, and this is only a work of fiction. That would be okay if the issues weren't so important.

I could stay away from reading such books, but I chose this book precisely because it challenged Christian faith. I wanted to know what others thought. I read hoping to find a way to respond to those who think Jesus is but a great man. I looked through the lens of this novel and saw a desperate world adrift in a sea of doubt and confusion. I found related stories in *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. Those stories explored the quest for the historical Jesus, the lost Gospels, and even the Matrix trilogy; but they only confirmed what I saw in the novel. I also discovered, thankfully, that I may be in this world but I am not of this world. By the grace of God, I'm different.

So I continue to believe that Jesus is true God and true man, begotten not made. I confess that truth, knowing that he has come to earth to redeem me from sin, death, and hell. I trust the message of Scripture. It's the truth and all I need. I still believe that it is God's revelation to a fallen world: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).



*John Braun is vice president of publishing services at Northwestern Publishing House.*

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# RECIPES FOR WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Using different "flavor" combinations will enlarge your menu of women's ministry programs and encourage daily spiritual nutrition.

Jane Schlenvogt

Is the thought of adding cinnamon to a stir-fry outside of your comfort zone? Could chai tea still be on your list of tastes to try someday? What are you waiting for? African peanut stew might become a family favorite. A double chai tea latte with vanilla could be your next addiction.

Ministry flavor sensations abound for women everywhere. Is it time you tried something new to your spiritual taste buds?

By now you have your finger on the needs of women in your congregation through your focus group. Maybe you have scheduled a spring "main dish" event to draw women



deeper into the Word and closer in fellowship. Now you are ready to choose from the smorgasbord of "side dishes" in order to encourage daily spiritual nutrition.

## Mentoring relationships

Start with a serving of Bible study. Don't think you have to serve an army here, or even a banquet for 50. On an airplane, the emergency instructions always say, "Attend to your own oxygen mask first, then assist others." To start with, maybe you and a friend will "lunch" together on the Word. You could read a chapter of Scripture together and talk about its applications to your lives. Hmmm, that tasted delightful, don't you think? Wouldn't others enjoy this recipe?

You are ready to mix in a mentoring program. Setting one up is simple. Gather the names of those interested in a one-on-one nurturing relationship. Pair them together by



personal request, older woman with younger, or by interests. This match may be for six months or up to a year. These spiritual sisters will befriend and pray for each other, provide spiritual counsel, and encourage each other. They might work through a Bible study together.

The depth of the relationship depends on the pair. Have "sisters" tell about the kinds of activities they did together and especially how they were encouraged in their spiritual walk.

### **Bible study groups**

Women with common side interests often come together for Bible study. The number of groups that materialize is limited only by the amateur activities in your midst.

Moms of toddlers could get together for a "play date." As the children become familiar, they might play nearby while moms discuss a chapter of the Bible or a Christian book they have all chosen to read. The leader could prepare a study guide. Or maybe they have all purchased a study guide and worked the assignment ahead. Moms have been known to meet in parks, each other's homes, or even the school gym. The challenge in caring for little ones can make regular attendance difficult, so consider mailing the handouts to those not present on a given day. Although a generous serving of encouragement is provided to young moms through such a group, a Mom's Bible study is more than a support group; mothers are drawn to their true source of strength, Jesus Christ.

Those among you who savor a good sweat might gather for a workout and Bible study. After a stretch and a strain for your muscles you could be refreshed in spirit by studying the Word.

Other common interests might include the bakers, the bikers, and even trail hikers. I know of two kayaking friends who meet monthly and recite Scripture and pray in the middle of a lake.

There are the crafters, knitters, and child sitters. A pastor's wife once shared the Potter of our souls during a clay class. What about babysitters learning and sharing lessons from the Word to bring Jesus to the hearts of children in their care?

### **Prayer warriors**

A passion for prayer can bring women together. Bearing lists, journals, prayer books, and hearts flowing with praise and petitions, a group might meet in each other's homes. The early risers could enjoy breakfast together following prayer time; others gather in the evening as a night watch of prayer warriors. Prayer reaches our Father's ears at all hours. The hostess of the group could start with a Scripture reading, after which she begins the prayers. Everyone takes a turn to come before God with requests and thanksgiving. Encourage all those who come to join hearts in prayer. Thank them for their prayers, remembering that the Holy Spirit intercedes in our most humble prayer efforts.

A card ministry may be a side dish of one or more of your prayer groups. Consider designing your own cards, communicating the thought, "We're praying for you." Pray specifically for half a dozen families from your church directory at each meeting. Some prayer ideas include strength for their earthly struggles, prosperity for their home and family, and giving thanks for the joy of fellowship and friendship.

Then have all the women sign the cards and have one be responsible for mailing them. When you have worked alphabetically through your membership list, start over again.

### **Sharing recipes**

Have you noticed a lady gifted with a lovely faith habitually visiting the lonely or the ill? Hearts starving for companionship are all around. Ask her to share what her heart has led her to do. Does she read from God's Word? Has a particular devotional been helpful? What ministry materials, if any, does she leave behind for encouragement? Let other women copy her "recipe" so that the servings are multiplied! You've just added another ministry to the menu!

Some of the flavor combinations offered here may be new to your ministry "taste buds." Remember that when the camaraderie of common interests brings God's women together around the Word, they are more likely to dine together through eternity. Continue to season your services to women with fresh flavorings as the Lord leads us together on this journey of ministry.



*Jane Schlenvogt is a member at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin. To learn more about St. Andrew's women's ministries, go to <[www.st-andrew-online.org](http://www.st-andrew-online.org)>.*

## **WOMEN'S MINISTRY COMMITTEE**

WELS recently formed a Women's Ministry Committee under the direction of Parish Services/Adult Discipleship. This committee exists to encourage WELS women to develop and use their God-given gifts and abilities to the glory of God and the benefit of his kingdom. For more information, contact Peg Raabe, administrative assistant for WELS Parish Services, 414/256-3278, <[pegr@sab.wels.net](mailto:pegr@sab.wels.net)>.



# CROSS OF LIFE

## MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO

### Finding the common denominator

Julie K. Wietzke

**I**t's Friday night. Reggae music is playing in the background. People are talking and laughing. Some begin moving to the beat. Soon everyone in the room—including a 75-year-old Romanian man—is dancing to the island music.

What doesn't belong here? (This is a trick question!) Actually nothing and no one is out of place. This is a typical gathering for Cross of Life, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, a mission congregation of 63 members from more than 12 different nationalities.

Although members come from various cultures and races, they all have something in common—faith in their Savior and the desire to spread that faith into the diverse, multicultural city of Mississauga.

### Finding the right location

Located right outside of Toronto, Mississauga is considered one of the fastest growing cities in Canada due to the number of immigrants settling in the area. Houses are being built by the thousands to accommodate the people. But the neighborhoods aren't defined by culture.

"All different people from all different races are really scattered around," says Joel Schulz, pastor at Cross of Life. "Down most of our streets, it's hard to find three houses in a row of people with the same skin color, culture, or racial background."

Holding worship services in its target neighborhood provides common ground to the community-minded group of Cross of Life's members and prospects.

Yet Schulz didn't know this when he first came to Mississauga in 1999. He was assigned to restart an exploratory that had been working out of the neighboring community of Oakville. To stay close to existing members, he began holding worship in a plush civic center in downtown Mississauga, about 15 minutes away from his target neighborhood.

Schulz invited people to services, used Travel-Canvass-Witness teams, and "basically became a telemarketer." Although it was building its prospect list, Cross of Life only had about 30 to 40 visitors in the first year and a half. "We were too far away," says



Members of a Travel-Canvass-Witness team teach neighborhood children about soccer and Jesus at a one-week soccer/Bible camp.

Schulz. "We thought we needed a 'nice' place to meet, but [prospects] didn't care what the building looked like. They wanted something they could walk to."

When the church had no visitors on Christmas Eve 2000, members decided that night that the church needed a new location.

Two months later Cross of Life began holding services in a school gym in the middle of its target area. New visitors came every week in that first month. Since then Cross of Life has had hundreds of visitors each year and is well-known in its community.

### Building relationships

But it didn't become well-known overnight. Moving into the target neighborhood helped, but the members needed to gain trust and build relationships with the people whom they were serving. Because the church's neighborhood had more kids age seven and under than any other Toronto neighborhood, the congregation knew that it needed to reach out to the children.

After having several successful one-day programs for neighborhood children, the church's prospect list continued to grow. But Schulz felt that something more was needed. In spring 2001, he came up with the idea of having an event that would appeal to all cultures—a one-week soccer/Bible camp. By interspersing soccer



drills with Bible truths, Schulz and members of a Travel-Canvass-Witness team reached 85 children with the truth about Jesus and strengthened the church's community image.

Those children then shared the message of God's truth with their parents, and some of those parents began attending Bible information classes. Three families joined the church; others are still in classes. Plans are in place for the fourth annual camp this summer.

### Showing love

While all these things may have helped get their foot in the door, God's true Word and members filled with love for each other and the lost keep people coming back.

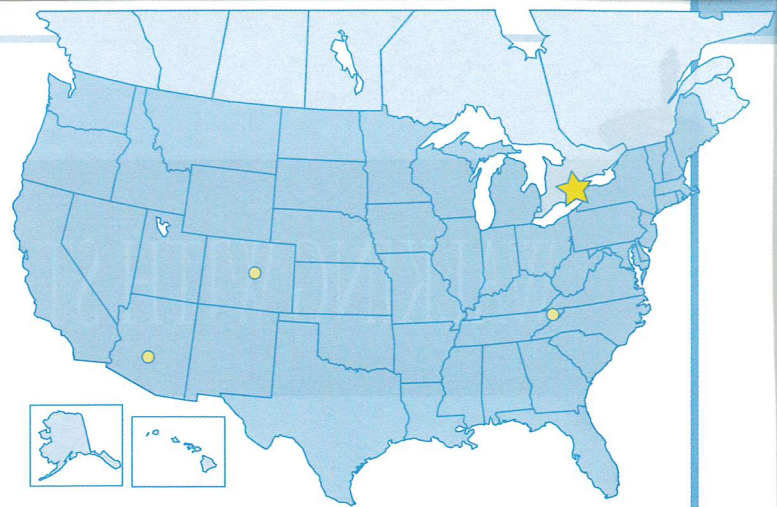
Lloyd Stacey, who was formerly unchurched, attended Cross of Life for the first time when his sister and brother-in-law were visiting him and encouraged him to attend. He went back the following week. "My eyes were opened as if for the first time," says Stacey. "I can recall a voice inside me saying, 'Where have you been all this time? You need to be here!' I have had a hunger for God's Word ever since."



Neighborhood children at a one-day Bible camp called "Noah's Ark 4 Kids."

Lester Chandoo never went to church in Trinidad because "at home, church was a big fashion show." He attended several churches after he and his wife moved to Canada in the mid 1980s. But only after he took Bible information classes at Cross of Life did he see the whole truth and feel the love of his Savior and his family in Christ. "It's different to see the joy and fellowship that you have on a Sunday and even on days other than Sunday," says Chandoo. "[In other churches] people invite you because they know what you do or who you are. They don't invite you because you're a person. Here you're treated like people."

