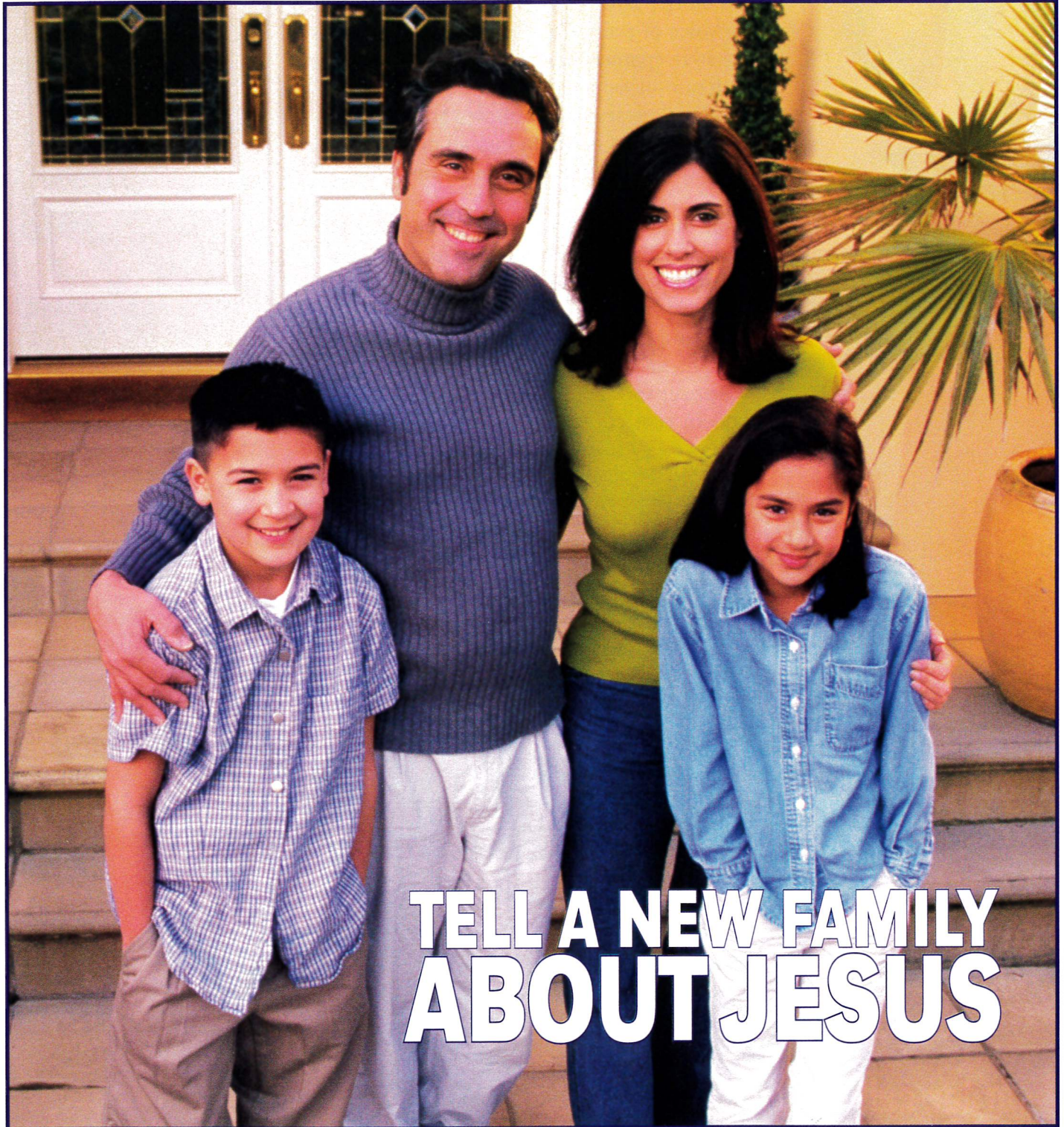


THE ANTICHRIST • DENYING DEATH • FEELING LONELY

JANUARY 2005

# Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness

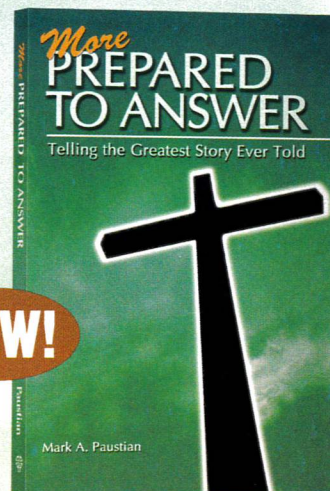
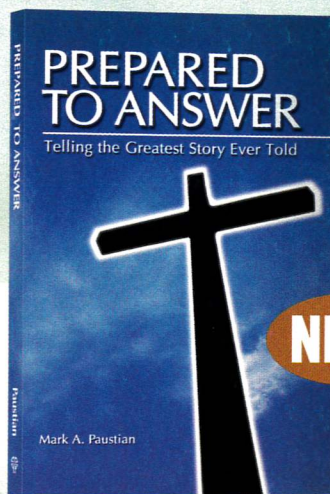


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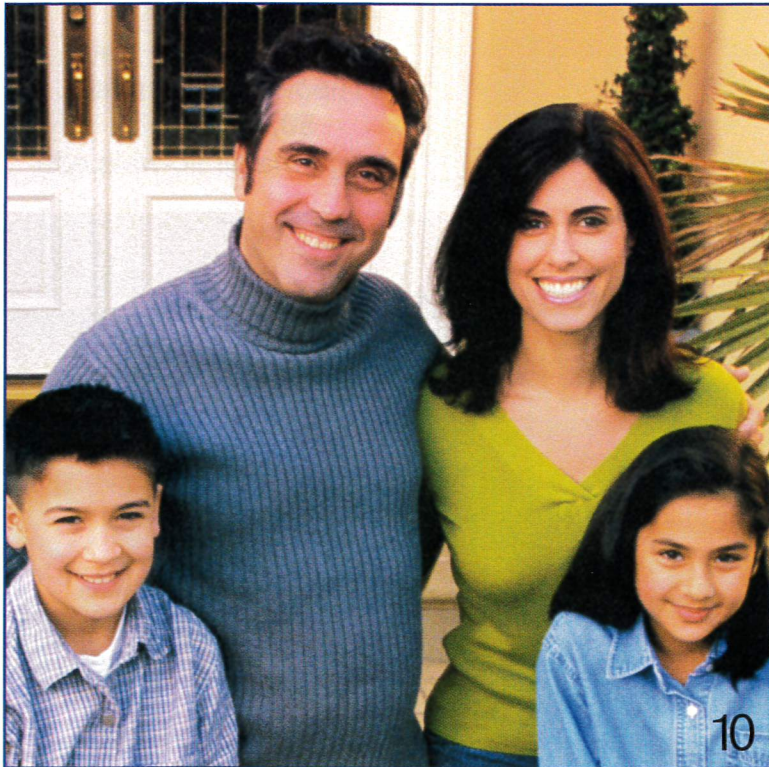
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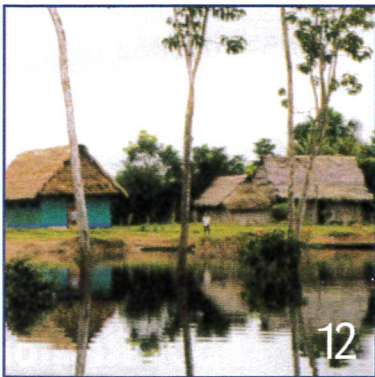


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“We must raise the profile on Hispanic/Latino outreach.”



CORBIS



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## Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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NOR FORSAKE US.  
*1 Kings 8:57*

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# JANUARY

## WHAT'S INSIDE *by Nicole Balza*

*Forward in Christ* is debuting two yearlong series in 2005. The first is an interactive Bible study called "Songs for the heart" (p. 35) that will offer comfort, encouragement, and guidance from the psalms for the different seasons of your life. The first Bible study focuses on loneliness. One of my New Year's resolutions is to clip this monthly feature from the magazine so that I can easily find the comfort I need as I experience life's ups and downs.

Our second 12-part series will focus on WELS members who live their faith in extraordinary ways. We'll meet men and women from across North America who are shining examples of how God blesses his children with unique gifts and the heart to share those gifts with others. Turn to p. 28 to read this month's feature about Janis Visaggio, a member of Prince of Peace, Englewood, Fla.

Finally, I want to highlight our cover story, "Becoming partners in the gospel" (p. 10). Learn about WELS' new Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team, and consider how you can become involved with outreach to Hispanics and Latinos. Sometimes it can be as easy as welcoming your new neighbors. Establishing a friendly relationship is a great first step in reaching out with Christ's saving love.

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**BENEFICIAL ISSUE**

Thank you for your fine work!

I just read the November 2004 issue. I thought it was packed with beneficial information and articles. I appreciated the many varied and personal accounts of God's amazing blessings on WELS-related efforts to spread the good news.

I especially enjoyed "experiencing" the vacation Bible schools brought to Peruvians, young and old alike, with "missionaries" from Wisconsin Lutheran High School ["Not your typical vacation Bible school"]. It is such a blessing to have firsthand reports of how the powerful seed of the gospel is reaching, saving, and changing hearts and lives around the world! Praise the Lord!

Joel Raasch  
Germantown, Wisconsin

**DISTRICT CONVENTIONS**

*In the September 2004 issue, Forward in Christ reported that the Michigan District requested a change to the synodical bylaws requiring districts to have annual conventions rather than biannual conventions.—ed.*

For many years now, our synod has (rightly, I believe) encouraged grassroots input regarding synodical matters. District conventions are the way our districts can officially provide that input from pastors, teachers, and congregations. Every congregation can provide a layman to represent it.

Annual district conventions would not give pastors and male teachers an extra meeting to go to. Many of our districts have some gathering of pastors and teachers (and laymen) in the years that district conventions do not meet. However, they cannot speak as or for the district because it's not a meeting of the district in convention. Those who are synod delegates also do not have official input from the

rest of the members of the district they represent, if the gatherings are not district conventions.

Michigan District delegates (as they are informed by information and debate at district convention) are well aware of and interested in what is happening beyond the boundaries of the church property—as they ought to be. They certainly do not show the apathy that Alan Ross ["Feedback," Nov. 2004] has unfortunately observed.

Finally, district conventions are not just to disseminate information. They allow debate and the passing of resolutions so that God's people in the districts can provide true, grassroots counsel and advice to the synod in convention.

John C. Seifert,  
Michigan District President  
Midland, Michigan

I was disappointed by *Forward in Christ's* decision to publish the letter by Alan Ross ["Feedback," Nov. 2004], in which he spoke negatively about the Michigan District's request for annual district conventions.

I was especially disappointed that FIC chose to print, without comment or correction, Ross's judgmental comment that his brothers and sisters in Christ are apathetic "pew sitters."

As a delegate to the 2003 synod convention, I found that the delegates from our Michigan District were among the best-informed at the convention, because our district chose to hold a special convention shortly prior to the convention.

Guy Purdue  
Westland, Michigan

**PROOFREADING ERROR**

Re: "Doctors all" by Karl Gurgel [Oct. 2004], paragraph four, line six. The word "course" is used instead of "coarse," which has the effect of making the sentence meaningless as written.

This is pointed out to readers not as nitpick but as critical illustration that spell-check technology is no substitute for the hard work of careful proofreading.

Michas Ohnstad  
North Branch, Minnesota

*Oops! Sad to say, we can't blame any spell-check but our own.—ed.*

**TELL A STORY**

I would like to expand a bit on Prof. Mark Paustian's article, "Prepared to answer" [Nov. 2004]. I believe Paustian is in good company when he encourages "telling a story." After all, the Holy Spirit, who is without question the best communicator of all, made choices that any other author makes. Among them he chose the form or genre that would best communicate his message. For the most part, he chose narrative (stories) along with some poetry and examples of correspondence.

Wouldn't we do well to try more consciously to follow the Spirit's example? I am sure that this would improve our communication as we preach and teach the Spirit's message, the gospel.

Harold R. Johnne  
Racine, Wisconsin

Send your letters to "Feedback," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 250 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

# Our plans are in God's hands

*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." James 4:13-15*

Stephen H. Geiger

**“M**y heart will beat tomorrow.”  
Will it?

## We dream about the future

We might say many things about our futures. We might include many events in our plans. But most likely we'd hesitate to announce that our blood will be pumping in 24 hours.

Perhaps the thought of saying such a thing has never crossed your mind. But why wouldn't you say it? Deep down you know that heartbeats are beyond your control. You are not going to make a claim that you have no power to make happen.

Yet don't we do that very thing with issues far more complex than simply sustaining a heartbeat? Don't we announce that in three weeks we'll take a vacation? Don't we share with friends that someday we'll be married and have children? In the middle of suffering, don't we determine by what date God should take the pain away?

We make plans. We have dreams. We have expectations for how we'd like our life to go.

## We can't guarantee the future

Is planning wrong? Is dreaming sin? It need not be. But so easily we think that we have the power to make our plans succeed.

But wait. Don't we have some power to do just that? Won't hard work get me a college diploma? Won't effort ensure a good income? Won't going to the doctor relieve my hurt?

There is nothing wrong with hard work. There is nothing evil in persistence and effort. The danger is when

we think that hard work and persistence and effort are at the heart of our plans succeeding.

We can't even guarantee our own heartbeat.

If it is the Lord's will, we will live. But if God's plan is different, within the next five minutes my life can be over. We depend on God for our very existence yet make our plans as if God didn't even exist.