And you're treated like friends. "We have fellowship every Sunday after worship, and I can see and feel genuine love," says Stacey. Members and prospects also regularly get together during the week for fellowship



★ Featured congregation    ○ Congregation already featured

## QUICK FACTS

Cross of Life, <[www.crossoflife.net](http://www.crossoflife.net)>:

- is located in a highly unchurched area. One Mississauga pastor stated, "If five percent of people went to church on Sunday, there wouldn't be enough churches to go to."
- has members from countries such as the United States, Canada, Romania, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Vietnam, China, Brazil, and Colombia.
- has 14 people attending four different Bible information classes a week.
- has nine people in the Congregational Evangelist program.

events—or just for dinner. Members are excited about the Word and are making connections with others so they can share their joy.

### Plans for the future

In September 2003, Cross of Life entered the Mission Development Phase of the Board for Home Missions and is on its way to being self-supporting. Members are excited by the news: "It provides me with a level of comfort that my new church is going to be around, and I don't have to worry about looking for another one," says Stacey.

But challenges still abound. The school gymnasium works well for worship, but Schulz and Staff Minister Kevin Walker hold all meetings, Bible classes, and some fellowship events in their homes. If classes keep growing, space will become an issue. Even though a land search committee has been formed, land is scarce, so scarce that hardly any churches in Mississauga have their own building. Prices are high as well, with four or five acres of land costing millions of dollars.

Yet the zeal for saving souls continues to bring this diverse group together. "It's exciting seeing God's Word work," says Schulz, "not only as we grow in numbers but also as we grow in faith."

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





## WALKING WITH ST. JOHN

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5



# JESUS' RESURRECTION

The resurrection chapters in the fourth Gospel reaffirm the ultimate good news that faith in Jesus is the sum and substance of Christian life on earth.

Theodore J. Hartwig

These resurrection chapters in the fourth Gospel fix attention on three truths to comfort believers. First, they reaffirm this Gospel's ultimate good news that faith in Jesus is the sum and substance of Christian life on earth. Next, they reveal the entirely new human existence into which Jesus entered with his resurrection and thus also hint at the nature of our resurrected bodies as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15:49. Also, these chapters, so full of vivid, you-are-there descriptions, offer unprejudiced believers a final assurance that John's Gospel, as well as the other three, is so clear in its integrity that, as a Christian historian stated so well, it carries its own self-confirmation or self-ratification.

### **They were overjoyed when they saw the Lord (20:1-31)**

Both the integrity and vividness of John's reporting appear as he tells of the first visits to the Lord's gravesite. His own youthfulness that advantaged him in the race to the

tomb restrained him from entering it. Impetuous Peter, however, was not inhibited from barging right in. But perceptive John came ahead in catching the resurrection significance of the tidy grave cloths.

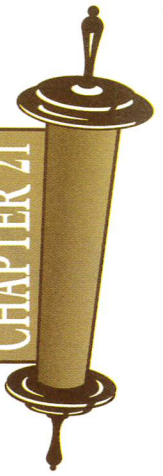
As for the new existence of Jesus and the new relationship with his friends, that too is immediately apparent in his morning encounter with Mary and evening appearance to the disciples. The context dictated Jesus' caution that Mary should not hold on to him. The old contacts with all of his friends belonged to the past, to be replaced by a new unifying bond in his word. Holding Jesus was not the issue with the disciples, but in that context, their need for peace of mind and heart. In conferring such peace through his spoken word, Jesus also empowered them to grant this same gift with his word to every repentant sinner.

The encounter with Thomas is a lesson on the priority of faith

over the senses. Since this disciple's familiar name and his nickname both have the meaning of "twin," it is highly possible that he had a twin brother and, therefore, had personal experience with mistaken identities. This would add weight to his makeup as a man of practical reason. He would not be persuaded by his friends' repeated assurances that they had seen the risen Lord. His mind was made up. He would be convinced only by sight and by the touch of Jesus' wounds found in no other living person. When he came to his senses and called the Lord his God, Jesus did not rebuff this testimony.

That is how the inspired Word wins hearers to the truth. It does not overwhelm ears with insistent logic aimed at convincing the intellect about what is a fact. Such is the way of the law. Instead, it speaks its truths to the heart by simply telling the story of what happened. This is the winsome way of the gospel.





### Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias (21:1-14)

The fourth Gospel's last chapter records the final, vividly described experiences of an eyewitness. In-sightful John and impulsive Peter, two close friends, furnished a true-to-life example of opposites attracted to each other. Jesus' question at the lakeshore casually exhibits his omniscience over the failure of the fishing venture. The stupendous number of fish caught is reminiscent of an earlier fishing expedition recorded in Luke 5.

### Feed my lambs; take care of my sheep (21:15-25)

Then Jesus gave a spoken assurance to Peter, here addressed three times as Simon rather than the rock man Peter, that his threefold denial had already been forgiven and that he was reinstated into partnership with his friends to care for the Lord's sheep and to shepherd others into the Lord's sheepfold. Only once, with his first question, did Jesus sharply remind Peter of his former overweening arrogance to claim a love for Jesus above that of the other disciples. Now a thoroughly chastened Peter responds that though he was not capable of the Lord's perfect love to him, he nevertheless did hold Jesus in high affection, and if he,

Peter, could not even be sure of this, then Jesus certainly would be.

The Lord's closing words to Peter heighten the comfort by assuring this disciple of the steadfastness of his confirmed faith. He will seal his faith with a martyr's death. Nothing more is said about it. At the time John wrote near the end of the first century, it could have been commonly known when and how Peter died. As for himself, now for the first time writing personally, John had to squelch the rumor that he, approaching the century mark, would live until the Lord's second return.

## The fourth Gospel's last chapter records the final, vividly described experiences of an eyewitness.

### Postscript

In concluding this eight-month journey with St. John, a final question vital to understanding his Gospel as well as the entire Christian faith needs to be asked and answered. It is a matter seized upon by skeptics and unbelievers to ridicule the resurrection as a pious legend fabricated during the first or second generation of the church's history. Why did the risen Lord reveal himself only to his own, not to the

general public as in the past? The answer: For the same reason that he rejected attempts to make him a king after feeding the 5,000. "Shock and awe" methods do not win hearts to a Savior from sin. By natural inclination people want a glorious Savior without a suffering Savior. They want to seize heaven by force rather than take God's commandments seriously and repent of sin. They want an Easter without a Good Friday, a "rah, rah" instead of a *mea culpa, mea culpa*.

Why then did the risen Lord appear only to his own? As a personal friend said so well: "Only those who have experienced Christ's death for us will know how to rejoice in his resurrection without regarding it, like society at large, as a free pass to an eternity as Christ-less as their present existence. Resurrection faith must be meshed with passion faith or it becomes mere triumphalism." The risen Lord did not appear to the general public for the public's own good and for its judgment. ✨

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

*To read Prof. Hartwig's complete commentary on John's Gospel, go to <[www.wels.net/nlarch/search.pl](http://www.wels.net/nlarch/search.pl)> and search the "author" category for Theodore Hartwig.*



# Making music and sipping fine wine

**People have found many ways to abuse God's gift of sexual intimacy. But within marriage, God doesn't just allow it. He looks with favor on it.**

**John D. Schuetze**

**I**sn't there something terribly wrong with sex today? Ask the wife who just discovered that her husband is addicted to Internet pornography. Ask the parents who just learned that their teenage daughter is pregnant. Ask the father who was just told that his son is gay. Ask the grandparents who just heard that their granddaughter moved in with her boyfriend. With all the problems associated with sex, something must be wrong with it.

There's no doubt that people have found many ways to abuse God's gift of sexual intimacy. Yet the problem is not with the gift. God created us as sexual beings with sexual desires. He gave man and woman sexual intimacy as a gift, a blessing, and a benefit. It was part of the world that God declared to be "very good."

But what about after the fall into sin? Haven't the Madonnas and Larry Flynts of our sinful society degraded sex so much that nothing good can come out of it?



## **A blessing from God**

To answer this question let's look at the Old Testament book of Song of Songs. People have interpreted the Song in many ways. Some have seen it as an allegory that speaks about the love Christ has for his church. Others interpret the Song purely as a poem about the physical love between a man and a woman where sexual references abound.

I believe this Song is best understood as describing the love between a husband and wife, with allusions to that greater love between God and his people. We might call Song of Songs the mirror image of Ephesians 5. Instead of using God's love as a model for husbands and wives, the Song uses human love between husband and wife as a reminder of God's

close relationship with his people. This picture is common in Scripture. Through the prophet Hosea the Lord tells us, "In that day you will call me 'my husband.' I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord" (Hosea 2:16,19,20).

As we look at this Song of Songs, this greatest or best of songs, we see that God speaks about human love, including sexual intimacy. In the opening words of the Song, the woman states, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine." The word that Scripture uses here for "love" refers to a sexual love. In his commentary on Song of Songs, John Brug translates this word



as “lovemaking.” He explains, “The word which is translated lovemaking is not the generic Hebrew word for love, but a word which refers to caresses or other expressions of love.”<sup>1</sup>

As the Song unfolds, God gives us a glimpse of sexual intimacy between a husband and wife. It is not done in a crass or tasteless manner but in a way that shows that sexual intimacy is a blessing from God. God encourages husband and wife to celebrate his blessing of sexual intimacy. Through the Song, God shows that he gives sexual intimacy not an “X” rating but an “EXcellent” rating. Within marriage, sexual intimacy has God’s approval. He doesn’t just allow it. He looks with favor on it.

intimacy, intellectual intimacy, creative intimacy, recreational intimacy, work intimacy, crisis intimacy, emotional intimacy, and spiritual intimacy. They conclude, “There are more areas in which creative closeness can grow than most couples even suspect. The music, which couples make together, comes from playing a variety of combinations of strings. Each couple should aim at discovering the particular harmony and melody of intimacy, which they find most satisfying. Their musical pattern will vary at different periods in their marriage.”<sup>2</sup>

Within marriage, couples enjoy many different kinds of intimacy. Sexual intimacy is but one way that they express their unity and harmony.

needs to be picked at the right time, and wine needs time to age. A fine wine only gets better with time.

So also with God’s gift of sexual intimacy. Like fine wine, it is worth the wait. Like fine wine, it gladdens the heart of husband and wife. As the woman in the Song proclaims, “Your love is more delightful than wine.” Later in the Song she adds, “May the wine go straight to my lover, flowing gently over lips and teeth. I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me” (7:9,10).

Making music and sipping fine wine—that is what God’s gift of sexual intimacy is all about. It expresses the unique harmony and unity God gives to husband and wife. When

*Sexual intimacy is a beautiful way that husband and wife celebrate their unity.*

### **A way to express oneness**

Two things about sexual intimacy stand out in the Song. The first is harmony, and the second is its status as a precious gift.

Within marriage the husband and wife are one. Sexual intimacy does not bring about this harmony or oneness. Rather sexual intimacy is the practice of it. Such intimacy is unique to the marriage relationship. Through the sexual union the wife and husband express the deep and close oneness they share in marriage. To engage in sexual activity outside of marriage is to practice something that doesn’t exist—harmony and oneness. No wonder it often leaves some sour notes ringing in people’s ears.

In their book *The Intimate Marriage*, Charlotte and Howard Clinebell explore the different kinds of intimacy in marriage. They speak about sexual

It is but one way that they play the music of marriage. It is but one way that they express the oneness that God desires to have with us human beings. His Son brought peace between God and people. Christ’s prayer is that we may be one with the Father. Sexual intimacy is a beautiful way that husband and wife celebrate their unity. When husband and wife share sexual intimacy, they don’t just make love. They also make music and express the harmony and oneness of marriage.

### **A gift worth the wait**

When sexual intimacy is kept within marriage, we can still hear the echo of Eden’s blessing, “It is very good.” Within marriage, sexual intimacy is like fine wine. Last summer I visited Ukraine and learned that some of the best wines in Europe are produced in the Crimea. The secret is time. The grapes need time to grow. The fruit

kept within the confines of marriage, it is something that husband and wife can celebrate. And it is something that God doesn’t just tolerate. It is something that he blesses. When used in this way, the blessing of the Song still stands, “Eat, friends! Drink! And be intoxicated with lovemaking.”<sup>3</sup>



*John Schuetze is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*

<sup>1</sup>John F. Brug, *Commentary on Song of Songs*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Charlotte H. and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *The Intimate Marriage*, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970, pp. 28, 29.

<sup>3</sup>Translation from *Commentary on Song of Songs* by John F. Brug, p. 55.



# WHATEVER

## Even disappointment is sweet

I was devastated when I flubbed my audition, but eventually I realized that God had a better plan for me.

Katherine Thompson

For violinists, being concertmaster is the best it gets. The concertmaster is the violinist who comes on stage at a concert after everyone else, bows, and looks important while everyone pretends to tune. (Really, they tuned backstage.)

But the real reason I wanted to be concertmaster of my youth orchestra was for the other 90 percent of the duties. I wanted to be the intermediary between the conductor and the string section; to decide bowings and articulation; and to dispense wisdom to all my lowlier colleagues, guiding them towards my enlightened interpretation of the music. Okay, I also wanted the prestige.

**Every first violinist has a fair shot at the position.** The conductor decides based on an audition. I had a month to prepare. I practiced every day, sometimes 20 minutes on one measure. No one could deny that I worked hard.

My teacher was pleased with my work. He liked my interpretation and had little to say about anything, except that sometimes I forgot to breathe. He was pretty sure I would be a concertmaster.

Most important, I took my request to God. Every night I pestered him with my desire like the widow of the parable did the judge. I appended one thing to the end of all my pleas, "Yet not my will be done, O Lord, but thine be done in this matter." I could take "no" for an answer.

**Well, you guessed it, I totally bombed the audition.** Completely flubbed. Goofed, messed up, miffed it. It was a musical train wreck. Three days later, a letter came. Three concertmasters—Derek, Krista, and Laura—but not Katie. I cried.

For three days I carried my grief with me. I could not be consoled. My mind kept returning to every-

thing I could have done better. I didn't know how much disappointment could hurt. I have unsuccessfully auditioned before and have not been too affected. This time I was devastated. I wasn't jealous. I wasn't angry with God, the conductor, the concertmasters, or myself. I was simply disappointed. I felt like a failure, and I wondered if I was really cut out to be an orchestra member.

**God let me be sad for three days, and then he sent me a comforting echo from my childhood.** We had a tape of Bible verse songs, and one came floating back. It takes its catchy lyrics from Romans 8:28: "All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose."

At the next rehearsal, I was seated next to Vicki, who was my first friend when I was new to this orchestra and unfamiliar with all the other first violins. I play my best sitting next to her, and really, it is the best place for me. I resolved that God had planned this sweet gift for me, and my task was laid out. Instead of leading, my job was to follow him, playing my heart out to the glory of God.

This pattern repeats itself for everyone. In every life there are dreams of glory that God gently refuses to grant. However, God has also promised that he will cause all things to work ultimately in our favor. It is never easy to take, but for Christians with the hope of heaven, disappointment is sweet. God has a better plan.

Katherine Thompson, a homeschooled senior, is a member of Zion, Cambria, Wisconsin.





# It's all about Jesus

Mark J. Lenz

In the ancient world, founders of religions did not say the things Jesus said about himself. They saw themselves as men with divine messages to share. Muhammad insisted he was a prophet whose message came from Allah. Sankara claimed to be an interpreter of early Hindu religion. Gautama was known as the last of a succession of Buddhas.

But none claimed to be the Son of God!

Many are willing to acknowledge that Jesus was a good man or a prophet who said some profound things. But when one considers what the Bible says, and particularly what Jesus said about himself, those become impossible alternatives. The Gospel of John makes this abundantly clear.

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

- John's Gospel was written toward the end of the first century when some were denying that Jesus was true God. For what three purposes does John say he wrote his Gospel (20:31)?
- The first chapter of John's Gospel establishes that Jesus is the Son of God. According to verse 14, who is the "Word" in 1:1? What does verse 1 say about the Word? How has God made himself known (1:18)?
- In John's Gospel, various people offer testimonies that Christ is the Son of God. What is the testimony of John the Baptist (1:34)? Nathanael (1:49)?
- John records eight miracles of Christ (besides his resurrection) to prove that he is the Son of God. Six are found only in John's Gospel.
  1. What, according to verse 11, did the miracle recorded in 2:1-11 reveal?
  2. What effect did the miracle recorded in 4:46-54 have on the official and his household?
  3. Why were the Jews determined to kill Jesus following the miracle recorded in 5:1-9? See verses 16-18.
  4. What did the man who was healed (9:1-7) say about Jesus (9:33)?
  5. What miracle is recorded in chapter 11? Why did the chief priests make plans to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus (12:10,11)?
  6. What were the reactions of John and Peter to the miracle recorded in 21:1-6? See verse 7.
- John records that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. How does Jesus identify himself in 3:18? How does Jesus describe his relationship with the Father in 5:19-25? What does Jesus reveal about himself in 8:58? What is the significance of the Jews' reaction in 8:59? What does Jesus say about himself in 10:30? Why did the Jews threaten to stone him in 10:31,33,36? In 11:4 how does Jesus identify himself? What does Jesus say about himself in 14:7? What insights do Jesus' words in 14:9-11 provide? In 19:7 why did the Jews insist that Jesus must die?
- Whenever Jesus referred to himself as "I AM" he was identifying himself with the name that God used to reveal himself in the Old Testament. The term I AM is the root of the Hebrew personal name for God, *Yahweh*. John records a number of symbols or images Jesus linked with the words "I am" to explain his purpose for coming to earth. Identify the "I am"s of Jesus in the following verses: 6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1. Explain the spiritual significance of the symbols or images.
- In combating Arianism, Athanasius said the Son must be God to be the Savior of all people. Why? List additional comforts that result from knowing that Jesus is the Son of God.

*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](http://www.wels.net)>, jumpword "fic," and click on "It's all about Jesus." Answers will be available after April 5.



# Martin Luther College graduates

On Dec. 17, 2003, 13 students graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.



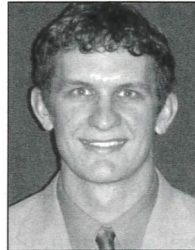
**Ruth M. Baur**  
Brillion, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary education



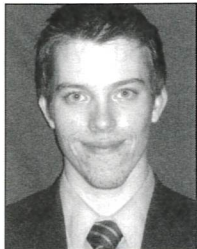
**Martha C. Carne**  
Columbia, Md.  
B.S. in elementary-early childhood education



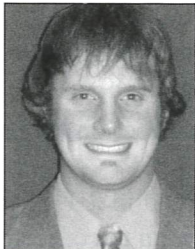
**Melissa R. Hahnke**  
Manitowoc, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Casey A. Holtz**  
Appleton, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Christopher W. Maki**  
Oconomowoc, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Benjamin J. Priebe**  
Bay City, Mich.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Megan J. Priem**  
Littleton, Colo.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Cora A. Quintanilla**  
Shawano, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Tarah E. Schoell**  
New Ulm, Minn.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Richard L. Stockton Jr.**  
Portage, Mich.  
B.S. in elementary-secondary education



**Benjamin L. Strackbein**  
New Ulm, Minn.  
B.S. in staff ministry



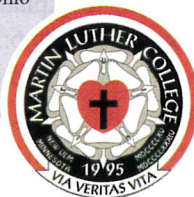
**Rachel J. Voeks**  
Juneau, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary education



**Michael C. Wisniewski**  
Madison, Wis.  
B.S. in elementary-secondary education

### Assignments for MLC graduates

**Baur, Ruth M.**, to Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio  
**Holtz, Casey A.**, to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.  
**Priebe, Benjamin J.**, to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.  
**Voeks, Rachel J.**, to Zion, Toledo, Ohio



## District conventions

**Arizona-California:** June 14-16  
Arizona Golf & Conference Center,  
Mesa, Ariz. Contact: Pastor Kenneth  
Pasch, 480/986-0466.

**Dakota-Montana:** June 15-17  
Great Plains Lutheran High School,  
Watertown, S.D. Contact: Pastor  
Stephen Geiger, 605/665-4793.

**Michigan:** June 8-10  
Michigan Lutheran Seminary,  
Saginaw, Mich. Contact: Pastor  
James Seelow, 989/781-0980.

**Minnesota:** June 8-10  
Martin Luther College, New Ulm,  
Minn. Contact: Pastor Michael  
Hatzung, 651/777-5771.

**Nebraska:** June 14-16  
Nebraska Lutheran High School,  
Waco, Neb. Contact: Pastor Gary  
Bode, 712/276-3241.

**North Atlantic:** June 15, 16  
Shenandoah University, Winchester,  
Va. Contact: Pastor Jeffrey Wegner,  
508/761-5051.

**Northern Wisconsin:** June 13-15  
Fox Valley Lutheran High School,  
Appleton, Wis. Contact: Pastor  
Ronald Szep, 920/788-4408.

**Pacific Northwest:** June 10, 11  
Evergreen Lutheran High School,  
Des Moines, Wash. Contact: Pastor  
Jon Buchholz, 253/839-0731.

**South Atlantic:** June 7-9  
Holiday Inn, Indian Rocks  
Beach, Fla. Contact: Pastor Robert  
M. Krueger, 865/966-3112.

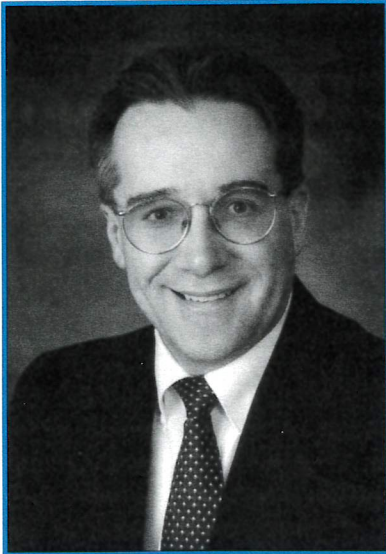
**South Central:** June 7, 8  
Calvary Lutheran Church,  
Dallas, Texas. Contact: Pastor  
Christopher Goelzer, 210/682-6898.