We feel that we know what is best for our life. We decide what things we don't want to happen. We imagine that we are in control. We assume that our life will continue. We assume that our plans should succeed.

## God controls our future

Perhaps you know what happens next. Something goes wrong. Our imagined control vanishes. Terror strikes. Despair haunts. We long for relief, but the God we so need is the very God we have overlooked.

That's frightening. It's frightening to know that you've made an enemy out of the one who holds your heartbeat in his hands.

It's stunning to know that the one you've treated as an enemy has chosen to be your friend.

Our God knew how we would fall to pride and live imagining that we were in charge. His Son chose to become one of us. When Jesus came to earth to save, one responsibility as our substitute was to be submissive. He became a humble servant. He chose to live as



one who wasn't in charge. He entrusted his future to the one who knew best.

As you are troubled at the thought of your mishandling of the future, know that the Lord came to handle just such sin. His perfect submission led to innocent suffering. His good life and pure death brought forgiveness for the world. Be at peace.

Then trust. The Lord is in control.

Dream. Plan. Work with energy to pursue your Father's kingdom, to appreciate every blessing he gives. But when it comes to what happens next, know and find peace in the fact that you have no power to determine what the future will bring.

Your heartbeat is in God's hands.

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

# It's about choices

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

*I just got cable. Now it takes me 15 minutes to figure out that there's nothing on TV.*

*Anonymous*

How do our lives differ most from our great-grandparents'? In 1920, you could buy a Model T Ford in any color you wanted—as long as it was black. The 2004 Ford Taurus comes in nine different colors and with a selection of trim and interior packages that Henry Ford would find absurd. Your great-grandpa used to walk up to a lunch counter and order a cup of coffee. He never knew the joy of a double mocha latte with a shot of vanilla and whipped cream (or the “joy” of paying \$4.50 for a cup of coffee, either). We have a dizzying variety of choices available that our great-grandparents couldn't have imagined.

So we must be a lot happier, right?

To hear our pundits talk, you would think so. You don't hear most candidates or companies promising to do their best to limit your choices. More choices must mean more freedom, and, in 21st-century America, freedom is the value that trumps all others. Abortion takes a human life, but restrictions on abortion would deny “a woman's right to choose”—and we can't have that, can we? Enemies of marriage say that telling people to be faithful to one sexual partner is like insisting that they watch the same movie over and over or eat at the same restaurant for the rest of their lives. Variety is no longer the spice of life; it's become some people's bread and butter.

But if more choices mean more happiness, why are many people today so miserable?

In *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*, Barry Schwartz argues that this huge variety of options hasn't made us any happier. More options mean more decisions, and that has filled our lives with stress of a kind our grandparents never knew. In other words, there might be something to be said for not having to choose from 35 kinds of coffee or 900

cable TV channels, for not having to think about whether to be faithful to my spouse, for not equating freedom with an unlimited ability to choose.

In Scripture, freedom is one of the greatest blessings of Jesus' redemptive work (Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:1,2). But Scripture's definition of freedom is very different from society's definition. According to Scripture, the ability to do whatever I want, whenever I want—as I am by nature—wouldn't be freedom at all. It would be slavery to the worst kind of tyrant: one I can never get away from because he lives right here inside me. It's absurd to call it “freedom” when my sinful nature gets to pick from a dazzling array of perversions and vices, until my life is a mess and God's judgment is bearing down on me like a locomotive.

That's exactly from what Jesus set us free. Thanks to Jesus, we no longer have to fear God's judgment. Nor do we have to obey a little tyrant

inside who's bent on destroying us. We can serve a God who's determined to save us. We can live God's way and enjoy it thoroughly, every day of our lives, until in the end we join the Lord in glory.

Living free in Jesus isn't the same thing as having infinite choices. It even means that some choices are off the menu altogether. But that's okay.

We Christians already know exactly what we want.

*Contributing editor Ken Cherney is pastor at St. John, St. John's, Antigua, West Indies.*

**Living free in Jesus isn't the same thing as having infinite choices.**





at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: The Antichrist

**Will there be a physical person/Antichrist who will take up residence in a temple in Jerusalem and deceive many?**

Your question appears to refer to what Paul said about the Antichrist (whom Paul calls “the man of lawlessness”) in 2 Thessalonians 2:4: “He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple.”

The key to this verse’s interpretation is the meaning of “temple.” All other times Paul uses this term, he never means a literal building in a literal city. Paul always uses it as he does in 1 Corinthians 3:16: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” Paul pictures each of us brought to faith by the Spirit as part of a beautiful spiritual house in which the Spirit lives. “Temple” is Paul’s picture language for Christ’s believers, his church. There’s no evidence in Thessalonians that he suddenly uses the term differently.

What makes the Antichrist such a devastating enemy is that he sets himself up right in that “temple”—right in the midst of believers! Certainly the Antichrist is not truly a part of “God’s temple.” Yet since Christ’s *invisible* church is found in the midst of *visible* gatherings around the means of grace, that’s where the Antichrist goes to work.

2 Thessalonians 2 tells us that the Antichrist’s work within the church has its beginnings at the apostles’ time (v. 7) with his overthrow at Jesus’ second coming (v. 8).

That working right among God’s people also explains how he deceives so many. Masquerading as a Christian leader, he leads many within the church to believe “the lie” (v. 11) rather than “the truth” (v. 10).

Scripture leaves no doubt what “the lie” is and what “the truth” is. The greatest lie troubling the Christian church is the lie of self-righteousness. This lie blinds sinners to the fact that we are by nature slaves to sin with nothing to offer God as a contribution to our salvation. The truth is that

only if the Son sets us free are we free indeed (John 8:34-36).

So, can we know who this great Antichrist is? 2 Thessalonians 2 tells us the Antichrist will be “revealed” (v. 3). Scripture gives us the information it does so that we identify this enemy of Christ within the church lest we too be deceived.

What are we looking for? We aren’t looking for a political leader who rises up merely in the very last times and tries to control the Holy Land. Rather, we are looking for someone holding great authority in the midst of the visible church. His beginnings are at apostolic times, and he continues until Jesus’ return. He supports the great lie of self-righteousness that diametrically opposes the gospel’s truth.

Although Scripture tells us that many “small a” antichrists (1 John 2:18) will trouble Christ’s church, the one “capital A” Antichrist who fits all these scriptural criteria is the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. And, as strange as it may sound, the most dangerous popes are those who are the most outwardly moral and pious. Especially in our day and age of moral relativism, a pope who champions outward morality becomes an exceedingly attractive religious symbol.

Let me conclude by altering your question. “Will there be a physical person/Antichrist who will take up residence in God’s temple (his church) and deceive many?” Yes, Scripture has foretold that, and the numbers deceived by the Antichrist’s lie are staggering! Pray that many escape that deception and cling to the truth. May God keep us focused on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as the only truth that sets us free!

*Contributing editor Richard Gurgel, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.*

Have a question? Send it to “Q & A,” *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Look online at [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword “qa”, for more questions and answers.

# Becoming partners IN THE GOSPEL

The Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team is helping WELS congregations and their Hispanic/Latino members reach out to this growing U.S. population.

Laura C. Warmuth

**I**t is difficult to describe the immense joy that comes from being loved by someone of another culture. The many Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and other Hispanics/Latinos who in patience and Christian love took time to teach me their culture, their world, and their lives are my most treasured friends," shares Pastor Michael Roth, who was called as WELS' Hispanic/Latino consultant in 2001. "They put up with my mistakes and—at times—arrogance to show me that there are other ways to live, communicate, and preach the gospel."

"To help them become full partners in the gospel," Roth adds, "is the least I can do in response to the love they have shown me!"

From English-as-a-second-language classes to bilingual services, many WELS congregations have already begun reaching out to their Hispanic/Latino neighbors. If WELS is going to be serious about North American outreach, though, we must raise the profile on Hispanic/Latino outreach.

See for yourself. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau:

- Hispanics/Latinos are the largest and fastest growing minority in the United States, surpassing the African-American population.
- Forty-seven million people speak a language other than English in their homes, two-thirds of whom speak Spanish.

- In the year 2030, Caucasians will make up only 30 percent of elementary school-age children, while Hispanics/Latinos will make up 54 percent.

## A team up to the task

The idea for a Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team surfaced at a meeting in November 2003. Although the agenda was to assist the Pastoral Studies Institute (a branch of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary that provides an alternate means of training for the full-time pastoral ministry) with Spanish language training, it became clear that other aspects of this ministry also needed more attention.

"We needed to help congregations learn to do this outreach, raise up Hispanics and Latinos into every appropriate form of ministry as quickly as possible, and provide appropriate materials for both training and outreach," summarizes Roth.

With these three goals in mind, the Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team was formed. "No longer will congregations have to thrash around looking for ways to train the increasing Hispanic populace," team member Pastor Ron Baerbock explains. But with the leadership of this three-man team there will now be "a clear-cut path to follow with materials and instructors capable of working with

Hispanics/Latinos in their native language."

## Team organization

This team is under the Board for Home Missions, but because of the varied functions of the team, it is accountable to an action committee made up of the administrators from Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education. Though the team does not operate from one specific location, their efforts all come together to advance the gospel.

The team is divided into three positions:

- **Mission Developer**—As the mission developer, Roth says, "I walk with [congregations/missions] to help them do the work, not just talk about the work." From the time a new opportunity is spotted, he helps missions deal with cultural differences and develop and carry out a ministry plan. He networks Hispanic/Latino ministries around the country so they can not only share ideas, but also encouragement. As Roth travels among the many existing ministries, he can assess the needs for training and materials. Although his specific work for the Board for Home Missions has not changed, Roth is excited that, with the help of his teammates, he now has more to offer.

## The Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team

- held a conference in November 2004 for pastors who have already begun this work. They modeled forms of worship and discussed the impact of legal and illegal immigration on WELS ministries.
- is planning four regional conferences in 2005 for congregations who are just beginning Hispanic/Latino ministries.
- plans to make use of the already successful "School of Outreach" program.
- plans to work with the Commission on Worship to develop materials for Spanish language and bilingual worship.

### What can I do?

- Accept opportunities for outreach and the idea of Hispanics/Latinos reaching out to their own people.
- Provide monetary support.
- Consider how you as a layperson can serve your congregation to free up time for your pastor to start new ministries.
- Consider how you can find new ways to show simple Christian love to your new neighbors.
- Encourage Hispanic/Latino members of your congregation to develop their gifts and talents to reach out to their own culture.
- Pray that the Lord blesses all these endeavors.

- **Publications Director**—Baerbock's original call is under the Board for World Missions as director of Spanish publications. He draws heavily on the resources and experiences from mission work in Latin America to satisfy the home missions' needs uncovered by the Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team. Many books such as Luther's Small Catechism, *The Christian Family*, and *Biblical Worship* have already been translated, while textbooks on outreach and evangelism are in the works.



Germán Novelli worked as a journalist in Venezuela before fleeing to Puerto Rico after attempts were made to take his life over political articles he had written. In 2003 he entered into fellowship with WELS. He has served as a lay minister and led workshops on evangelism, church growth, and discipleship. Now living in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Novelli will soon begin classes to become a WELS pastor.

- **Theological Educator**—From a human standpoint, it will be more effective for Hispanics/Latinos to speak the Word to their own people. This is where Pastor Mark Goeglein, working closely with the Board for Ministerial Education, fits into the team. "It is exciting to see how the Lord is moving the hearts of our Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters to want to share the good news about Jesus with others," Goeglein says.

As the theological educator, Goeglein develops curriculums and helps train Hispanics and Latinos for ministry. Some students' goals may be to serve as volunteers in their home congregations while others wish to prepare for a call into the full-time ministry. Goeglein evaluates students' previous academic and spiritual educations to see which courses they will need to prepare for ministry. He and other pastors throughout the synod will provide the necessary training.

### The complete package

"For the first time we have a complete package to offer congregations that are getting started," Roth says. "I can help them work through the process of change, learn their neighborhood, and start this outreach. We have the [written] materials to do outreach, a full curriculum, and a trainer in Mark Goeglein to help train laypeople for ministry. We have several proven strategies that work for this outreach. Finally, we have enough other pastors/congregations in WELS in the United States who are doing this work to provide a network of brothers in ministry."

Laura Warmuth is staff writer for Forward in Christ.



Nelson Encarnación and Gonzalo Delgadillo, members of Risen Savior, Orlando, Fla., are both interested in training as WELS pastors. Delgadillo moved to Orlando from Bogota, Colombia, where he was involved with WELS as an evangelist and teacher. Encarnación is originally from Puerto Rico. He was pastor of a Spanish-speaking Assembly of God congregation before coming to WELS in his search for a church that teaches the Word of God accurately and faithfully.

Terry Schultz, an Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionary in Peru, has had  
Here he shares how a small village survived a torrential rainfall and how

# Jungle journey turns into rescue operation

Terry Schultz

**F**or months Vicar Ronal Rivas and I had waited for the waters to rise in the small jungle rivers so that we could visit our congregations by boat. We had personal invitations to visit two native Chayahuita villages that we had never entered before. However, as we met on a plane in Tarapoto for the 20-minute flight to Yurimaguas, Ronal greeted me with devastating news that would immediately change our plans.

**Three and a half hours down the Huallaga River (one of the three main tributaries of the Amazon River) lies the village of Pelejo, where we first began our Amazon work.** This village of hardworking *mestizos* contains our dear congregation, *la iglesia luterana de mi Jesus*—The Lutheran Church of My Jesus. Last week the village was hit with a torrential, rainforest-strength downpour that did not stop for four days!