**Southeastern Wisconsin:** June 8, 9  
Wisconsin Lutheran College,  
Milwaukee, Wis. Contact: Pastor  
Robert Pasbrig, 414/259-8122.

**Western Wisconsin:** June 6-8  
Luther Preparatory School,  
Watertown, Wis. Contact: Pastor  
Mark Johnston, 715/635-7672.



## New president at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary



Paul Wendland accepted the call to be the next president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Wendland has been a professor at the seminary since the 2001-02 school year and is currently the director of the seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute.

David Valleskey will retire as president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., at the end of the 2003-04 school year. On Feb. 12, current seminary professor Paul Wendland accepted the call to serve as the school's next president.

"I will miss both the students and the faculty," says Valleskey, who served at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for 20 years, the last eight of those years as president. "The students became my congregation, and the faculty is family."

Valleskey notes that Wendland "has a broad

background that will serve him well as seminary president. He is confessional, evangelical, mission-minded, culturally sensitive, appropriately flexible, and zealous about both nurturing and equipping the saints—the same qualities we strive to instill in our students."

During his ministry, Wendland served as a pastor/missionary in Zambia, Central Africa; Hopkins, Mich.; and Salt Lake City, Utah. He then taught at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Wendland's new position will be demanding. He notes, "Rising tuition, salary, and health care costs, coupled with a depleted student aid fund, create

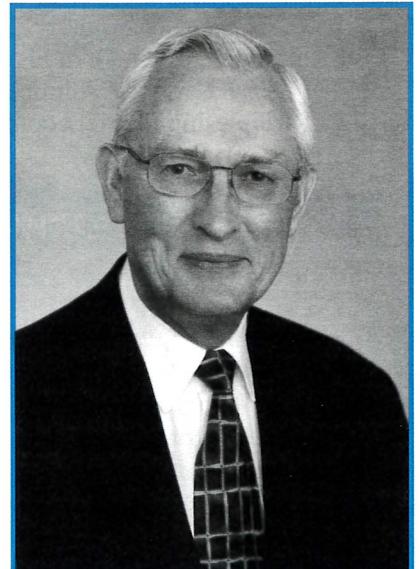
challenges that we face not only on this campus but across our synod's entire worker training system. I also think that it's always a challenge for any generation to remember the gospel, to remember it clearly, and to confess it in a way where the good news of what Jesus has done for us permeates our thinking, our speaking, and our dealings with one another."

Synod president Karl Gurgel views Wendland's job as vital. "The seminary and its president have a major impact on the synod because they're training our future leaders—setting the course for the next generation of called workers."

Wendland agrees. "People look to the seminary as an institution that helps set a theological tone for our synod. I think they're very much concerned about the type of pastoral candidate that we graduate. I think people are looking for graduates who will be confessional, scriptural, mission-minded, and evangelical."

Gurgel is confident that Wendland will maintain the strong tradition of excellence at the seminary. "Paul Wendland is dedicated to ministry," notes Gurgel. "He is also someone in whom people readily and quickly place their confidence."

Yet Wendland is quick to deflect the focus from himself. "My confidence in this calling is certainly not found in any sense of myself," he insists. "I know me. I know that I am a sinful man. My confidence is that my Lord Jesus is asking me to do this now and he's given me such fine men on the faculty to work with. I feel confident that he will supply what I lack and will give me his good Spirit."



David Valleskey will retire as president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at the end of the 2003-04 school year. He and his wife, Janice, will then move to San Marcos, Calif.

### Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

As WELS' theological training ground, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary teaches biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology in a four-year format that includes one year of practical experience in a parish setting. The seminary awards a master of divinity degree to students who complete its traditional program.

In 2003, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary established a Pastoral Studies Institute for non-traditional students who want to study for the pastoral ministry but do not fit into the traditional seminary structure. These men may receive bachelor of divinity degrees.

During the 2003-04 school year, 15 seminary faculty members have been preparing 185 men to serve as pastors in WELS congregations.



## Tapping the potential

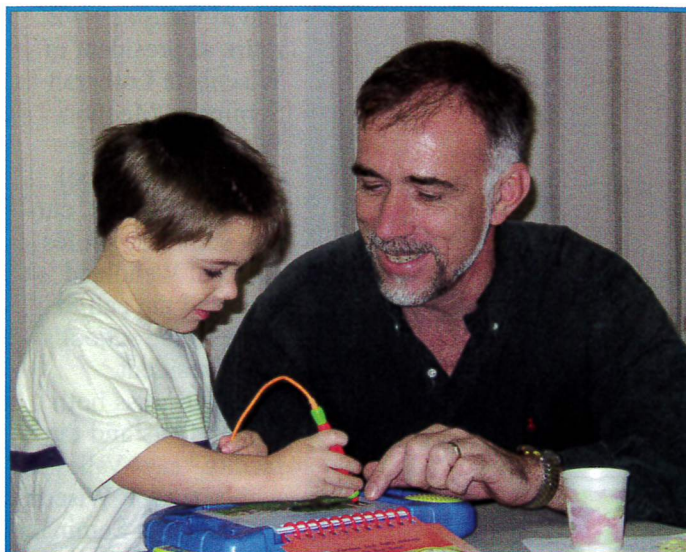
Dave Kehl broke the pattern he had going when he took the call to be the administrator for the Commission on Adult Discipleship. Up to that point, he had bounced back and forth between congregations named Good Shepherd and St. John, beginning in 1977 with his vicar year at Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb. From there, he served St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.; Good Shepherd, Attleboro, Mass.; St. John, St. Johns, Antigua; and Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla. Strange, but true.

But what does this have to do with Kehl's new call? Well, it shows the diversity of his ministry experiences. Old and young; large and small; from the Midwest to the Caribbean, Kehl has seen the gamut of congregational experiences—which makes him a great candidate to help develop resources for a wide range of congregations.

Kehl says, "The cultures change from place to place, but people's basic spiritual needs stay the same—primarily to know their Savior Jesus and understand how to be a Christian in the world but not of the world."

He continues, "The Commission on Adult Discipleship is a place of untapped potential for many congregations. There are so many resources available that some may not know where to start. But I believe that one of the most important things that we can do in the synod is to help adults grow in their spiritual lives—and that is where Adult Discipleship comes in. Spiritual growth is really the backbone of all other areas of church life. We know that pastors don't have time to develop materials, so we will help them with that, so that they can focus on other areas of ministry."

Kehl's first plan of attack in his new position is to listen—to Parish Services' Administrator Bruce Becker, to Adult Discipleship district coordinators, to Adult



Dave Kehl plays with a three-year-old preschool student at Little Lambs, a ministry of Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla., Kehl's former congregation.

Discipleship commission members, and to parish pastors. "I want to call a lot of pastors and ask them what they need. How can I serve them? Then I can formulate where I should focus my efforts."

### More about Dave Kehl

**Family:** wife Joan; daughters Erika, Heidi, and Lisa; son Jonathan

**Experience:** North Atlantic District youth discipleship coordinator, South Atlantic District worship coordinator, Caribbean mission developer, Caribbean Christian Training Institute director

## Benefits of Forward in Christ

The Feb. 13, 1938, edition of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, listed these benefits of this WELS "church paper."

1. It saves you from becoming ingrown in your parish, without any information or interest in anything beyond its limits.
2. It widens your horizon and gives you a sense of fellowship with other folks of your faith, both in this and other countries.
3. It provides you, at regular intervals, with good, clean, wholesome reading which, instead of doing harm, as much current literature

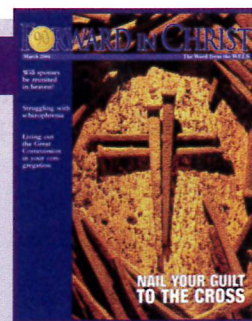
does, will do only good.

4. If there are children and young people in the home, the paper will do much to foster in them a much needed and much to be desired loyalty to the Church of Christ.
5. It will help to steady you in the faith of your fathers, as over against a bewildering Babel-din of cults that seek to win you to themselves.
6. It gives you an opportunity to render indirect but valuable service to others by improving the paper itself; for the larger the number of subscribers, the larger will be

the income and therewith the means of improving.

*What was true in 1938 still holds true today.*

To order a subscription to Forward in Christ, call Northwestern Publishing House. 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8. Milwaukee, 414/615-5785. Or order on-line, <[www.nph.net/periodicals](http://www.nph.net/periodicals)>. Charge it—Discover, MasterCard, or Visa—or bill it.







## Looking back

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

### From the Oct. 19, 1952, issue—

Synod President John F. Brenner wrote this article titled "Get out the vote."

"The present pre-election political furor has brought about a decided program in many communities 'To get out the vote,' to 'Vote as you please but please vote.'

"In some communities the local churches have been approached to take part in this campaign, to set up a campaign within their own congregations. . . .

"Such a campaign is hardly necessary in a Christian congregation. Now don't get us wrong. We are neither unpatriotic nor disloyal to our country. . . . But such a campaign is unnecessary because the church has a different approach. It works on a different plane.

"The citizen who is a Christian . . .

will find that his life is guided by the Holy Spirit. He will also be a good citizen. His judgment will be guided by God's Word and the same may be said of his general conduct.

"Christ told us, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's' (Matthew 22:21). The Scriptures tell us, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God' (Romans 13:1). Our children learn these facts when they study the Fourth Commandment. These words clearly indicate the Christian's duty over against his government.

"Since the casting of a ballot by a citizen is as much a part of our system of government as obeying the traffic laws, etc., it most certainly becomes the obligation of the Christian citizen to perform that duty. His vote will be

guided by his Christian judgment. Surely this will mean that he will be able to voice his judgment over against unmoral practices should he discover them in his government. He can voice his approval or even aid in obtaining the political services of such who will carry out their administration in a moral and righteous manner.

"But as a church we are in the 'Father's Business' and that is the business of saving souls and leading them to Christ. There is neither time nor place to instruct the member to vote by a special campaign, much less how to vote. A Christian who is a faithful student of the Bible, a faithful attendant at the services of his church, and zealous in the work of the church, finds his guidance for his entire life in God's Word. That is the influence that the church has upon its members by virtue of preaching all of God's Word."

## A direct connection

"We are glad to be linked with you in his mission through the Mission Partners program. Thank you for your generous support of our church. We are so thankful to the Lord that we have an 'extended family' of faith, and we treasure the unity we share."

So begins an e-mail from home missionary Daniel Kramer to Tesha Kropidlowski. Kropidlowski, a member of St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash., has adopted Kramer's congregation, Peace in Jesus, Boise, Idaho, through WELS Mission Partners. Kropidlowski helps support Peace in Jesus financially and spiritually. Hear from Kropidlowski herself about this partnership.

**Q** Why did you decide to become a Mission Partner?

**A** I liked the idea of having a direct influence on a mission congregation. There is satisfaction in knowing that my donations are going directly to further God's kingdom in the mission field. I like praying to God on behalf of a specific congregation and pastor

instead of my generic "please bless all missions and missionaries around the world." I have only been involved for a short time, but I am very happy with my decision. I feel more connected to Christ's Great Commission and hope my efforts are encouraging and helpful.