How bad did things get in Pelejo? The entire town found itself underwater as the river and lagoon overflowed their banks. The town quickly ran out of food. The mud-and-brick ovens of the village bakery were reduced to a little pile of bricks. Various wild jungle animals—huge boars, deer, and rodents—were spotted racing through town, panicked by the flooding in the nearby jungle!

The one and only telephone that connects the village to the outside world went out. Water began to rise foot by foot! Quickly it rose to three feet and began entering the low-lying, frail, dirt-floor-and-wooden-board houses. All the roads and paths through town soon disappeared underwater. To visit relatives or old folks stranded in their homes without food would be a treacherous undertaking amidst the flooding and the driving rain.

How could one get to them? Well, with so many fish in the surrounding rivers, nearly every family in Pelejo has its own dugout canoe. So, during the deluge, people got in their canoes and began paddling down the flooded streets! The people found themselves paddling past rats, dogs, chickens, and snakes that were all swimming for their lives. When a person finally got to his loved one's house, he simply paddled right through the front door and into the home.

Once inside the house, he might find Grandpa sitting in his dugout canoe along with the dog and the radio, with the rest of his meager possessions just floating and bobbing about. What little food had been in the house (a little flour, sugar, bread) would all have been used up or lost, with no way to restock it. People

*many adventures while sharing the gospel in the jungles of the Amazon. church members showed their Christian love in desperate times.*

would huddle together in their canoe inside their homes, listening to the unrelenting rain. If the house didn't contain a "second floor" (i.e. a few boards lying across the roof beams like an attic), there would be no place to sleep. People would sleep right in their canoes. The long days were passed by talking and consoling one another, as the rain just kept coming.

And what a lot of consoling there was to do! The people all knew that this downpour spelled disaster for their carefully tended rice fields. Imagine working for months sloshing through the muddy rice fields in the blazing tropical sun. With your back bent completely over, you push the rice shoots into the mud, row after row, while insects swirl around you, biting and stinging away. Normally, in three months you will have something you can harvest. You take this to market for a little money with which to feed and clothe your family or to buy much needed medicine.

Now, as the people of Pelejo sat in their flooded homes, they knew with each passing hour that it was more likely that their entire rice crop (three months of work or a quarter of the year's income) would be lost.

At times like this, you simply cling to your God-given faith, knowing that he is still watching over you. You remind yourself that he absolutely loves you and that he never takes his eyes off you.

**By the third day, the water was over four feet high.** It was now exceedingly dangerous for small children, who could easily drown inside a flooded house! Such was the case for our church member, Tomasa, and her three small children. Weighing the various risks involved, on the third day Tomasa raced out of her flooded house with her children and dashed for the home of Jose and Sandra, our two Sunday school teachers who live right next door to our church.



The Lutheran Church of My Jesus in Pelejo, Peru, sustained a four-day flood in 2004.

Tomasa found Jose and Sandra inside their flooded house, their two little kids floating in Jose's canoe.

**The city looked dreary, downright abysmal, covered in mud and insects.**

Jose and Sandra immediately agreed to Tomasa's request to unlock the church so she and her children could seek refuge there. Our church, which sits less than 10 yards from the lagoon, was constructed on poles a couple feet off the ground, a costly and difficult endeavor. But that raised-floor construction saved the church building and everything in it from being flooded.

Once inside, Tomasa hung up mosquito nets, and the four of them crawled under them and slept on the floor. Meanwhile, the nearby lagoon was overrunning its banks! Tomasa and her children had the eerie experience of sleeping on the dry, wooden planks, while a dangerous, sweeping torrent of river water rushed by just

inches beneath them.

It was almost like a mini, sideways version of the parting of the Red Sea, with the family passing the night on "dry ground" while the rain and waters piled up all around them. Tomasa didn't sleep at all as the water went roaring beneath them all night long.

At the height of it all, much of the town was submerged in more than four-and-a-half feet of water. All human life survived, thank the Lord. Many animals were lost. The rice crop was completely destroyed. Most people only had fish and bananas to eat. The waters quickly subsided, leaving everything covered in thick mud. This of course brought an explosion of insect life, adding more misery to the depressing situation. Inside and outside homes, people found themselves walking in a virtual six-inch-thick carpet of biting gnats and flies.

**Less than an hour and a half from stepping off our plane in Yurimaguas, Ronal and I were on the river to Pelejo with our**

*continued on p. 14*



Sunday school students from The Lutheran Church of My Jesus, Pelejo, Peru, help carry in food donated by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod after a flood destroyed the jungle town's food supply.

*Jungle journey . . . continued from p. 13*

**jungle river pilot, Segundo.** We bought as much food as we possibly could without putting our originally planned exploratory trip in jeopardy.

After three and a half hours on the river, we were in Pelejo. It was now three days since the rain had stopped, and the water had soaked into the ground. The city looked dreary, downright abysmal, covered in mud and insects. The scorching sun was out now, sapping what little strength people had to clean everything up. There was a water line halfway up the walls of every wooden house.

We immediately began offloading our precious cargo: a huge bag of high-quality rice, three garbage-bag-size sacks of bakery buns (we cleaned out one whole Yurimaguas bakery), a case of individual packets of spaghetti noodles, and a case of individual bags of coarse brown sugar. Yes, we were a little heavy on carbohydrates. However, in the hot tropical sun, vegetables and fruits would immediately spoil. Our dry goods could feed the people for several days.

We set up our food distribution center in the church. Our elated church members came racing to meet us, many with tears coming down their cheeks. They, of course, had no idea we were coming. We all sat in the church, and Ronal, Segundo, and I quietly listened as the story of the city flood was told and retold by nearly every member. The shock of realizing the entire family crop and income were lost was just beginning to sink

in. Our contribution of a simple bag of food was extremely welcome, especially as there was basically no food in town to purchase.

Meanwhile, a helicopter could be heard passing overhead! In anger and frustration, our members reported that the mayor of the village of Papaplaya, just a 20-minute walk away, had political connections. Papaplaya had already received three food drops! The loud helicopters, which signaled relief and assistance for others, were yet another bitter pill for our members to swallow.

## Our elated church members came racing to meet us, many with tears coming down their cheeks.

**Before we distributed the food, we held a simple church service, in which we thanked God that no one had perished in the four-day flood.**

I emphasized that we don't have answers to all the "why" questions when tragedies strike, but we certainly have an answer to the "who" questions—who's in charge: Our loving heavenly Father who loves us so much that he spared not his own Son that we might live with him forever. We cling to the incomprehensible, yet unequivocal, promise that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." We have God's word on that, and we know that he doesn't lie! Our dear members nodded their heads in agreement, clinging to these precious promises, amidst all evidence to the contrary as each family's field lay in ruin.

After many songs and prayers, it was food distribution time. Like some mini-U.N. operation, the

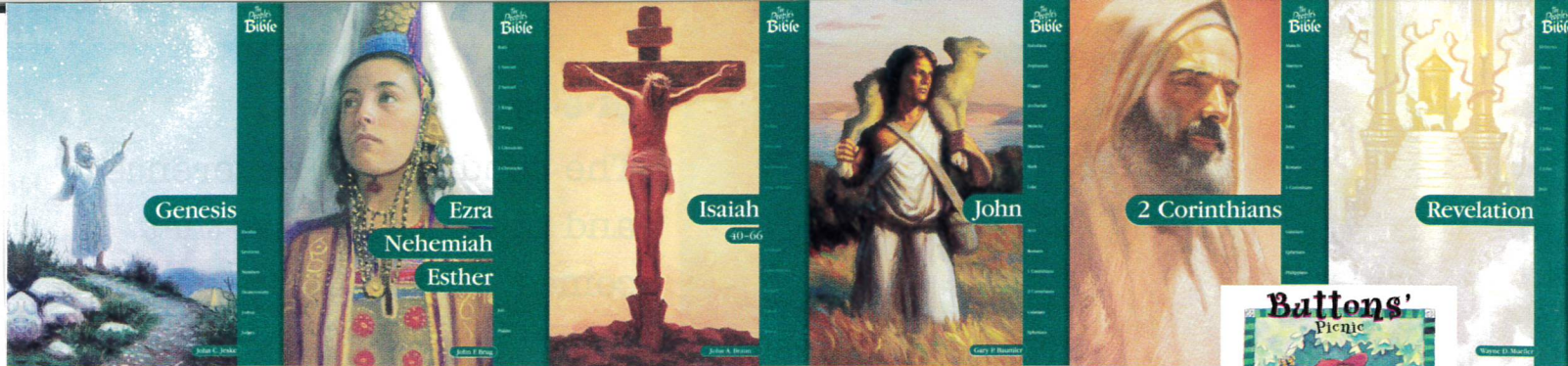
people formed a line to receive their food supplies. They came forward with a jar or plastic bowl (kids came with cups), and we filled them all with rice. Then they moved over to the table for a packet of spaghetti noodles, a bag of rolls, and a bag of brown sugar. That our humble contributions swelled nearly everyone's eyes with tears was almost more than Ronal, Segundo, and I could take!

Not too surprisingly, more than a few non-member moms with their kids had shown up and gotten in line with their plastic bowls and cups. More recipients meant cutting back on everyone's portions. However, during this distribution time, an extraordinary moment occurred that I will never forget. I saw some of our members get out of the line and quietly go sit down on a bench. They waited to make sure all the others, even non-members, received a little food before they would get back in line. What an incredible example of Christian love in action! I can't remember when I ever felt so proud of our precious Peruvian brothers and sisters.

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

*Terry Schultz is an Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionary in Peru.*

*Terry Schultz serves with three other ELS missionaries and six national pastors in Peru. The missionaries, national pastors, vicars, and seminary students together serve more than 50 congregations and preaching stations scattered around Lima, in the Andes Mountains north of Lima, and in the Upper Amazon Basin. Worshiping in modern buildings, adobe houses, and thatch-roof huts, more than 1,500 Peruvians learn of their Savior and then, in turn, proclaim the gospel in their communities.*



# Getting the Word to WELS

Northwestern Publishing House delivers Christ-centered resources to WELS and beyond. Adam Goede

**W**ELS is built on the truth of God's Word. Therefore, it is a priority of the synod to have books and study materials that are biblically sound for WELS called workers and lay members. Northwestern Publishing House (NPH), a WELS subsidiary, plays the important role of producing those materials.

## A history

The publishing house has been around for most of the synod's existence. NPH first served as the synodical bookstore for 15 years. When WELS decided to combine the bookstore with a printing shop in 1891, the publishing house moved to downtown Milwaukee. Some of the first works produced by the new publishing house included a catechism, hymnbook, theological quarterly, and the *Gemeindeblatt* (congregation paper).

As NPH's capabilities grew from books with stamped hard covers to those with four-color printing, the operations moved several times to new sites in Milwaukee. In 1983, the board of directors decided to outsource the printing and binding operations to alleviate the costs of new technology. In 1985, NPH moved to its current location in Wauwatosa, Wis.

## Present-day operations

WELS has been blessed by the work of Northwestern Publishing House throughout its history. Many members are familiar with NPH's most popular products. The People's Bible series offers commentary by

pastors on each book of the Bible. *Meditations* is a devotional periodical printed four times per year. NPH also sells the religious curriculum *Christ-Light* for Sunday school and elementary school classes.

The profits from the best-selling products are what support NPH financially. "There is an arm of the synod, the Publication Coordinating Commission, that offers subsidies for books that might not be financially successful but are necessary," explains Mark Buske, NPH marketing director. "Otherwise the goal of a non-profit organization like NPH is to break even after paying the printing and production costs, and this is done by the revenue we take in from sales."

## A look to the future

Buske is hopeful about NPH's newest projects, some already in production and others planned for future release. Two new books, *Prepared to Answer* and *More Prepared to Answer*, discuss controversial topics from a unique, narrative approach. There will also be Bible studies covering the whole Bible, chapter by chapter or book by book; a new parenting magazine; and, further into the future, a series titled "A Lutheran Looks at." This series will compare the beliefs and teachings of WELS with other church bodies, similar to the way a previously printed book, *WELS and Other Lutherans*, charted the differences between the Lutheran synods.

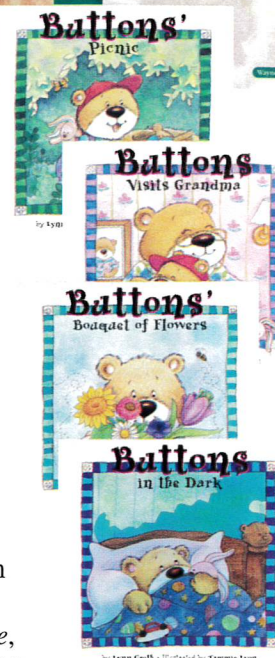
Just as NPH has adapted over the years to meet new needs, it continues to explore fresh ways to better serve WELS. It has experimented with new media products such as *God's Promise*, an interactive CD-ROM that presents the Bible via computer with visuals, sound, and interactions. NPH released its first children's book series, Buttons the Bear, in 2003. Sales through the Internet at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net) are growing, and the company is always striving to make the site more user-friendly. E-mail provides customers with product updates.

The publishing house also markets certain products outside WELS when it seems they could sell well, but this is always a challenge. The original idea behind NPH, and the focus since its inception, has been to serve the synod. Financially, this is best accomplished by targeting a WELS audience.

As Buske says, "We can try to sell to other church bodies, but it gets expensive. We have to break even to keep doing what we're doing, so first and foremost we serve WELS."

*Adam Goede is a member at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.*

*To read the first two articles in this series on WELS subsidiaries, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "ficarchive". Search using the keyword phrase "subsidiary".*





**pi·e·ty** *n. pl.*

The condition of reverence and devotion to God that comes with faith in Christ.

**pi·e·tism** *n.*

Making subjective standards of piety and religious experience the essential measure of Christianity or the Christian faith.

# True Christian piety

True Christian piety does not consist primarily in what we do but in recognizing what our God has done for us.

John M. Brenner

Luther was not the first to try to reform the church. Many before him recognized that something was wrong in the life of God's people. But most who went before Luther focused on behavior or organizational reforms.

Luther, however, recognized that the real problem in the church was not how people were living but what the church was teaching. The Roman Church emphasized what people were to do to contribute to their salvation rather than teaching that Jesus has accomplished everything for salvation in our place. Rome had raised tradition and the decisions and decrees of popes and councils to a position of equal or superior authority to the Holy Scriptures.

Medieval piety included making pilgrimages to "holy" places and praying to Mary and the saints. Taking monastic vows and doing

works of penance were considered meritorious. Among the common people, knowledge of the basic teachings of the Bible was often minimal. The Lord's Supper was viewed as a sacrifice we offer to gain God's favor rather than a gracious meal of life by which God offers and seals the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Striving to gain God's favor by leading a life of medieval piety drove Luther to the point of despair. The more he tried to keep God's law and appease God by what he did, the more his conscience became burdened with the knowledge that all of his efforts fell far short.

### **Piety in Luther's time**

As Luther studied the Scriptures, he came to understand that true Christian piety does not consist primarily in what we do but in recognizing what our God has done for us. The message of the Lutheran Reformation centered on

God's full and free forgiveness won by the perfect life and sacrifice of God's own Son. Jesus made full atonement for our sins. He has defeated the Prince of Darkness and opened heaven's doors. True Christian piety consists in trusting that message.

To foster true piety, Luther and his colleagues translated the Bible into the language of the people, published books of sermons and devotional material, and wrote hymns and catechisms.

Luther's Small Catechism provided a summary and explanation of the basic truths of Christianity in terms so simple that even a child could understand. Those basic truths were so important that he reviewed them every day. In his preface to the Large Catechism, Luther wrote,

I, too, am a doctor and a preacher. . . . Yet I continue to do as a child does that is being taught the Catechism. Mornings



and when I otherwise have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I like, but must remain a child and student of the Catechism.

Lutheran piety was evident in the corporate worship of the congregation. Worship centered on God's Word and the sacraments, the means the Holy Spirit uses to create, sustain, and strengthen faith. Following Luther's example, pastors preached sermons aimed not only at the head but also at the heart to convict their hearers of their sin and to point them to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Lutheran Church became known as the "Singing Church" as the reformers wrote hymns expressing the deep truths of Scripture in meter and rhyme. The sacraments were restored to their rightful place as means of grace, means through which the Holy Spirit conveys forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Heads of households were urged to carry out their God-given responsibilities as spiritual heads of their families in leading worship at home and instructing their children in the basic truths of God's Word. Luther provided devotional material, sermon books, and his catechisms to assist parents in that God-given task.

### **Piety in practice**

Piety is a matter of the heart. The Holy Spirit reaches the heart through the means of grace. He works to create or strengthen faith when God's Word is read and proclaimed.

As faith grows, the Christian life shows. Luther taught the precious truth that we are saved by faith alone without the deeds of the law, but he also clearly taught that faith is never alone. Good works and a Christian life flow from faith. In his preface to Paul's Letter to the Romans, Luther wrote:

Faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us born anew of God (John 1:12,13). It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers. . . . O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 35, p. 370)

## **Daily contrition and repentance is true piety in practice.**

In this life, however, we will never reach perfection. Every Christian is a sinner and a saint at the same time and remains so until he dies. Because we sin daily, we daily confess our sins and turn to our heavenly Father for forgiveness. Daily contrition and repentance is true piety in practice.

### **Piety in the Age of Orthodoxy**

Lutheran piety was also evident during the Post-Reformation period or Age of Orthodoxy (1580-1715). Theologians wrote monumental works on Christian doctrine. However, the greatest of these theologians produced not only scholarly writings but also devotional works for the common people. Lutheran hymnody flourished revealing a heartfelt piety in poetry.

One of the greatest hymn writers of the period was Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676). Gerhardt lived through the terror and destruction of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) during which parts of Germany were ravished over and over again by marauding armies. Whole villages disappeared, and dis-

placed people wandered the countryside looking for food and shelter.

Gerhardt's personal life was also tragic. He was preceded in death by his wife and four of his five children. He was removed from his office as a pastor for refusing to compromise his confession of the truth. Yet from the pen of this man who suffered so much came some of the greatest expressions of Christian hope, confidence, and comfort ever written. His Christian piety, centered in his Savior, looked beyond the problems, heartache, and trials of this life to the glorious hope of heaven. As he wrote:

Lord, when your glory I shall see  
And taste your kingdom's pleasure,  
Your blood my royal robe shall be,  
My joy beyond all measure!  
When I appear before your throne,  
Your righteousness shall be my crown;  
With these I need not hide me.  
And there, in garments richly wrought,  
As your own bride I shall be brought  
To stand in joy beside you.  
(*Christian Worship* 219)

That kind of piety thrives when Jesus and his saving work remain our primary focus. True piety grows when the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, the sacraments are rightly administered, and the precious teachings of the Holy Scriptures are carefully taught and treasured.

*John Brenner, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.*

*This is the first of a four-part series that will show historically and biblically the struggle between piety and pietism that regularly troubles the church.*

# WHATEVER

## Snowflakes

Many people look for miracles in their life. I think God gives us miracles everyday, and today my miracle was a snowflake.

Kathryn Jackan

**I**t's snowing right now. As I look out my window I can't help but remember the saying, "No two snowflakes are alike." How many snowflakes are there? Millions? Trillions? Quadruple ka-jillion? And every one of those is different?

Wow. How can that be? Sure there are a lot of people who hate snow and more who love it. No one can argue the joys of snow days. But each one of those flakes is different. How amazing.

Sometimes it takes more for an awe-inducing reaction—mountains, the Grand Canyon, oceans. But for me, I just had to look out my window and realize the wonder of God's great creation.

**What's my point? Just to ask you to stop and look out your window and be amazed.** Many people look for miracles in their life. They wonder why God doesn't give us miracles, ways to see things that assure us he's there. I think he does, every day, and today my miracle was a snowflake.

God has given us so much here on earth. Many devotions dig deep and think deep. But I'm a simple person, and I realize that I can just look out my window and be amazed at God's wonderful blessings. More than just snowflakes. All of them.

Life is busy. Study for your chemistry test. Turn in your applications. Play in a basketball game tomorrow. It's easy to get caught up in it all. It's nice just to take a look out your window and realize that God is great! We should never forget this.

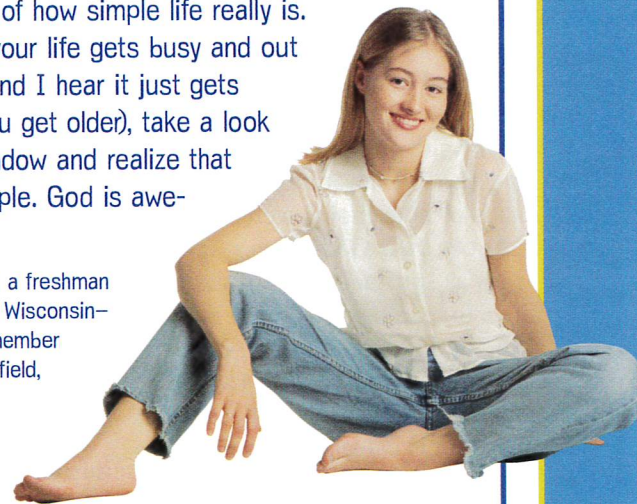
And if God can give us all this in our sinful world, what will heaven be like? If these little snowflakes are

beautiful, what will heaven be like, where everything is perfect?

**One of my favorite passages is Matthew 6:28,29:** "See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these." Jesus goes on to tell us not to worry. That reminds me of how simple life really is.

So when your life gets busy and out of control (and I hear it just gets worse as you get older), take a look out your window and realize that it's very simple. God is awesome!

Kathryn Jackan, a freshman at University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a member at Trinity, Marshfield, Wisconsin.

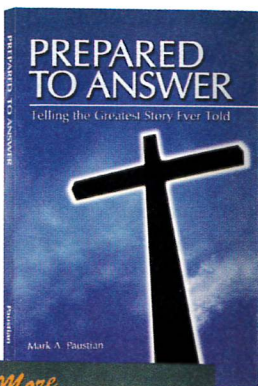


# awesome

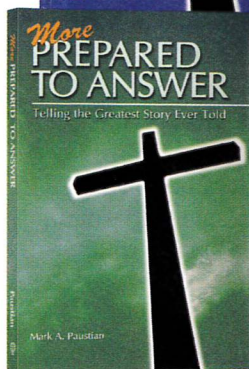
# Booknook

A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net) or call 800-662-6022. Note: These reviews are not meant to represent the opinions of WELS or Forward in Christ.

## Begin with a story about Jesus



With the books *Prepared to Answer* and *More Prepared to Answer*, Mark Paustian presents a philosophy of personal witnessing that could be called “All I Really Need



to Know I Learned in Sunday School.” When facing questions to our faith, Paustian encourages us to begin with a story about Jesus rather than out-right doctrinal

claims. For in meeting Jesus, the questioner meets him who is at the heart of all our doctrine.

Responding first with a Gospel account, Paustian then meets the questioners where they are at. For example, with a bit of reason he may expose the unreliable nature of the philosophy behind a question. Often he appeals to one’s natural knowledge of God from creation and conscience. In meeting the questioners where they are at, he is able to lead them where they need to be—face-to-face with the Word made flesh, crucified, and risen.

There is not always an obvious connection between the story and the question. For example, I don’t know if one would readily think of sharing the account of Christ’s trans-

figuration in response to the question, “With so many interpretations, who can say who is right?” But Paustian makes insightful applications from the Gospel stories as he answers the questions in an engaging and evangelical style.

These books will be a blessing to many.

- **Evangelists:** This includes us all as witnesses of Christ. Whether you face these questions door-to-door, in the office, or at home, these books will have you more prepared to answer.
- **Seekers and skeptics:** I think even skeptics would read these books cover to cover. They will appreciate that the author doesn’t dodge the questions at all.
- **College students:** The objections Paustian handles abound in universities. Parents, put these books in your children’s hands as they head out into a world awash in liberalism.
- **Pastors:** You will find many sermon illustrations.
- **You:** You have probably wrestled with some of these questions from time to time. Let Jesus ease your doubts as you meet him in these Gospel-inspired answers.

Daniel Dexter

Christ our Redeemer, El Paso, Texas

Editor’s note: These books cost \$14.99 each or \$23.98 for the set of two.

## Untangling the Web

*The Internet has become a vast maze of information. Knowing where to look for strong Christian content can make the journey easier.*

Are you interested in receiving timely information from WELS? Subscribe to any of the more than 20 e-mail news services available at [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net). Go to [www.wels.net/jumpword/subscribe](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/subscribe) to receive:

- daily devotions or prayers written by WELS pastors;
- WELS news releases;
- the site spotlight, which provides links to important online synod information;
- regularly published newsletters such as *Mission Connection* (home and world mission news);
- and more.

Once you arrive at [www.wels.net/jumpword/subscribe](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/subscribe), click on the link of the news service that you would like to receive. If you already have a [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net) account and are logged on, you can simply click the “subscribe” button on the right. If you do not have a [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net) account, enter your e-mail address in the “subscribe” box on the right. Then enter your name and a password when prompted.

As you tour [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), keep your eyes open for the “subscribe” button. Any time that button appears, you can subscribe to information contained on that page.

Note: [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net) offers e-mail subscriptions in two different formats—news services (described above) and listserves. The Subscriptions page will note the difference between the two and explain how to subscribe to listserves.

## Building bridges

Maria and I were making our family trees. Explaining each branch, I told her about my two newborn nieces. She told me about her husband and children back home . . . whom she hadn't seen in eight years. Tears. In her eyes and mine. We built a bridge that day. We made a connection.



Joanne Ihling, a faithful volunteer from Gethsemane, Milwaukee, works with students at the WELS model ESL school.

I met Maria at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, which started an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) program in February 2003. Gethsemane's goal was to teach English effectively while building bridges in the community to further its outreach to Hispanics and Latinos.

Also in February 2003, the WELS Synodical Council allocated grant money from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for a model ESL program developed by WELS member Beth

Thompson. In September 2003, Gethsemane's members invited Thompson to use their facility as the home base for this new program, and in May 2004 the congregation passed a resolution to make this model ESL program its long-term and primary outreach effort to adults.

Sponsored by Home and World Missions, the program is labeled a "model ESL program and lab school." It serves as an example and on-site training location for representatives from congregations starting ESL programs. As a lab school, it develops new techniques for teaching both English and first-language literacy. Since many ESL students are unable to read in their native language, first-language skills are not only important to help Spanish-speakers retain their identity, but also make it possible to learn to read in a second language.

Three evenings a week, volunteer Dale Laine teaches the advanced students, while Thompson takes the beginners. Children can attend learning activities while their parents are in class. So as not to hinder the initial bridge-building intent of the program,

lesson content is not Bible-related. Rather, the classes serve as a way to bring immigrants into contact with caring Christians, opening doors to share God's Word. A Spanish-speaking Gethsemane member offers a Bible class once a week, and the congregation is sending its pastor for Spanish immersion training this summer.