**Q** How did you decide with whom to partner?

**A** I looked at the Internet list of mission partners and received brochures from my WELS planned giving counselor, Pastor Soukup. I prayed that the Lord would guide my decision. I knew that WELS' primary focus was on home missions, and I'm excited about reaching out to other cultures, so I decided on Peace in Jesus congregation to the Vietnamese in Boise, Idaho, and *Pan de Vida* (Bread of Life) Hispanic outreach in Santa Ana, Calif.

**Q** How has this partnership been a blessing to you and your family?

**A** I am excited to receive the mission updates from my two partner missions. My children were able

to see how Peace in Jesus celebrated the Vietnamese New Year in God's name. I received photos and a church bulletin in the Vietnamese language.

I was able to pray directly for blessings on the 12 new adult confirmands on January 25 at *Pan de Vida*. I also had my fifth- to seventh-grade Sunday School class make valentines with Bible verses proclaiming God's love in the Vietnamese and Spanish languages. I mailed the valentines to each of the missions. My children and I pray each night for the pastors and congregations by name and for specific needs they have identified. I can share the mission excitement with fellow members of my congregation. God promises his Word will never return to him empty, but will accomplish his purposes. I am blessed to be a part of his purposes!

*For more information, contact the Commission for Communication on Financial Support, 1-800-827-5482, or visit <[www.wels.net/mpg](http://www.wels.net/mpg)>.*



## 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.*

**Board for World Missions**  
414/256-3233



Multi-Language Publications has developed 119 full-color, portrait-size Bible history illustrations. The illustrations use Semitic-looking Bible characters in biblically and historically accurate settings. These illustrations, created by Glenn Meyer, are available in digital form with a printed thumbnail album for the cost of shipping and handling to world and multicultural mission fields in fellowship with WELS. A grant from WELS' 150th anniversary thank offering helped make this project possible. Obtain copies directly from Multi-Language Publications, 1-800-876-1388.

**Multi-Language Publications has completed translating the eight *I Am* tracts into Spanish.** The Spanish edition of these tracts uses photographs of Latinos and scenery identifiable with Latin America. The Commission on Evangelism and Northwestern Publishing House produced the original tracts. Purchase copies directly from Multi-Language Publications, 1-800-876-1388.

**Commission on Parish Schools**  
414/256-3221

**The Commission on Parish Schools and the Board for Parish Services approved a new accreditation process for WELS schools.** The process involves thorough self-study based upon 10 accreditation standards, site visitation by a team of outside individuals, and accountability for annual school improvement. Accredited schools strengthen their ministries, increase opportunities for outreach into their communities, and have greater access to corporate and foundation grant monies. Twenty-five WELS schools, including two area Lutheran high schools, have volunteered to field test the new accreditation process.

**Board for Home Missions**  
414/256-3284

**At its February 2004 meeting the Board for Home Missions (BHM) concurred with the action of the respective district mission boards in discontinuing BHM funding** for efforts in Grenada, West Indies, and Redeemer, Roswell, N.M. The board also concurred with the action of the congregation and the Northern Wisconsin district mission board in closing Risen Savior, Cedar Grove, Wis.

**Mission Establishing Phase status** without subsidy was given to Phoenix (South Mountain/Laveen), Ariz., and The Villages, Fla. This means outreach groups in these areas, under the guidance of the district mission board and the BHM, are working toward becoming congregations.

**Mission Development Phase status** was granted to Prince of Peace, Englewood, Fla., and Hope, Oconomowoc/Dousman, Wis. These congregations continue to organize themselves as they persist in reaching out to the community.

**Funding was provided to help establish a part-time plus campus ministry** in Oshkosh, Wis.

## District news

### South Atlantic

**Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Blaise**, a member of Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn., was killed in action while flying over northern Iraq on Jan. 23. Twenty-nine-year-old Blaise was the pilot-in-command on a Kiowa Warrior helicopter. He is survived by his wife, Kate, and his parents.

**Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla.**, opened its Center for Christian Child Care on Jan. 6. The center offers both childcare and preschool.

**Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.**, combined the efforts of its three youth programs to reach out to the community. On Sunday nights, an average of 44 young people gather for worship and then break out into groups in several areas of interest, including woodworking, stained glass, cooking, and drama. Fifteen adults are trained as leaders and personal mentors to the youth.

On Feb. 29, **Northdale Lutheran School, Tampa, Fla.**, dedicated its school building. For the past two years the school has operated out of the church's fellowship hall.

On Dec. 21, 2003, 20 new members joined **Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.**, by transfer and confirmation.

**Beautiful Savior, Summerville, S.C.**, dedicated its new church on Jan. 25.

### Northern Wisconsin

Darcy Rahjes, head cheer team coach at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., reports that four WELS high schools competed in the Wisconsin State Cheer Competition on Jan. 31.

**Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee**, came in first and **Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton**, came in fifth in division two for large schools. **Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson**, came in first and **Winnebago Lutheran Academy** came in third in division three for large schools.

### Happy Anniversary!

**MI**—On Nov. 30, 2003 members of Grace, St. Joseph, Mich., celebrated **Kenneth Holte's** 40th year in full-time ministry. Holte is a teacher/principal/staff minister.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MI—John Eich; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Christopher Kruschel.



## LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

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

### The music man

Imagine a band consisting of an alto saxophone, one trumpet, a drum, and two flutes. It could be a director's worst nightmare. Not for Rich Pinski, director of grade school bands at Northland Lutheran High School, Wausau, Wis. For him, finding compositions to fit the musicians is simple—he'll sit down and arrange the pieces himself.

"[Arranging music] started as a hobby but turned into a necessity," says Pinski, "because Lutheran school bands don't always have full instrumentation. Also, music is not written to accommodate beginner- and advanced-level abilities in the same song. I write or rewrite the music to fit the band."

For the past 20 years, Pinski has directed band, choir, or the grade school band program at four WELS high schools—Luther, Onalaska, Wis.;

Shoreland, Somers, Wis.; Great Plains, Watertown, S.D.; and Northland. He is also a professional musician who performs a solo contemporary Christian concert and plays at restaurants and for parties, dances, and benefits.

In addition to rewriting pieces for his students, Pinski assists other band and choir directors by arranging songs to fit their needs. Even if there is not a part written for a certain instrument, Pinski will write a new part and incorporate it into the piece. He also arranges hymns and school songs, turning even the smallest group into a harmonious ensemble.

"Rich is a great resource for other directors," says Joan Hohenstein, organist and assistant choir director at St. John, Lake Benton, Minn. "They tell him what level students they have, what instruments, and the song they want to play, and he can rearrange the piece for them."



Rich Pinski is a man of many musical talents, which he enjoys sharing with other Christians.

Yes, Pinski has run into a few very disproportionate ensembles over the years. But add a piano, organ, synthesizer, or guitar part, and you have a band.

In true scriptural fashion Pinski's goal is getting kids together to "Praise God with instruments!"

To consult with Pinski about music, e-mail <rpinski@nlhs.org>.

Elizabeth Hudock

## World news

**Number of Lutherans increases in two-year period**—Over the last two years, the total number of Lutherans has increased by 570,000 to 66 million at the end of 2003, according to the latest statistics issued by the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva.

The fastest regional growth (9.3 percent) was recorded in Africa, where 1.1 million Lutherans were added over the last two years, pushing the number up to 13 million. In Asia, the number of Lutherans increased 7.3 million (up 2.5 percent).

The number of Lutherans in Europe, mostly due to losses in Scandinavia and Germany, dropped to 36 million (down 1.75 percent). The Lutheran Church of Australia

registered 75,100 members, a decrease of 9,900 (12 percent).

Lutheran World Federation has 136 member churches with a total membership of 62.3 million. Other more conservative churches are independent or belong to the International Lutheran Council (ILC).

*WELS does not belong to either of these organizations.*

ASSIST News Service, Feb. 20, 2004

**Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church celebrates 50th anniversary**—The *Lutherisches Theologisches Seminar Leipzig*, the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) in Germany,

celebrated its 50th anniversary in September. About 130 people attended the anniversary worship service on Sept. 27, 2003.

This year, nine students are at the seminary, including several international students.

The ELFK has about 1,500 members served by 15 pastors and three vicars. It is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, a group of Lutheran church bodies together with WELS that share a common confession.

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



## The ROC

What happens when four WELS churches in Watertown, Wis., decide to work together to open a youth recreation center? It's called the ROC.

Add in some coordination and planning; a devoted director and caring volunteers; a convenient location; pool, ping-pong, foosball, karaoke, video games, and computers; countless prayers; and God's grace and you have a successful Recreation and Outreach Center (ROC) for youth.

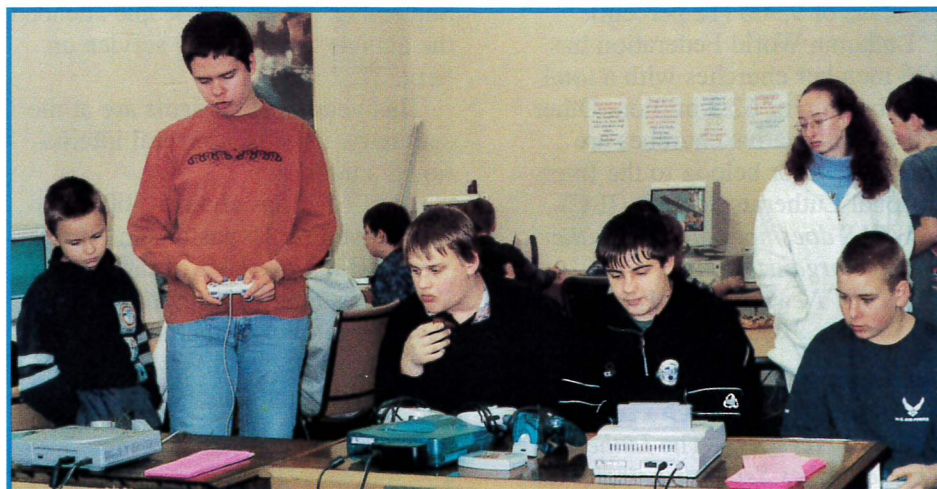
The center opened on Dec. 3, 2003. Since then, Pastor Tim Mueller, the ROC's director, reports that 10 to 25 teens attend each weeknight and 35 to 50 teens attend on Friday and Saturdays. More than 150 different teens have visited the ROC. The center is open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 3 to 9 PM and Fridays from 3 to 10 PM. Teens come to hang out, do homework, and play games. Each night an optional Bible study is offered. About 30 to 40 percent of teens attend these studies.

Sixteen-year-old Megan Kielbasa, who attends a Catholic church, says, "I started to go to the ROC a couple days before exams, which helped me out a lot. Then Pastor [Mueller] told me I should stop back. So I did, and I have been going to the ROC ever since. The people there are so amazing and friendly. It's awesome!"

"The ROC is reaching out and helping those who are WELS and non-WELS, those who are church and unchurched," explains Mueller. "I would say that we have about 40 percent WELS teens and 60 percent non-WELS or unchurched."