Since the school opened, more than 200 adults have registered, and more than 100 people from Gethsemane and the Milwaukee area have volunteered as tutors.

"This week I had two conversations—one with my boss—and I'm so happy about it because I understood all he said to me," one student shares. "Thank you for everything."

Walking through the school doors as a first-time English tutor, I understood the concept of ESL schools as pre-evangelism tools. But driving home that night I truly appreciated the impact this program has on students' and volunteers' lives. It's all about building bridges along which the gospel can travel.

*If you are interested in volunteering as a tutor, you can attend a volunteer seminar at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, on January 21-22. Contact Beth Thompson, bthompsn@dias.net, for details.*

Laura Warmuth

## The gospel at work in Japan

*From Brad Wordell, WELS missionary in Japan:*

In our worship service on May 29, Mrs. Gotoh was baptized. Her husband was baptized about three years ago. After the service, Mr. Gotoh said, "Today my wife has become my sister (in Christ)."

Mr. and Mrs. Gotoh first came to our church about 28 years ago. We give thanks to the Lord for his goodness!

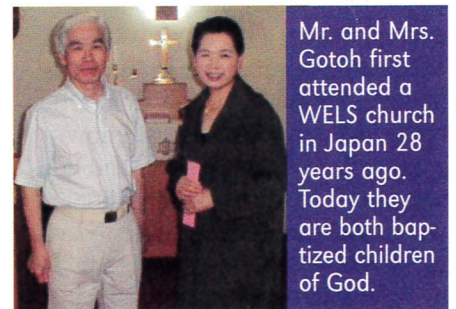
*From Kermit Habben, WELS missionary in Japan:*

One never knows when the seed of the gospel will blossom and bear fruit. Last week a lady called and asked where the church was here in Utsunomiya. When Mrs. Konno arrived she told me her story.

She had been baptized in our church here in Utsunomiya exactly 40 years ago, when she was

17 years old. Then she got sick and was hospitalized for some time. When she got out she got married, and her husband would not allow her to come to church.

"But today I told him I was going to church, and he agreed that it was okay," Mrs. Konno told me. "I'm sorry that it took me so long to be able to come back. I would like to come as often as I can, and I would like to restudy the Bible."



Mr. and Mrs. Gotoh first attended a WELS church in Japan 28 years ago. Today they are both baptized children of God.

## Hurricane-torn campus teaches valuable lessons

Passing Principal Steve Granberg one day in the hallway at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., I asked, "Has anyone thought of sending some of our kids down to Florida to help with hurricane clean-up efforts?" Three weeks later, that idea turned into a Gideon-like invasion of central Florida by 39 teenagers and 12 chaperones for 10 days in October 2004.

What was even more amazing were the valuable lessons about the Lord's mysterious ways each of us learned. Too many questions kept me up at night, and the Lord amazed me with his answers.

- Where would we put such a group to work and still keep them safe? WELS Kingdom Workers pointed us to Southern Lutheran Academy (SLA), Mulberry, Fla., a struggling area Lutheran high school with a student body of three and a campus full of downed trees.
- Where would we get the money? From a generous gift from the WELS Committee on Relief, a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, and many personal donations.
- How would we get there? A gracious discount on a coach bus from Nationwide Travelers in Appleton and the Red Cross running interference for a passenger van answered that question.

- How would we tool our small army when SLA had no means to do so? Through every kid bringing a rake; with donated push mowers, wheelbarrows, and chainsaws; and with Kettle Moraine faculty member Jim Fenske keeping everything in running order.
- Would these Wisconsin kids be able to handle the heat, the humidity, and the hard work? This was the silliest question of all. Upperclassmen quickly took on their straw boss roles with a servant-leader attitude so that chaperones could work the chainsaws without having to watch over the work crews. Students who knew how to tackle hard work became teachers to those who didn't. Kids who have showed questionable initiative in the classroom would look for more work when their assigned task was done.

The greatest benefit, however, was seeing how lessons of Christ's love in the classroom quickly translated into actions of Christlike love in the work field. More than 1,700 man hours, 40 downed trees, and 33 acres of mowed and raked campus later, we came home with a deeper appreciation for the good that God worked in the aftermath of two hurricanes. We all learned a lesson only God could teach—the rewarding feelings one has when combining personal sacrifice with much-needed service.

*Jon Baumann*



Hard work eases hurricane woes.

## Obituaries

### Charles E. Found 1915-2004

Charles Found was born Jan. 5, 1915, in West Allis, Wis. He died June 12, 2004, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1938 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee; St. John, Libertyville, Ill.; Our Savior, South Shore, S.D.; Germantown, S.D.; Zion, Bristol, Wis.; Prince of Peace, Thousand Oaks, Calif.; the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, Lusaka, Zambia; Redeemer, Phoenix, Ariz.; St. Paul, Douglas, Ariz.; Warren and Sierra Vista, Ariz.; Shepherd of the Plains, Lubbock, Texas; and Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.

He is survived by his wife, Ella; two sons; three daughters; 16 grandchildren; four great-grandsons; one sister; and one brother.

### Richard D. Ziesemer 1920-2004

Richard Ziesemer was born Feb. 26, 1920, in Appleton, Wis. He died Sept. 29, 2004, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Mt. Zion, Ripon, Wis., and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee WELS Campus Ministry.

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth; two sons; four daughters; and seven grandchildren.

### Orville W. Kempfert 1920-2004

Orville Kempfert was born June 12, 1920. He died April 16, 2004, in West Bend, Wis.

A 1942 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Bethany, Hustisford, Wis., and St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife and one son. He is survived by one son, one daughter, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

## World Missions update

*Here are some of the mission field summaries reported by the Board for World Missions at the fall 2004 meeting.*

**Cameroon:** Seventeen national pastors are serving 30 congregations. They are eager to reach out to their fellow countrymen. In June several attended training sessions in evangelism and then spent a week in a town where the Lutheran Church of Cameroon is not represented, visiting people and inviting them to their first Lutheran service there. Presently, the Lutheran Church of Cameroon is working in the two English-speaking provinces of Cameroon, but the pastors are already looking forward to the day when they can begin to share God's message in the French-speaking areas.

**Nigeria:** God has blessed All Saints Lutheran Church with a new president, an additional pastor from the seminary, 11 faithful (two-year trained) evangelists, and laymen of faith and courage. God has also blessed Christ the King Lutheran Synod with one additional pastor graduate and six vicars who will be ordained at the annual synod convention in December.



This young member of a Nigerian Lutheran church was chosen to present gifts to WELS President Karl Gurgel when he visited her congregation in April 2004.

**Zambia:** Pastor Milton Mpofu is the new Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Zambia chairman. He was elected by the delegates at the synod's 24th convention.

The outgoing chairman stressed the theme of the synod, "Work together for the Lord." He emphasized the blessings that the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA) has experienced over the past 50 years: "We have an estab-

lished church body with a working constitution. There are 100 congregations with 29 preaching stations. We have a training program for national pastors. Presently we have 14 national pastors serving and six men studying at the seminary. We have national leadership that has evolved. This leadership is not just from the national pastors, but also trained and qualified laymen have taken up leadership positions. All of the LCCA congregations are paying 100 percent of their pastors' salaries. We have a church that is strong on doctrine and practice. We have some well organized districts, and our national ladies' organization is strong."

**Bulgaria:** Bulgaria will soon be served by a friendly counselor, former Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President Armin Panning, who accepted a one-year call. The Bulgarian Lutheran Church will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its founding. At the anniversary service two Bulgarian vicars will be ordained, bringing the number of Bulgarian pastors to three.

**Russia:** Five mission families serve in Siberia. In Omsk and Iskitim, missionary children in Russian schools have opened the door for teaching elective Bible classes in those schools. Once a week, after the last class, students can stay and hear a Sunday school Bible story. So far the lessons are only taught to classmates of the missionary children, but the majority of the students attend the class. The worker training program has one student in his second year in the seminary, one student in the Bible institute, and one student beginning a second vicar year.

**Scandinavia:** The fall courses at Biblicum include six Swedish seminary students, two seminary students from the Czech Republic, five pastors and one student from Latvia, and three Ukrainian pastors.

**Mexico:** A mission team has been firmly established in Torreon to capitalize on the evangelism enthusiasm demonstrated by the national church leaders in that city. In Sonora, WELS

Mission to the Children zealously pursues its goal of offering humanitarian aid as a bridge to gospel outreach and eventual church planting.

**Puerto Rico:** With no resident missionary assigned to Puerto Rico, the national church is operating independently for the most part. The 40th anniversary of WELS mission work in Puerto Rico was celebrated on October 31.

**Portugal:** The Lutheran Church of Portugal is a mission station connected at this time with the administrative committee for Latin American Missions. Although consisting of only a few faithful members, the church is holding services in two places. The national pastor there is receiving limited program support from WELS revolving funds to encourage outreach and nurture.

**Apacheland:** New outreach work is being done by the Apaches in the Hondah/McNary area. The initial opening service had over 100 people in attendance and has been averaging 30-40 in attendance ever since. Within five years this congregation could become one of the largest churches on the reservation.

The Apache Christian Training School has entered its seventh year. Four Apaches are enrolled in the pre-seminary class, three for their second year and one just beginning. In addition to their studies, these second-career men get hands-on worker training in local congregations. One great blessing will be seeing one of the original Apache Christian Training School students, Fidel Dazen, graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May.

**Indonesia:** The Indonesian church, *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia*, has nearly doubled its membership in the last year. The WELS stateside missionary continues to make every-other-month visits to Indonesia from his base in the United States, with frequent e-mail and phone contact in between. An exploratory visit of the island of Papua was conducted. West Timor has also been explored as a possible mission location.

# WELS news briefs

## Commission on Evangelism

414-256-3287; coe@sab.wels.net

### The Commission on Evangelism has prepared materials for a special worship service focusing on evangelism.

The theme for this year's Evangelism Sunday is "Every Soul A Treasure," the 2005 emphasis for North American Outreach. Materials include worship helps, text study, sermon, children's message, Bible class, and promotional material. You may download all of these materials from the evangelism Web site: [www.wels.net/jumpword/esunday](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/esunday).

## Communication Services

414-256-3230; csc@sab.wels.net

WELS Communication Services is setting its media production schedule for 2005. **Within that schedule, 10 spots are available for the media division to produce "outreach/calling card" DVDs for local congregations.** The DVD will contain menu selections such as a virtual tour of your church and school, a message from the pastor, and important contact information and directions. Your DVD can also include a copy of the "Soul Search" presentation or a locally produced law/gospel presentation.

DVDs will be produced at the congregation over a two-day period and then be professionally edited and authored. Congregations will receive a minimum of 1,000 copies of the DVD. Congregations interested in developing this reasonably priced tool for outreach should contact Media Communications Director Steve Zambo at 414-256-3281; [stevez@sab.wels.net](mailto:stevez@sab.wels.net).

## Board for Ministerial Education

414-256-3236; bme@sab.wels.net

**Enrollments for our four ministerial education schools are in.** These schools include Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis.; Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich. (high schools that begin preparing students for full-time ministry); Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. (college that trains teachers and prepares men

for the seminary); and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis. (seminary that trains pastors).

	2004-05	2003-04	2002-03
LPS	435	482	525
MLS	286	315	345
MLC	946*	1,031	1,054
WLS	193	185	182
Total	1,860	2,013	2,106

\*234 in pastor track

## Board for Home Missions

### Campus Ministry

414-256-3279; cm@sab.wels.net

**Lightsource, a WELS magazine for college students, has a new look.** Now printed in full color, it features articles on the core concepts in Christianity and on current issues from a Christian's viewpoint. It also addresses religious questions submitted by readers. Printed several times a year, *Lightsource* is sent to WELS college students, all pastors, area Lutheran high schools, and WELS synodical schools. For copies, contact Campus Ministry (see above).

## Board for World Missions

414-256-3233; bwm@sab.wels.net



Board for World Missions administrator Daniel Koelpin (right) honored Missionary John Janosek (left) for 40 years in the ministry on Oct. 6, 2004. Janosek spent his entire ministry in Africa, the majority in Malawi. During his ministry in Malawi, Janosek served the northern, central, and southern regions, ministering to as many as 38 bush congregations at one time. He and his wife, Yvonne, have retired to North Carolina.

## Conference of Presidents

414-256-3202; cop@sab.wels.net

**The 58th biennial convention of WELS will be held July 25-29, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.** Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* must

be submitted to the President's Office by Feb. 15. A memorial is a formal petition to the synod convention that asks consideration for a particular item of business and may be brought by an individual member or groups of members in the synod. For an example, visit [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "memorials". Send memorials for the 2005 convention to the President's Office, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; [carlam@sab.wels.net](mailto:carlam@sab.wels.net).

## Committee on Relief

630-907-1333; cor@sab.wels.net

**The goal of the WELS Committee on Relief is to bring physical relief to suffering humanity.** The committee's work is nonbudgetary and depends on gifts of concern from members. Grants given from October 2003-November 2004 include:

### Domestic grants

House fires . . . . .	\$ 5,000
Inner city relief . . . . .	6,500
Clovis, Calif., relief for Hmong immigrants . . . . .	7,500
Utica, Ill., tornadoes . . . . .	8,000
San Diego, Calif., wildfires . . . . .	10,000
Hurricane Isabel . . . . .	10,000
Clatonia, Neb., tornadoes . . . . .	15,000
Randolph, Wis., flood relief . . . . .	15,000
Los Angeles, Calif., relief for foreign immigrants . . . . .	15,000
Arizona forest fires . . . . .	25,000
Indiana flooding . . . . .	80,000
Needy families (poverty, medical) . . . . .	95,000
Florida hurricane relief . . . . .	<u>150,000</u>
Total domestic grants . . . . .	\$442,000

### Foreign grants

Typhoon Hong Kong . . . . .	\$ 5,000
Aid to Native Americans . . . . .	5,500
Hunger in Africa . . . . .	10,000
Haiti emergency fund . . . . .	10,000
World missionary grants . . . . .	12,000
General world relief . . . . .	25,500
Grenada hurricane relief . . . . .	<u>200,000</u>
Total foreign grants . . . . .	<u>\$268,000</u>
<b>Total grants . . . . .</b>	<b>\$710,000</b>

These updates are from the offices of the synod administration building at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

## Synodical Council members wrestle with difficult decisions

Balancing mission and ministry opportunities with available resources is a challenge that members of the Synodical Council deal with regularly. This year is no different. A sharply reduced revenue forecast for this fiscal year (July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005) forced the Synodical Council in its November meeting to approve methods to enhance revenue and cut costs.

These decisions are not made lightly—or without pain. Two laymembers of the Synodical Council—Mark Bannan (Michigan District) and Kurt Austad (Nebraska District)—shared some of the challenges and joys of being council members.

The issue the Synodical Council wrestles with the most is “how much do we invest in the future while taking advantage of the opportunities of the present,” says Austad. “We know that we will need called workers (Ministerial Education) and that most of our congregations need encouragement and training on how to thrive and reach out (Parish Services), yet the fields are ripe for harvest now, and we are missing out on outreach opportunities both here and abroad (Home and World Missions).”

With limited resources and ever increasing opportunities, balancing

these programs becomes even more difficult. “At our last meeting, we heard about an overwhelming opportunity to share our Savior with thousands of people in a different part of the world,” says Bannan. “But can we afford to do what is necessary to help these people hear about their Savior? Will we have to pull back from another field, just to do outreach to these lost souls?”

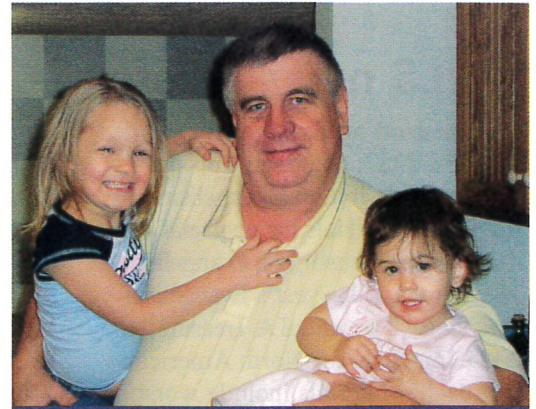
These men struggle—as a group and personally—as they make decisions that will direct the synod’s future. “Being a Synodical Council representative has been a mixed blessing,” says Bannan. “I get to work closely with the called workers of my district, which to me is a great privilege. . . .

“There are times, though, that being a Synodical Council member is not such a great thing. When we found that we had a problem within our budgeting process that led to double spending several million dollars, I was devastated. It was and still is our responsibility as Synodical Council members to accurately keep track of both spending and income.”

Both Bannan and Austad recognize the importance of their role. “It is important for the lay representatives to do their best to communicate well—both bringing the district’s concerns and comments to the Synodical Council and letting the district know what is on the minds of their synodical leaders,” says Austad.

They also know what needs to be done.

“First, I have to ask myself if I have been as faithful and generous as I can be



Mark Bannan and his two granddaughters. Bannan’s thoughts on the state of the synod: “We as members of this synod need to wake up and take action, which includes making prioritized cuts along with increasing our giving so that we can maintain what we are.”

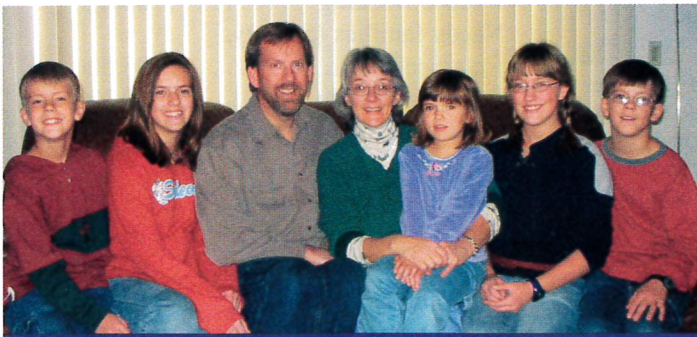
in my own personal stewardship. I think every member of the synod has to ask the same question, take stock of his blessings, and be honest with himself before responding,” says Austad.

He continues, “As a Synodical Council member, I have to be faithful with the resources that God has given us to work with, no matter what the amount. This means sound financial management and balancing the budget, even making unpopular cuts in ministry, but always with an optimistic eye toward the future.”

Both Austad and Bannan look to the Lord for guidance. “I feel so inadequate to effect the changes that need to be done to maintain a synod,” says Bannan. “However, I know that my Lord will provide what he feels is necessary. I just have to be willing to accept what he provides.”

Austad agrees. “We have some difficult decisions to make. I pray that God moves the hearts of synod members to provide the money needed to maintain and expand our gospel ministries for the sake of the lost and that he gives us wisdom as we decide how we should be using our limited resources.”

*For more information on the synod’s financial situation, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword “budget”. There you will also find more questions and answers from Mark Bannan and Kurt Austad.*



Kurt Austad and his family. Austad’s thoughts on the state of the synod: “I would compare the synod to a fruit tree that has been through a damaging windstorm. Some of the branches lost were bearing fruit, and some more had to be trimmed for balance and the overall health of the tree. Now the tree is recovering and will hopefully bear more fruit than before. There is still a lot of work to be done—water, fertilizer, maybe more pruning. Our roots are strong, but it won’t be easy.”



## District news

### Michigan



Zion, Toledo, Ohio, held its first Family Fall Fun Fest on Fri., Oct. 29, 2004, from 6-8 P.M. Spearheaded by Melissa Nolte (shown above dressed as Katie Luther, surrounded by her family), the fellowship and outreach event included games, prizes, food, and decorations. Perhaps the highlight was the "pin the nail on the Ninety-five Theses" game.

### Dakota-Montana

The **WELS Campus Ministry at South Dakota State University** in Brookings has been recognized as a student organization at the university. This allowed the campus ministry to place posters in the dormitories and sponsor a booth at the final registration/orientation day in fall 2004. Nearly 300 devotional booklets were shared with college students at the booth. Contacts made there have led several students to visit Our Savior Lutheran Church in Brookings.

**WELS churches in South Dakota** set up a booth at the South Dakota State Fair held Sept. 4-11, 2004. More than 175 names were collected and shared with various churches in South Dakota and six other states for follow up. A brochure picked up at the 2002 state fair led a student to enroll at Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D., this school year.

### Southeastern Wisconsin

On Oct. 24, 2004, **Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.**, dedicated its new organ.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: DM—Wayne Rouse; MI—John Eich; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

## A new path to the pulpit

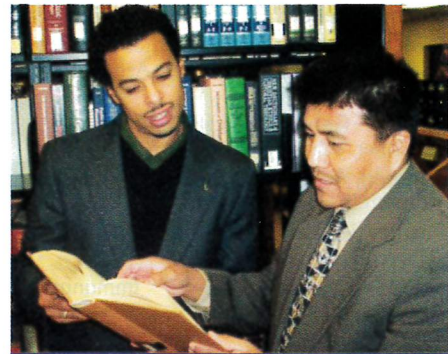
As U.S. demographics change and people from different cultural and ethnic groups join WELS churches, the Holy Spirit is creating the desire in some of these men to become pastors. The Pastoral Studies Institute, a branch of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., was created in January 2003 to serve these non-traditional students and other non-traditional students such as second-career men.

Former seminary president David Valleskey described the Pastoral Studies Institute as "an expression of [the seminary's] desire to rise to the challenge of preparing men to preach the gospel in the 21st century." These men will in turn reach out to and nurture people from their cultures, helping take the gospel to all nations. Realizing that these students may not be best served by the traditional path of pastoral training, the Pastoral Studies Institute offers different avenues for them.

Some students are encouraged to take the regular seminary-certification courses at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Others, after completing the Congregational Evangelist Program and receiving a recommendation from their pastor, are eligible for distance learning. This option allows students to train from home while still fulfilling their responsibilities to their families and jobs. As the student works through the curriculum, his home pastor serves as mentor and model. After learning biblical Hebrew and Greek and completing courses on the creeds, Bible background, and doctrine, these students are ready to enter the seminary to continue their education alongside the traditional students.

Still other students, especially those from diverse linguistic and cultural settings, may receive both their pre-seminary and seminary training in another language through satellite programs overseen by the institute.

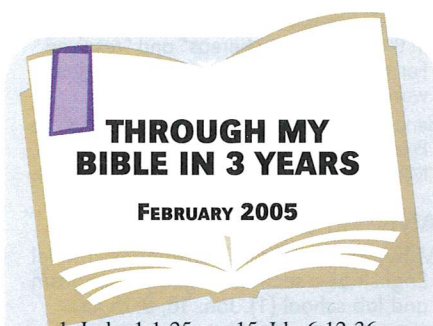
Whether a Swedish man like Peter Oman who will pastor a congregation in Sweden while working outside the church to support himself, or an



(From left) Peter Oman and Fidel Dazen are Pastoral Studies Institute students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

Apache like Fidel Dazen who grew up on the reservation in Arizona, these students bring inspiring enthusiasm and insight to WELS. They are blessings to the traditional seminary students whom they study alongside and will certainly bless each congregation and soul that they touch.

*The Pastoral Studies Institute wants to guide and assist students from every culture and corner of North America in their preparation for the pastoral ministry. Contact the institute's director, Prof. E. Allen Sorum at [sorume@wls.wels.net](mailto:sorume@wls.wels.net) or 262-242-8178.*



- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Luke 1:1-25    | 15. Lk. 6:12-36  |
| 2. Lk. 1:26-38    | 16. Lk. 6:37-49  |
| 3. Lk. 1:39-56    | 17. Lk. 7:1-17   |
| 4. Lk. 1:57-80    | 18. Lk. 7:18-35  |
| 5. Lk. 2:1-20     | 19. Lk. 7:36-8:3 |
| 6. Lk. 2:21-40    | 20. Lk. 8:4-21   |
| 7. Lk. 2:41-52    | 21. Lk. 8:22-39  |
| 8. Lk. 3:1-22     | 22. Lk. 8:40-56  |
| 9. Lk. 3:23-4:13  | 23. Lk. 9:1-17   |
| 10. Lk. 4:14-30   | 24. Lk. 9:18-36  |
| 11. Lk. 4:31-44   | 25. Lk. 9:37-56  |
| 12. Lk. 5:1-11    | 26. Genesis 1, 2 |
| 13. Lk. 5:12-26   | 27. Gen. 3       |
| 14. Lk. 5:27-6:11 | 28. Gen. 4, 5    |

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY**

**Pastors**

**Hennig, Richard F.**, to retirement  
**Huehn, Burgess A.**, to Bethany, Bruce Crossing, Mich./First English, Ashland/St. Paul, Hurley, Wis.  
**Jahnke, Gene E.**, to Beautiful Savior, Spooner, Wis.  
**Panning, Armin J.**, to Bulgarian Lutheran Church (friendly counselor)  
**Prange, Peter M.**, to Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.  
**Schossow, Paul N.**, to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.

**Teachers**

**Buss, Robert J.**, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Gustafson, Milda**, to Grace, Osceola, Wis.  
**Humann, Beth M.**, to Faith, Tacoma, Wash.  
**Ohrmundt, Marla R.**, to St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

**Staff minister**

**Weir, Russell G.**, to retirement

**SYNOD CONVENTION**

The 58th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 25-29, 2005, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Details will be announced later.

Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* must be submitted to the President's Office by Feb. 15, 2005. A memorial is a formal petition to the synod convention that asks consideration for a particular item of business. A memorial may be brought by an individual member or groups of members in the synod. Memorials are usually composed in the format of "whereas" and "resolved." For an example, visit [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "memorials".

Send memorials for the 2005 convention to President's Office, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; [carlam@sab.wels.net](mailto:carlam@sab.wels.net).

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**Milwaukee, Wis.**—Gethsemane model English-as-a-second-language program and lab school (1). Jan. 16, 9:15 A.M.  
**Kiel, Wis.**—Trinity (100). Jan. 16. Service, 10 A.M. 920-894-3012.  
**Bay City, Mich.**—Bethel School (125). Feb. 27. Service, 10:30 A.M. Potluck dinner to follow. Clara Schultz, 989-893-1609.

**COMING EVENTS**

**Martin Luther College choir tour**  
 Feb. 18—St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis., 7 P.M.  
 Feb. 19—St. John, Neillsville, Wis., 7 P.M.

Feb. 20—St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., 10:30 A.M. & Emanuel, New London, Wis., 7 P.M.

Feb. 21—Trinity, Kiel, Wis., 7 P.M.

Feb. 22—Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., 10 A.M. & Faith, Fond du Lac, 7 P.M.

Feb. 23—Divine Savior, Indianapolis, Ind., 7 P.M.

Feb. 24—St. John, Bay City, Mich., 7 P.M.

Feb. 25—Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., 10 A.M. & Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich., 7 P.M.

Feb. 26—Trinity, Waukesha, Wis., 5:30 P.M.