A monthly calendar promotes special events at the ROC, including game tournaments. Mueller says plans for the future are limited only by imagination. "We plan to set up a three-on-three basketball tournament each summer and to bring in Christian teen music. As I genuinely get to know the unchurched teens, I will begin to lead them into a Bible information class, including computer interactive teaching of the Bible. I also hope to have a Church Field Trip once a month where I can pick up unchurched teens on a Sunday and take them with me to church, rotating through the four WELS congregations associated with the ROC."

Jerry Kastens, staff minister at Trinity, Watertown, says, "I've already heard teens say, 'I hope this place doesn't close down. I don't have any other place to go.' Hearing things like that makes me think, 'Wow! This really is God's will.' It gives me goose bumps, and it explains why our members here of all ages are really excited about the ROC."



Video games are a popular feature of the Recreation and Outreach Center for youth operated by four WELS churches in Watertown, Wis.

## Obituaries

### Irene M. Denninger 1933-2003

Irene Denninger (nee Fehrle) was born Aug. 23, 1933, in Ann Arbor, Mich. She died Dec. 12, 2003, in Fox Lake, town of Trenton, Wis.

She attended Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., in the three-year program and taught at St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.

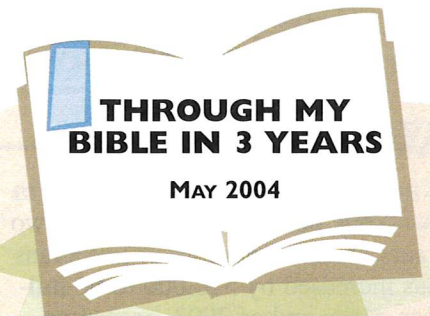
She is survived by her husband, George; three daughters; two sons; eight grandchildren; one brother; and one sister.

### Renee S. Rosenbaum 1968-2004

Renee Rosenbaum (nee Kloehn) was born Aug. 24, 1968, in New London, Wis. She died Jan. 23, 2004, in St. Joseph, Mich.

A 1990 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served at Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.

She is survived by her husband, Glenn; three sons; three daughters; her father and mother; her grandmother; two sisters; and one brother.



- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Jeremiah 48         | 17. Phil. 4           |
| 2. Jer. 49:1-33        | 18. Ezekiel 1         |
| 3. Jer. 49:34-50:46    | 19. Ezek. 2:1-3:21    |
| 4. Jer. 51:1-58        | 20. Ezek. 3:22-5:17   |
| 5. Jer. 51:59-52:34    | 21. Ezek. 6, 7        |
| 6. Lamentations 1      | 22. Ezek. 8           |
| 7. Lam. 2              | 23. Ezek. 9, 10       |
| 8. Lam. 3              | 24. Ezek. 11          |
| 9. Lam. 4              | 25. Ezek. 12, 13      |
| 10. Lam. 5             | 26. Ezek. 14, 15      |
| 11. Philippians 1:1-11 | 27. Ezek. 16          |
| 12. Phil. 1:12-26      | 28. Ezek. 17          |
| 13. Phil. 1:27-2:18    | 29. Ezek. 18, 19      |
| 14. Phil. 2:19-30      | 30. Ezek. 20:1-44     |
| 15. Phil. 3:1-11       | 31. Ezek. 20:45-21:32 |
| 16. Phil. 3:12-21      |                       |





## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

- Borgwardt, Daniel L.**, to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Gunderson, Paul C.**, to Trinity, Elkton/Immanuel, Ward, S.D.  
**Rodewald, Duane A.**, to Abiding Peace, Simpsonville, S.C.  
**Schlomer, Larry M.**, to Christ The Lord, Houston, Texas  
**Steinberg, Paul S.**, to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.  
**Vaccarella, Lee L.**, to retirement  
**Westra, Kevin P.**, to Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio

### Teachers

- Hadenfeldt, Kristin**, to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.  
**Kolander, John D.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee  
**Kneuppel, Kole F.**, to Hope, Milwaukee  
**Loberger, Scott D.**, to Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn.  
**Meyer, Sarah E.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Neumann, Jessica J.**, to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.  
**Pasbrig, James H.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Sebald, John A.**, to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.  
**Treder, Amanda C.**, to St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.

### Staff ministry

- Hofferbert, James**, to Christ Our Savior, Sterling, Va.

The synod administration building will be closed—April 9. Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888.

## ANNIVERSARIES

- Granger, Ind.**—Peace Lutheran School (25). April 18. Service, 10:30 AM. Lunch and program to follow.  
**Oak Grove (rural Juneau), Wis.**—St. Peter (125). May 2. Service, 10 AM. Dinner to follow.  
**Plymouth, Minn.**—West LHS (25). May 8. SpringWest 5k Fun Run/Walk, 8 AM. Snacks in cafeteria, 8-11 AM. All-school reunion, Rolling Green Country Club, 6 PM. May 9. Service, West LHS, 2 PM. School office, 763/509-9378.  
**Saginaw, Mich.**—Bethany (50). June 20. Service, 10:30 AM. Lynn Schroeder, 989/793-7747.  
**Tyler, Minn.**—Immanuel (125). July 11. Service, 10 AM. Catered dinner to follow at Legion Hall. RSVP, Jane Johnson, 507/247-5414 (evenings).

## COMING EVENTS

### Concerts and choir tours

#### Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary choir tour

- March 28—St. Paul, 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

#### 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

**Lutheran Chorale of Florida concert**—April 4, 4 PM. Living Savior, Valrico, Fla. Light meal and fellowship to follow.

**Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee concert**—May 2, 3 & 7 PM. Grace, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

#### Retreats, conferences, or conventions

- Staff ministers conference**—April 23 & 24. Sheraton, Brookfield, Wis. Registration, \$100. Don Borgwardt, 414/259-8122.
- Lutheran Girl Pioneers and Lutheran Pioneers concurrent international conventions**—April 24. Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, Wis. Lutheran Girl Pioneers, 608/781-5232. Lutheran Pioneers, 262/534-5124.
- Lutheran Women's Missionary Society National Convention**—June 24-27. Sioux Falls, S.D. Hosted by Minnesota Circuit, 414/321-6212.

#### Commencement events

- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**—May 20. Call service, 10 AM. Concert, 7:30 PM. May 21. Graduation, 10 AM.
- Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.**—May 14. Concert, 7:30 PM. May 15. Graduation, 10 AM. Call service, 2:30 PM.
- Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.**—May 21. Concert, 7 PM. May 22. Graduation, 10 AM.
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.**—May 28. Concert, 7 PM. May 29. Graduation, 10:30 AM.

#### Reunions

- 25th class reunion**—of Dr. Martin Luther College class of 1979. June 19. Wisconsin Dells, Wis. Sue Ratzburg, 262/644-5302.
- 30th class reunion**—of Michigan Lutheran Seminary class of 1974. July 24. Saginaw, Mich. Keith Rogien, 269/461-6589.

#### 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.

**Dedication**—new sanctuary and school addition. April 4, 2 PM. Crown of Life, West St. Paul, Minn.

**Building expansion dedication**—May 1, 4 PM. Risen Savior, Milwaukee. RSVP, 414/354-7320.

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

## AVAILABLE

**Paraments**—free for the cost of shipping or pick up from St. John, Watertown, Wis. Margaurite, 920/261-5959.

**Synodical Conference Hymnals (30), green choir gowns with gold stoles (10), and Gestetner copy printer 5303**—free for the

cost of shipping or pick up from Lord of Love, DeForest, Wis., 608/846-9036.

**Styrofoam symbols with gold decoration (241)**—free for the cost of shipping or pick up from St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis., 920/435-8468, ext. 22 or 25.

**Baptismal font**—free for the cost of shipping or pick up from Trinity, Elkton, Mich. Al Bumhoffer, 989/375-2733.

**Silver chalice, paten, and pitcher**—free for the cost of shipping. Laura Stelljes, 303/904-1214.

## NEEDED

**Guest preacher**—May 30 & June 6. Mount Zion, Missoula, Mont. 406/543-8222.

**Sermon Studies on the Gospels Series C**—Northwestern Publishing House, E.H. Wendland, editor. Copyright 1982. Pat Chuinard, 541/753-2816.

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

## NAMES WANTED

**Women**—serving as spiritual leaders in WELS congregations. WELS Women's Ministry Committee. Peg Raabe, 414/256-3278.

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

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

**Chicago**—Crossroads Christian Church. 3550 N Lakeshore Dr (at Addison) in the party room. Bible study, first Monday each month, 7 PM. Wendy Greenfield, 773/878-9868.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**Part-time relief staff**—for New Beginnings, a home for mothers in Denver, Colo. This Christian individual or couple will help run the home when house parents take time off. Annual salary, furnished one-bedroom apartment, and a benefits package available to qualified applicants. Applications will be considered from anyone willing to serve from three months to three years. Good opportunity for a retired person or couple looking to serve God as an integral part of this vital ministry. Doug or Charlene Bode, 303/364-0890.

**College-aged students**—for Camp Shiloh, Pittsburg, Texas. Groundskeeping, light house-keeping, kitchen help, and lifeguard work. May 30-Aug. 14. Dan Schmeling, 903/855-1800.

**Summer paid staff**—at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. June 1-Aug. 18. Counselors, head lifeguard, 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.



# Reaffirm your love for the repentant

**We need to be relentless when sharing the comfort of Jesus' love.**

**Paul E. Zell**

**S**atan is relentless; he won't give up. But neither will the saints.

## Separate yourselves from the unrepentant

Something shocking was happening at Corinth: A church member was having sex with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1). Satan targeted this man to rob him of eternal life and then confuse the Good Shepherd's flock. He lured this Christian fellow into a disgusting relationship with the woman who probably was his stepmother. Then he convinced the congregation that the best response was no response at all.

Satan is relentless. Soldiers of the cross are even more relentless. When Paul became aware of this scandal, he didn't pull any punches. "Shouldn't you . . . have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?" Paul demanded. ". . . When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus, . . . hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. . . . Expel the wicked man from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:2,4,5,13).

Several months passed. Titus brought Paul a new report. The saints at Corinth had obeyed the Lord's directive and taken the painful step of excommunicating their immoral brother. And there was more. "The punishment inflicted on him by the

majority [was] sufficient for him." Praise God! Apparently the immoral brother confessed his sin, broke off his ungodly relationship, and turned to the heavenly Father for forgiveness.