Feb. 27—St. Mark, Watertown, Wis., 10:45 A.M.

March 13—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 3 P.M.

**Luther Preparatory School choir tour**

March 16—Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 7 P.M.

March 17—Messiah, Wichita, Kan., 7 P.M.

March 18—Grace, Lowell, Ark., 7 P.M.

March 19—Cypress Springs Village, Texas, 5 P.M.

March 20—Calvary, Dallas, Texas, 11 A.M. & Holy Word, Austin, Texas, 7 P.M.

March 21—Our Savior, San Antonio, Texas, 7 P.M.

March 22—Christ the Lord, Houston, Texas, 7 P.M.

March 23—Abiding Word, Houston, Texas, 7:30 P.M.

March 24—Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas, 7 P.M.

March 25—Crown of Life, New Orleans, La., 7 P.M.

March 27—Gloria Dei, Memphis, Tenn., 7 A.M. & Hope, West Chicago, Ill., 7 P.M.

**WELS/ELS ladies retreat**—Jan. 7-9. Springhill Suites, Sarasota, Fla. Judy Becker, 941-355-6591.

**Marriage retreat**—sponsored by WELS Adult Discipleship. Feb. 11-13. Heidel House, Green Lake, Wis. 800-567-8669 or [www.welsmarriageretreat.org](http://www.welsmarriageretreat.org).

**Sunday school teacher and superintendent conference**—Jan. 22. 9:30 A.M.-3 P.M. St. John, Baraboo, Wis. Cost, \$10/person. Debbie Rothe, 920-262-2988.

**Marriage retreat**—Feb. 18-20. Schwan Retreat Center, Trego, Wis. 800-577-4848.

**Pathways to Christ retreat**—March 11-13. Hawthorn Inn and LaSures Banquet Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. Paula Nimmer, 920-233-1069.

**Christian Woman Today retreat**—April 8-10. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen, 262-784-0412.

**National Conference on Worship, Music and the Arts**—July 18-21. Gustavus Adolphus, St. Peter, Minn. [www.wels.net/worship](http://www.wels.net/worship). Commission on Worship, 414-256-3226.

**Reunions**

• **Dr. Martin Luther College class of 1993 and STEP class of 1994**—

Onalaska, Wis., area, June 18. [dorannmahnke@hotmail.com](mailto:dorannmahnke@hotmail.com).

• **Wisconsin Lutheran High School class of 1995**—Oct. 1. New Berlin Hills, New Berlin, Wis. Send contact information to Jennifer (Snell) Schultz, 262-524-1637 or [snelljennifer@hotmail.com](mailto:snelljennifer@hotmail.com).

**EduTech**—A national conference on teaching, learning, and technology. For all WELS members who teach, preach, or offer technical support, including church/school workers and laypeople. June 26-29, 2006. Oshkosh, Wis. [www.wels.net/edutech](http://www.wels.net/edutech) or 414-256-3222.

**NAMES WANTED**

**WELS actors**—for onscreen work. Send resume and headshot to Steve Zambo, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; [stevez@sab.wels.net](mailto:stevez@sab.wels.net).

**Gulf Shores, Ala., to Gulf Port, Miss.**—Harmon Lewis, 251-639-4621.

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

**Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base, Jacksonville, N.C.**—Stephen Schmidt, 910-937-0022.

**Wilmington, N.C.**—Stephen Schmidt, 910-937-0022.

**Caddo Mills/Greenville, Texas**—John Hering, 972-494-4911.

**POSITIONS AVAILABLE**

**Christian preschool teacher**—Precious Lambs Early Learning Center, Raleigh, N.C. Alicia, 919-847-2650.

**Choir director**—Jordan, West Allis, Wis. Jill, 414-453-2030.

**Individuals to teach English in a foreign country**—one-year commitment. All expenses paid. 651-267-1044 or [sbohme@hotmail.com](mailto:sbohme@hotmail.com).

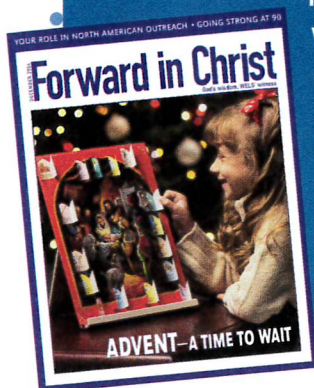
To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; [bulletinboard@sab.wels.net](mailto:bulletinboard@sab.wels.net). Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. An updated bulletin board is available at [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "bulletinboard".

# Potluck poll

What is the first page of the magazine you turn to each month when you receive *Forward in Christ*?

Send in your answer by Feb. 10 to *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. The first 10

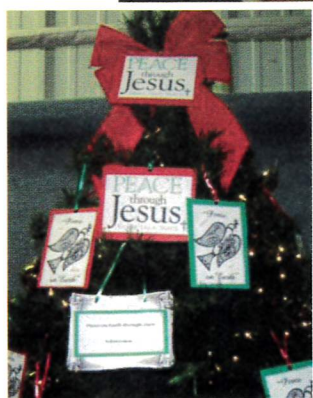
respondents will receive a *Forward in Christ* pocket calculator. We'll print the results in the April issue.



No one could wipe the smile off Bob's face as he displayed his trophy from the School of Outreach—a 130 lb. baby-boomer he snagged on Ephesians 2:8,9 while conversing over the fence right in his own backyard!

©Jeffrey Bovee

## Picture this



The Ladies Aid at St. Mark, Sambaugh, Mich., participated in the local museum's 2004 Galleria of Trees.

"We used our synod's theme, 'Peace through Jesus,' " writes St. Mark's member Anita Gurgel, "and tied it in with the museum's theme, 'Peace on Earth, Goodwill toward Men.' We printed doves with that theme on them and added the names of our missions to them."

Pictured are the ornaments on the tree and St. Mark's Ladies Aid.

*Submitted by Anita Gurgel*

## How will you INVEST this year?

As we look into 2005, we look at a block of time. We see 12 months; 52 weeks; 365 days; 8,760 hours; 525,600 minutes; 31,536,000 seconds. And all is a gift from God. We have done nothing to deserve it, earn it, or purchased it. . . .

Obviously, time is one of our most precious possessions. We can waste it. We can worry over it. We can spend it on ourselves. Or, as good stewards, we can invest it in the kingdom of God. . . .

The new year is full of time. As the seconds tick away, will you be tossing time out the window, or will you make every minute count?

*Steven B. Cloud, Pulpit Helps, Vol. 14, #2*

Send pictures to "Picture this," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

# DISCOVERING

## “what they have”

Nicole R. Balza

Janis Visaggio enthusiastically began serving her Savior after discovering the peace that he offers.

In many ways, Janis Visaggio's life began 12 years ago when she first visited Ascension Lutheran Church in Sarasota, Fla. Although Janis was 43 at the time, she'd been seeking something elusive all her life.

"I had been searching for a church to be comfortable in enough to want to return," she says. "Inside the heart of an unbeliever is a deep, deep sadness—heavy and filled with guilt. I had been praying to a God I didn't know to please fix what was wrong with my life."

Her 10-year-old son insisted that they needed to find a church. Raised Catholic, Janis chose Ascension because Lutheranism seemed to be "one step away" from the only religion she knew.

Janis attended Ascension's Bible class and worship service and was welcomed by member Rose Elliott, who encouraged Janis to bring her children to Sunday school and Pioneers. As she left, Janis thought, "This is a nice place in the middle of a hard world. I want what they have."

**Janis brought her children to Pioneers and sat in Ascension's courtyard while waiting for them.**

Joe King, another Ascension member, approached her and asked about her faith history. After listening to her story, Joe asked, "So, what do you think would happen if you died tonight? Would you go to heaven or hell?"

"No one had ever asked me that before," notes Janis. "I attempted to say something off the subject, but Joe stopped me. He said, 'Just answer the question.' At that moment I fell quiet inside, repeated the question to myself,

and told myself to be honest. 'Hell,' I said. 'Why?' asked Joe. 'Because I am not good,' I said."

Joe went on to explain that Jesus lived a perfect life in her place.

Then, "I was filled with a joy I have never known before or since. It was as if scales had been lifted from my eyes," Janis explains. "The guilt had been taken away. Jesus had freed me. I became a child of God. What a miracle! I had what they had! Peace in God."

Joe went on to give Janis her first Bible. As she took Bible information classes from Pastor John Huebner, Janis learned how to read her Bible, and she found answers to many questions that she had during her life. Janis became a WELS member, and her three children and husband, Tom, soon followed.

**As a new Christian, Janis says she was "filled with energy. I couldn't wait to help out and become part of the community."** Janis did not have to wait long. Soon Ascension called her to be its preschool director, and Janis began serving her Savior full-time.

Less than four years after joining Ascension, Janis's middle child, Matt, was heading into high school and considering becoming a pastor. Janis says, "Tom and I weren't sure where Wisconsin was, but we were sure we wanted the best Christian education for him." So, Matt left for Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis.

Two years later, the Visaggio's daughter, Hallie, also wanted to go to Luther



Janis Visaggio and her family (from left): sons Matt and Nicholas, daughter-in-law Jill, daughter Hallie, Janis, and husband Tom.

Prep. So Tom and Janis moved to Wisconsin to be near their two youngest children. While there, Janis accepted another call—this time to open a preschool for Zion, Hartland, Wis.

When Hallie was a senior at Luther Prep, Tom and Janis moved back to Florida. Two years later, Janis accepted a call to help Bethany, North Fort Myers, Fla., open a preschool. Bethany's preschool opened in fall 2004, and Janis is the preschool's director.

Compelled to serve her Savior, Janis also teaches a women's Bible study and writes the newsletter for her home congregation, Prince of Peace, Englewood, Fla. This fall she began a circuit Bible study for WELS preschool directors.

"The motivation to serve God's kingdom is not my own," Janis emphasizes. "I just can never think of a place I would rather be. To be able to work with fellow believers and do the work God has given me the talent to do is a blessing."

Amazing words and actions from someone who had never opened a Bible before being presented with one 12 years ago.

*Nicole Balza is assistant editor for Forward in Christ.*

# Denying death

In Jesus, death is not avoided. It is overcome.

Jason M. Nelson

In the last year I watched two good men die, my father and my father-in-law. I can say that they were good because God imputed Christ's goodness to them. Their late-blooming faith gave stronger evidence of it with each passing year.

I learned something from them in their last hours that had been pretty sketchy for me before. Death may be universal. Death may be inevitable. But death doesn't come without a fight, even for believers.

## Fighting against death

People have a strong capacity to deny that they are dying. It is easy to talk of it in the abstract when there is a long way to go. But bring it close to home, and the walls of resistance go up. I saw men whose bodies were being diminished by ravenous cancers try to convince themselves and their loved ones that they could still fend for themselves. Their defiant eyes glared out of hollow faces as they insisted that they didn't need help. They could take care of them-

selves, thank you very much. Finally, pathological weakness and humiliating incontinence broke their will.

**In the last year I watched two good men die.**

Hospice workers say that this denial is entirely common. Why shouldn't it be? Death was nowhere in God's personal experience, and it wasn't his original intention for the people he created. It was their defiance of him that brought about terrible death. Death is not natural even though we live what everyone knows are finite lives. God has set eternity in the hearts of men. Life yearns to go on. People struggle to survive and live. The last hours of restlessness on the deathbed might be that fight to its finish. That struggle is lost when death can no longer be denied.

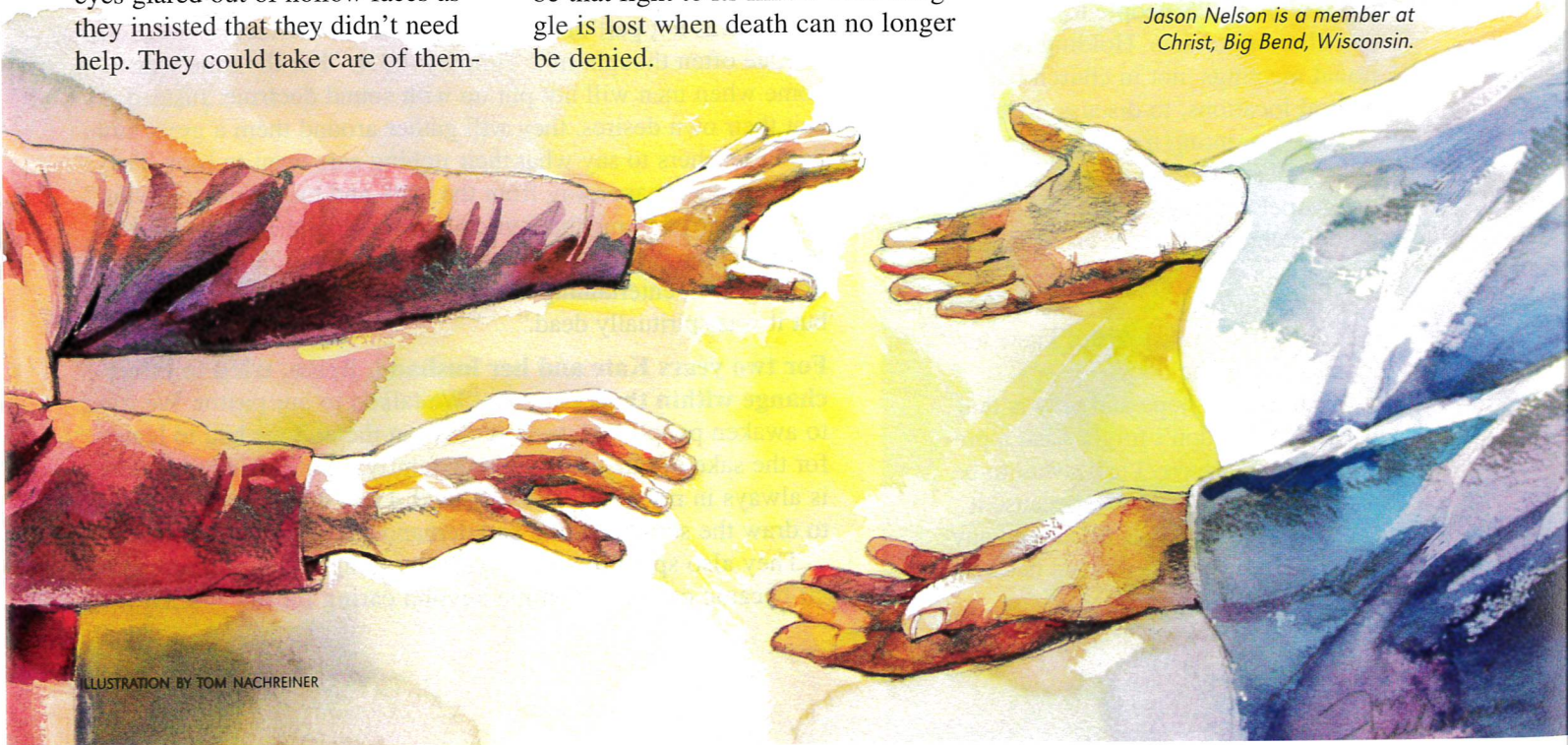
## Denying death its victory

But God found another way to deny death. He denied it its victory. He softened its awful sting. He took on himself what he imposed on us. He loved us to death in his one and only Son. Jesus' incarnation meant he would also suffer the death of his body so we could be given eternal life of body and soul. Jesus couldn't deny the horrible death appointed for him even though he agonized in prayer that such a cup of suffering might pass him by. No man escapes death. Not even the God-man.