## Continue to build up the repentant

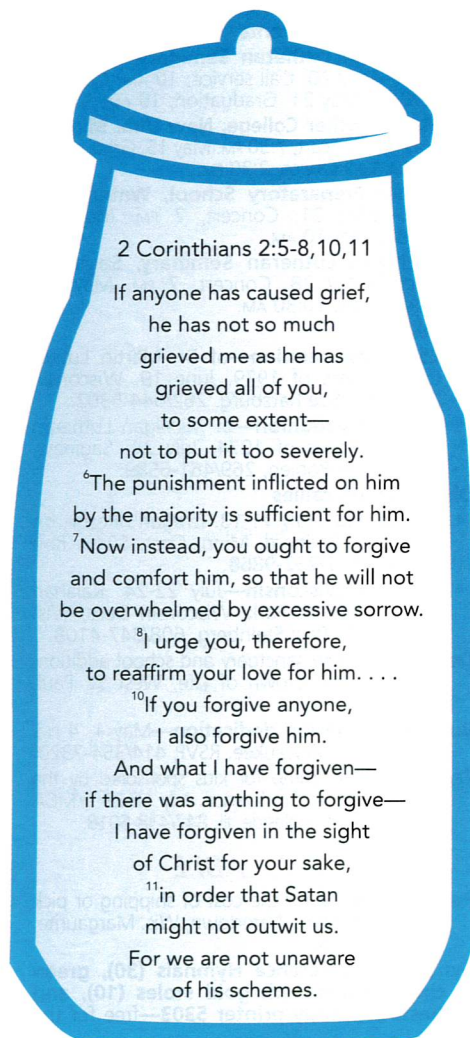
Yet the soul of this repentant sinner was still in danger. He had humiliated his father. He had discredited his church. He had fallen into immoral

activity "of a kind that does not occur even among pagans" (1 Corinthians 5:1). Though he repented, months later his transgressions still haunted him. "Excessive sorrow" threatened to swallow him up.

Satan just won't give up, will he? Thankfully, even today "we are not unaware of his schemes." We recognize that even after a sinner has repented, the devil still accuses him. So we keep praying that "God would guard and keep us so that the devil . . . may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins" (Luther's Small Catechism).

In 2 Corinthians the Holy Spirit's words describe an additional response. When someone you know has confessed and turned away from ungodliness, "you ought to forgive and comfort him," just as Paul urged the Corinthians. Yes, "reaffirm your love for him." A simple "Welcome back!" is good, but it may not be enough. A one-time gesture of kindness may not be adequate. Instead we must be willing to do what Jesus keeps doing for each of us—express his forgiveness persistently over the course of a lifetime.

"In order that Satan might not outwit us," we will be relentless with the comfort of Jesus' love.



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



# Easter, an ordinary day?

**W**hat if Easter was just another ordinary day? What if Christ has not been raised from the dead? Hear Paul's inspired answer to those questions in 1 Corinthians 15:14: "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."

As a lifelong Christian, I find it hard to imagine living without an Easter faith. How would you even picture a resurrection-free Easter?

Would it be like the blackness of the night never giving way to the brightness of the day? Is it like falling prey to a scam artist, promising us unbelievable benefits and products and delivering absolutely nothing? Could we compare it to the ecstatic joy of an engagement, which never leads to wedded bliss?

It's worse!

Although depressing, people do survive almost constant, wintry darkness in the far north. People do recover from financial reverses. Life does go on for many people without the presence of a spouse. But if anyone lives and dies without an Easter faith, there is no possible recovery. Eternal death, an endless separation from God and heaven, is absolutely certain.

How tragic! Especially since it can be prevented. Before Adam's fall, it wasn't that way. Even after the fall, because of the second Adam, Jesus our Savior, eternal life can replace an endless death. Thanks to the continuous effectiveness of Christ's death, forgiveness full and free, eternal life is possible. Jesus' resurrection guarantees it. And an Easter faith makes it personally a reality.

That's where we come in. Our God-given gift of an Easter faith isn't useless, nor is our preaching about it. Like a spring bubbling forth fresh, life-giving water, our Easter faith daily quenches our spiritual thirst. It can become a mighty river, flowing

freely and offering its lifesaving qualities to others along life's way.

For the next four years, North American Outreach is our synodical theme. Even as our proclamation of the gospel is to be worldwide, North American Outreach reminds us to take a closer look right where we are. As we regularly build up our own faith through the hearing of God's Word, are we concerned about those who no longer come regularly to hear the Word with us? Our concern needs to grow for those closest to us who need encouragement to get closer to their Savior. What about our neighbors and co-workers, anyone within our reach, who may not share our Easter faith?

When we consider the consequences, eternal life rather than endless death, we won't stop with sharing our Easter faith in North America. For Easter isn't just another ordinary day. It can be eternally life changing for everyone. Again note the words God gave Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20,22: "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Isn't Easter too good to be true just for you and me? You and I need to pray for opportunities to share Easter as broadly as Christ did, making it possible for all to live endlessly through him. Personally pray, too, for courage to speak up for Christ. Then, as the Holy Spirit works through Easter's good news, pray that Easter may become more than just another ordinary day for others, too. By faith may they join us in expressing our Easter faith: "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Easter isn't just another ordinary day!



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

Like a spring  
bubbling  
forth fresh,  
life-giving  
water, our  
Easter faith  
daily quenches  
our spiritual  
thirst.



# IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: *THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE*

**Question:** My co-worker recommended *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. Is there benefit from reading it?

**Answer:** My copy of *The Purpose Driven Life* proclaims: "Over Six Million Copies Sold." Obviously many have read it and benefited. The temptation for us as Lutherans is to ignore such books, since in our justifiable fear of pietism<sup>1</sup> we are sometimes timid about encouraging biblical piety.

You can gain several important truths from Rick Warren's book. Much like his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, Warren identifies a powerful temptation. As congregations and individuals, we forget what we are doing here. Our sinful nature's lust to live by sight and not by faith shifts our focus from timeless treasure to temporary trash.

Warren reminds us that God gives every Christian an eternal purpose. That's a powerful antidote to the aimless wandering that masquerades as life's purpose. Our consumer culture seeks only to be entertained by the latest and fastest. Cutting through the often artificial division of "sacred" and "secular," he reminds us that Monday at home and Tuesday at work—not just Sunday at church—present us with opportunities for praising Christ.

However, for all his commendable zeal for sanctified living, Warren stumbles into pietism's chief pitfall: he inadvertently shifts our focus from Jesus to ourselves.

From beginning to end, God's law (what I must do for God) predominates over God's gospel (what Jesus has done for me). Repeatedly, Warren justly confronts me with my ugly self-centeredness in the mirror of God's law. But then, often after only a passing gospel reference (or none!), I'm given detailed directions for doing better in the future. He supplies list after list of actions for improved sanctified living ("six secrets to friendship with God," "seven steps for restoring fellowship," "five attitudes of real servants"). The lists, in themselves, are often fine, but his key to unlocking greater success in sanctified living is almost always my improved obedience for Christ—not Christ's perfect obedience for me.

More and more as I read the book, the emphasis seemed to shifted from *The Purpose Driven Life* to *The Purpose*

*Driven Life*. The gospel was treated as knowledge already possessed and, therefore, safely assumed. Now my greatest need is to get serious about living obediently.

But is my chief problem in sanctification a lack of information? Isn't it my failure to grasp the full wonder of the gospel's transforming power? My moment-by-moment need for the gospel as the continuing power and strength of my sanctified life was often ignored. With "musts" and "shoulds," Warren drives me with the law rather than drawing me with the gospel.

I perceived a vast difference in emphasis between Warren's book and Paul's letters. Even when Paul is in the midst of his sanctification encouragements, he explores the depth of Christ's love. Only God can work in me "to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

Warren doesn't seem to grasp that sanctification's most important message isn't "this do!" but "this believe!" Believe that you are perfectly forgiven at Christ's cross for every sanctification failure. Believe that Christ has already in your place fulfilled every demand of God's law. Believe that in your baptism you died with Christ and rose with him—possessing his power to live a new life.

Could you read Warren's book with profit? Probably. Can I in good conscience recommend this for your devotional reading? No.



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

<sup>1</sup>Pietism began among 17th-century Lutherans as a reaction against what many perceived as a lack of genuine Christianity within the church. Sadly, many legitimate concerns were subverted when the objective truths of justification were downplayed and sanctification became a legalistic demand of how "good" Christians must live. Pietists often refused to see any areas of adiaphora in sanctification.

*Have a question you want answered? Send it to Forward in Christ, 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.*

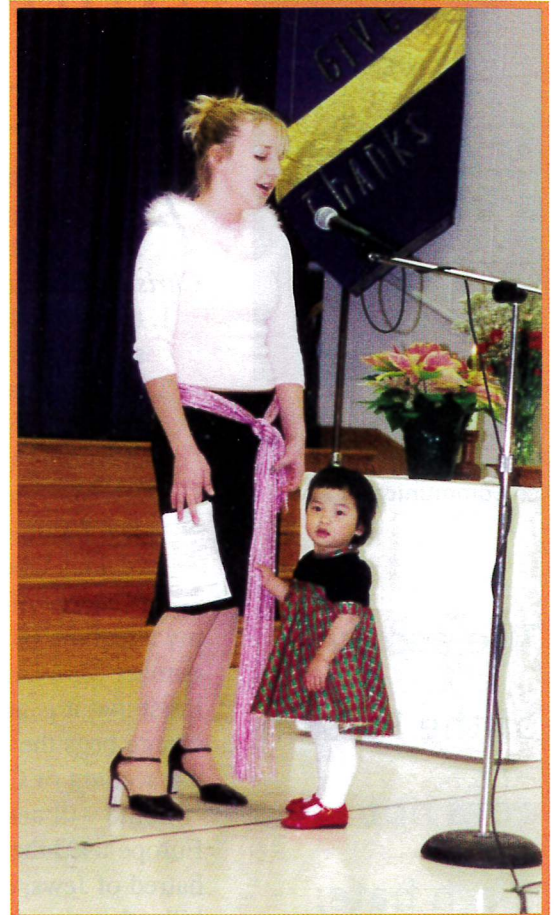


## What am I?

*Aubrey Hook wrote this poem when she was in sixth grade at Faith Lutheran School, Antioch, Ill.*

I am dragged around  
 On the ground  
 With people all around me shouting  
 And women all around me pouting  
 I am laid on the ground  
 With men all bound  
 Nailing and wailing around me  
 What could this be?  
 Why is a man hanging on me?  
 Another of them saying,  
 "Save yourself and save me too!  
 If you are even able to do!"  
 Then it became black  
 Like I was under a sack  
 As if it was night  
 But it was still supposed to be light  
 Then the ground around me opened as if it was talking  
 And the dead arose walking  
 Then I could hear the soldier's club thud  
 But when they came to me all I could see was water and blood  
 Then without a sound  
 I was brought to the ground  
 He was taken off me  
 And only then could I see  
 How poor this man was  
 And I knew that because  
 He had blood on his face  
 As if covered completely by red lace  
 Then I understood I was used  
 As part of this man's abuse  
 How sorry I felt  
 For what this man had dealt  
 I wish I could share shame  
 But I think I am part to blame  
 Of how this man had to die  
 It makes me want to cry  
 When people came to bury  
 They were not the least bit merry  
 I feel sad and bad  
 About what happened to this poor lad  
 But by Sunday morning I then knew  
 That before I really did not have a clue  
 That I was holding the King of Kings  
 Now I shall rejoice and sing

## Picture this



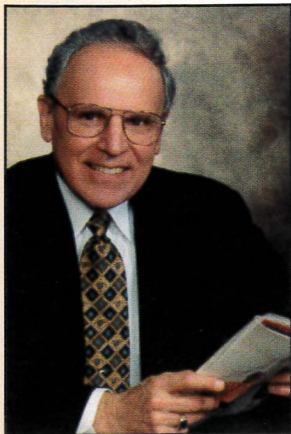
*Bruce Wietzke, pastor at Shepherd of the Bay, Lusby, Md., writes:*

We thought we'd share one remarkable incident that happened in our Dec. 14, 2003, service when our Sunday school children presented "Christmas Around the World."

Justine Hoerning, a high school freshman, memorized and sang a rendition of the Chinese hymn "Silent Night, Blessed Night" in English and in Chinese. When Justine began her song, little one-and-a-half-year-old Lily Severson, originally from China, ran up to Justine, hung onto her clothing, and looked up to her as if to say, "Thank you for singing one song just for me!" As soon as the song was done, Lily ran back to her father.

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.





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

The account  
of the Passion  
does not  
teach hate;  
it teaches  
love.

# Anti-Semitism and the death of Christ

As I write this column, I am eagerly awaiting my opportunity to see Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. Several reviews tell me it is

1. true to Scripture's account with extra-scriptural elements added;
2. violent—can you imagine the brutality connected with a crucifixion?; and
3. according to some critics, mostly Jewish—anti-Semitic. Some would say that it is as anti-Semitic as the famous Oberammergau Passion Play.

The charge of anti-Semitism has caught my attention, particularly since a good number of reviewers, including some Jews, insist that it is not at all anti-Semitic. The charge begs the question: "Since when is the account of Christ's death anti-Semitic?"

Some will answer: "Since people in Europe used the Passion story to fuel their hatred of Jews, even calling us 'Christ killers' as they persecuted us."

The charge sounds compelling, even though a direct cause and effect is questionable. Untold thousands who have seen the Oberammergau play, for instance, do not hate Jews.

But have the critics, perhaps, seen something injected into the script of *The Passion* that is, in fact, aimed at fomenting hatred against Jews? They don't point to anything that isn't already in the Bible account. The one passage that most offends them is the mob's response when Pilate washes his hands of Jesus' blood: "Let his blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25).<sup>1</sup> They do not note, however, that Jesus tells us his crucifixion must happen because "the Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49) and that Pilate himself "would have no power over [Jesus] if it were not given [him] from above" (John 19:11).

The negative critics are objecting then to the historical biblical account of the cruci-

fixion because Jewish leaders and a Jewish mob had a hand in bringing Jesus to death. They ignore, of course, that most of Jesus' followers also were Jews. And, as Jesus said earlier in his ministry, "... salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22).

The charge of anti-Semitism based on this movie is about as absurd as saying that the *Exodus* was anti-Egyptian or anti-Arab. And most surely, then, films of the Holocaust are anti-German and anti-Christian. As a German Christian, I don't see it that way.

It helps to know from the majority of reviewers that *The Passion* clearly shows that Jesus died because he chose to die for us and that our sins were at the core of it. People who see the movie and understand don't blame the Jews; they blame themselves. Then, at the dawn of the resurrection, they rejoice over the results.

Don't misunderstand me. Anti-Semitism is real, as are many other kinds of racism. Who would deny a large anti-Christian groundswell in this very day? Such hatred does not come from the Bible account of Christ's life and death. It comes from hearts filled with hate. It misuses Scripture to legitimize hate. That's not the fault of Scripture.

The account of the Passion does not teach hate; it teaches love. The love of God, who would sacrifice his own Son to save a world of lost sinners! The love of the Savior, who said of his enemies as he was reaching the depths of his woe: "Father, forgive them!"

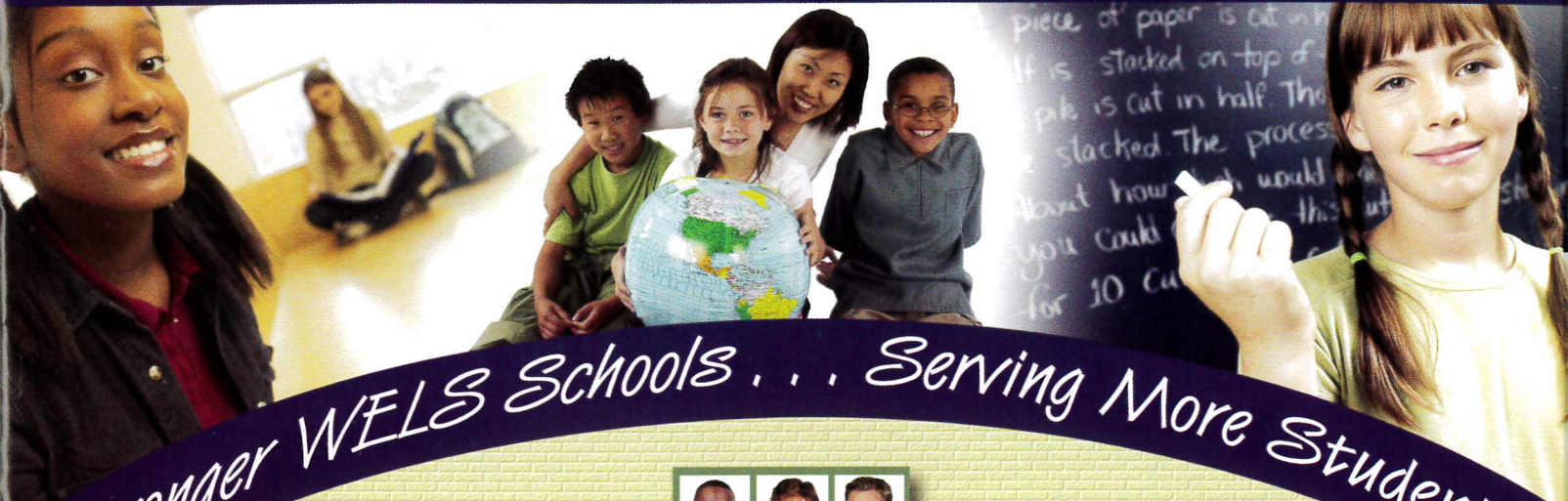
Those who believe in Christ will emulate that love for all people. They will tell those without Christ, Jewish or other, that Jesus by his sacrifice has won the forgiveness we all need. Now that Jesus is risen, we turn our focus to life, eternal life, not death; and that prompts love.

*Gary P. Baumler*

<sup>1</sup>This passage was removed from the movie's subtitles in the final editing.

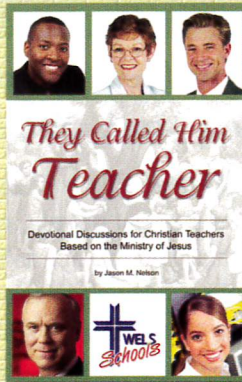
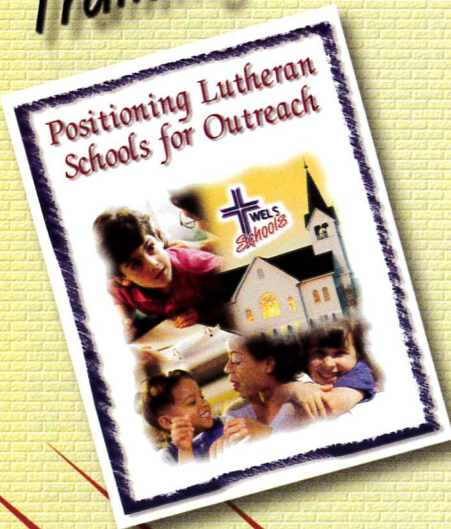


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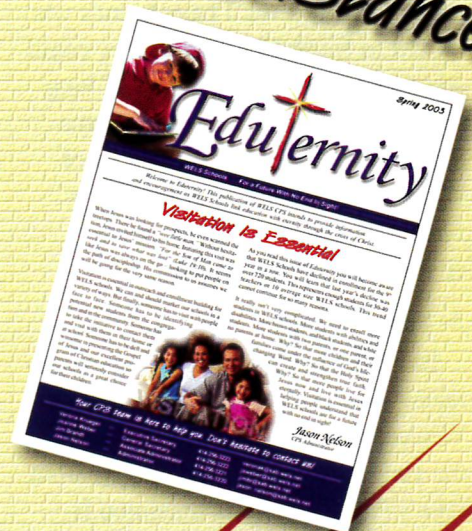


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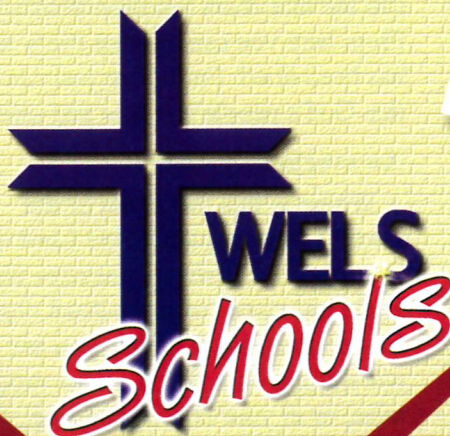
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# A VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAINTOP



Peter A. Panitzke

**How different is the view from the mountain of the Lord!  
From here you can see that death has been destroyed.**

I have been to the top of Pike's Peak only once, but the view will stay with me forever. I have friends who moved to North Carolina so they could always enjoy a mountain view. I long to see another mountain view. Some day I want to stand on the Mount of Olives on the east side of the city of Jerusalem and look down on that city in which Jesus walked.

## **A glorious view**

But there is a more important mountaintop to enjoy. No trip is necessary. We can enjoy this view every day. And the view is far better than the one from Pike's Peak. Which mountaintop is this? It is the mountain of the Lord. "On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples. . . . On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth" (Isaiah 25:6-8).

This mountain provides a view better than Pike's Peak. Pike's Peak is so high that you cannot see every-

thing clearly. On Pike's Peak you are not able to see that people are attending funerals. You are not able to see that people are crying. You are not able to see that Satan has led another child of God to commit a disgraceful sin. But your inability to see these events does not change the fact that they are happening.

How different is the view from the mountain of the Lord! From here you can see that death has been destroyed. From here you can see that every tear has been dried. From here you can see that God's people are pure and safe.

## **An everlasting view**

Where is this mountain of the Lord? The mountain of the Lord is wherever a Christian celebrates that Jesus has risen from the dead. On Easter morning, whether you are worshiping on a beach, in the mountains, or in your church building, you are on the mountain of the Lord.

From the vantage point of Jesus' resurrection you see death has been swallowed up. Jesus' promise echoes in our ears, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). From here you see that tears are wiped away. We grieve, but we do so with hope.

We shall see our loved ones again. The other sorrows of this life are only temporary, as God's master plan plays out to bring us to his eternal home. If death could not hold our Savior, then no problem that you or I face is beyond his power to help.

From here you see that every disgrace of sin is removed. "He . . . was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Jesus' resurrection is God's announcement that he has forgiven you. Rather than turning away from you in disgust because of your sins, your God sees you as his pure and holy "bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Revelation 21:2). God invites you to join him in a banquet that will last forever.

You and I never have to leave this mountain. We don't have to move to a mountain state or plan a long trip. Every day you can open your eyes and look out from this mountaintop. Your Savior has risen from the dead. What a beautiful view this gives.

This Easter and every day, let us go to the mountain of the Lord.

*Peter Panitzke is a pastor at St. Paul, Muskego, Wisconsin.*