In Jesus, death is not avoided. It is overcome. His resurrection guarantees a new beginning out of a bittersweet end. This is the only way to die—and to live. Those of us who remain can let bony fingers slip through ours, commending our loved ones to God and angels.

Death is denied when in a last labored whisper a child of God surrenders and says, "I believe."

*Jason Nelson is a member at Christ, Big Bend, Wisconsin.*



## A LOOK FROM THE OUTSIDE

*New WELS member Kate Tohal talks about what WELS looks like from the outside:*

I remember someone from our old church telling that familiar joke: A man died and went to heaven. One of heaven's tour guides showed him around. When they came to a particular wing, the guide said, "Sshhh. Please tiptoe and don't say anything." "Why?" asked the man. "Because this is the WELS section, and they think that they're the only ones here."

Part of that negative image arises because WELS might appear to some as elitist. We aren't involved in ecumenical things, we have close communion, we tend to stick to our own kind. And even though we have really good biblical reasons for that, outsiders don't understand or aren't aware of our reasons for doing them. But if people took the time to find out what WELS is really about, they'd be pleasantly surprised! I think many people are searching for what we've found. They just don't know that what they need and want is right there in a WELS church.

Are there things we could do better? Probably. Like mingling with those who aren't in our "comfort zone" in order to build a bridge to Christ. Inviting more non-WELS people to our events and church services. Holding informational meetings, not in church but in neutral locations, to discuss the end times or parenting teens or caring for elderly parents—and then weaving the gospel into these meetings. Even holding church services elsewhere—in people's comfort zones.

WELS does really well once people get in the door. I just wish I knew how to get more in the door!

What I really hope and pray is that WELS people don't forget what a precious gift they have. I can't wait to be part of everything WELS, because it is so much more Spirit-filled than anything we've ever experienced before.

# God led

A family hungry for God's truth discovers the

**I**n spring 2002 Kate Tohal and her family finished a long, difficult journey. Their destination: a wooden pew in a New Ulm church that insists on Bible truth. "God led us to WELS," says Kate, "and we thank him every day for that."

**Kate grew up in a conservative Lutheran church with what she describes as "a firm faith and a belief in the infallible, inerrant Word of God."** But in a relatively short period of time, the church body of her childhood transformed itself into something she and her family barely recognized.

It started small. "On occasion, we would hear something in our sermons or in Bible study that didn't seem biblical to us," she says. Then the inaccuracies increased and grew more troublesome. "The more we questioned and researched, the more alarmed we became. The scales fell away from our eyes."

Sermons were unconnected to the Bible. Sin was seldom mentioned. Practicing homosexuals were told their behavior was acceptable because "God made them that way." Songs contained lyrics calling God our "Mother." Bible studies were studies of anything but the Bible. As for the inerrancy of Scripture, it simply was not part of the official church doctrine.

Kate often thought of 2 Timothy 4:3,4: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

"It occurred to me that our church was like the Sardis church in Revelation," she says. "It had a beautiful building, a variety of programs, entertaining worship services, and a big budget, but it was spiritually dead."

**For two years Kate and her husband, Brian, tried to effect change within their church.** "We talked to our pastor. We tried to awaken people," Kate says. "But in the end we had to leave for the sake of ourselves and our family. Martin Luther's quote is always in my mind: 'Here I stand. I can do no other.' We had to draw the scriptural line and demand, 'Here and no further!'"

They also spent those two years praying and doing research. "It became our only pastime beyond caring for our family,"

# us to WELS

spiritual food they were looking for at a WELS church in Minnesota. Laurie F. Biedenbender

says Kate. They visited churches; watched worship services on cable TV; did online searches; met with pastors; talked to members of different denominations; and read dozens of books, including *What's Going on Among the Lutherans?*, a Northwestern Publishing House publication.

"Brian and I talked about it on our frequent walks. It became all-important to find out what church out there believed in God's truth. God gave Brian the wisdom needed to lead our family down the right path—closer to Christ."

## **That path led to a WELS church: St. Paul in New Ulm, Minn.**

"When we first started visiting St. Paul, we were immediately welcomed by one of the pastors," says Kate. "One woman invited me to join a women's Bible study group. Another woman hugged me and called me her sister in Christ. And the sermons! We had been so hungry for God's truth, and here God's Word was proclaimed regularly! We had been spiritually withering on the vine, and here we were grafted onto the tap root to be spiritually nourished. What joy! And what a visible difference to now be among faith-filled, Spirit-filled people!"

The transition wasn't without hardship, of course. It's never easy to leave your friends, and asking your children to leave theirs may be even harder. But the Tohals immediately got involved at St. Paul: sending their two youngest daughters to its school; allowing their oldest daughter



The Tohal family: (back row) Brian and Kate, (front row, from left) Sarah, Samantha, and Jackie.

to go on a mission trip with its teens; attending Bible study, Sunday school, Pioneers, and youth group; and signing up for volunteer opportunities. "Perhaps getting involved right away is one reason we felt connected right away," says Kate.

## **More than two years later, the Tohals are still connected and thoroughly enjoying the spiritual food they receive at St. Paul.**

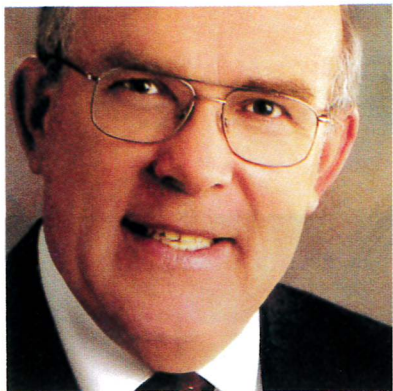
"Until you've been deprived, you probably can't imagine how important it is—more critical than food and water!" Kate says.

She still gets calls from members of her old church who are hungry

for that food—questioning what they're being taught and searching for truth. Kate knows just where to direct them: to WELS. "I pray that those who are lifelong WELS members never take for granted what they have."

"I sometimes envision that this must be just a wee little bit how people feel who come to the United States as refugees," she says. "It's so wonderful to find refuge."

*Laurie Biedenbender is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minnesota.*



*Carl R. Gungl*

## The grace given to us

Worship services on both New Year's Eve and New Year's Day used to be quite common. New Year's Eve services often looked backward—a time of reflection and repentance to acknowledge past mistakes and sins. New Year's Day services looked forward—a time of hope and absolution as we saw the infant Savior pouring out his first drops of blood for us at his circumcision.

Similarly Paul looked backward and forward in Ephesians 3:8. He humbly called himself the least of God's people. He knew his own sins. That's why, as he looked forward, he treasured God's grace so much. It's almost as if Paul were saying, "If God can forgive me, he can forgive anyone." Paul saw his God-given ministry as a further gift of grace: "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

It's no different for you and me. Looking back, I need to acknowledge my personal sins as well as my mistakes as WELS president. At the same time, I need to personally look forward and rejoice in God's pardon as well as his further grace. As with Paul, God still graciously gives me—gives all of us—the assignment "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Together in WELS, we've selected an emphasis, North American Outreach. Our stated objective is: "WELS people will proclaim peace through Jesus—by all possible means—to more and more people."

How are we doing? In some ways, not so well. Here are some obstacles I see:

- We haven't opened a new home mission with synodical funding for three years.
- We have 14 fewer world missionaries now than we had three years ago.
- Our synodical schools for training future called workers are operating with greatly reduced manpower and budgets that are close to negatively impacting the quality education we expect for our future called workers.
- Our congregation mission offerings through October 2004 are \$800,000 less

than last year, putting serious pressure on our already reduced mission activities.

Furthermore, even as we reduce expenditures for mission and ministry in line with revenue, we see additional opportunities:

- Fifty-one men will graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May, along with 136 teachers and seven staff ministers at Martin Luther College, each one of them a blessing from God.
- Home Missions has a growing list of places where ministry opportunities could be expanded or begun.
- Twenty Hmong are being prepared for ministry to their people.
- A North American Outreach visit is offered to each congregation to remind all of us of our God-given mission.
- A stewardship presentation is offered to every congregation to help us individually, congregationally, and synodically to more fully fund our mission and ministry opportunities.

Seeing the obstacles, sensing the opportunities, what can I personally do? Pray! Participate! Provide!

Pray God may help us all repent of placing any obstacle in the path of proclaiming the gospel. Along with his pardon, pray he may still grant us renewed opportunities to share Jesus with others.

Participate with other Christians in setting a course for the future. Give your input when your congregation is determining the amount of its mission offering for next year. Seek additional ways of putting God's gifts of called workers to work in your congregation or area.

Provide, if you can, increased individual gifts for spreading the gospel through your congregation or directly to the synod.

Pray, participate, provide. Behind each of them is God's saving love, which embraces us. And through us, God still proclaims peace through Jesus to more and more people.



# Women of faith: Abigail

In times of confrontation, Christ's messengers of reconciliation will be the true difference-makers.

Philip L. Kieselhorst

As we make our plans for the new year, we hope to make a difference in people's lives. Abigail was a woman of little significance to the world, but she made a world of difference in the lives of some powerful people. She was a wise woman living in a time of fools.

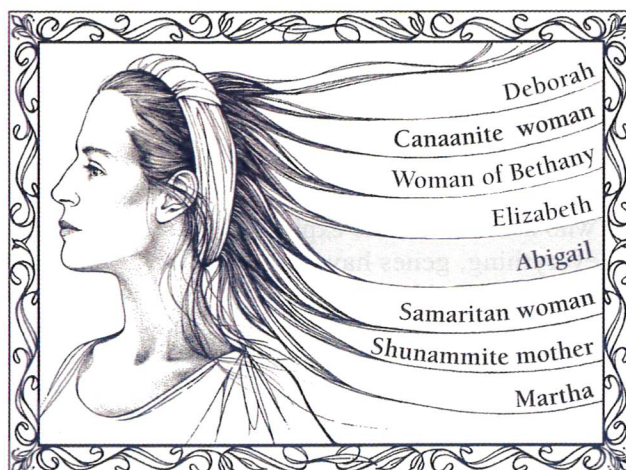
## The fools

Abigail had the unpleasant distinction of being married to a fool. Nabal was wealthy and influential, but he was also "surly and mean in his dealings" (1 Samuel 25:3). David's men protected Nabal's flocks so that Nabal profited from their work. But when David requested provisions for his men, Nabal responded by ridiculing David.

David responded to a fool's provocation with his own foolishness. He rashly decided to take vengeance out of God's hands. David said to his men, "Put on your swords!" (1 Samuel 25:13).

David acted no more wisely than Nabal. After all, prideful vengeance was the very reason David was on the run from Saul. Now David was about to make the same mistake.

Surly, mean, rushing into revenge at the slightest provocation, do these foolish attitudes describe only Nabal and David? We become Nabal when we're unwilling to serve, often becoming surly about it when asked. We morph into fools as we fly into a rage when someone provokes us. Our sinful folly invites disaster.



## The faithful and wise

Moments before disaster struck Nabal and David, God sent Abigail to intercede. Her wise counsel saved both men from their folly.

In spite of her husband's shortcomings, Abigail was faithful to him and served him. She did everything in her power to save her household.

## Jesus is a difference-maker. He makes us wise for salvation.

In spite of David's rage for revenge, Abigail confronted him, soothed his anger, pointed out his wrong, and skillfully negotiated peace.

In a time of fools, Abigail proved faithful and wise.

## Faith in a time of fools

The source of Abigail's wisdom can be traced to her faith in God. She trusted that God would accomplish his plan and purpose through David. She therefore reminded David that he was the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 25:28) and that the cause was God's

(1 Samuel 25:29-31). She urged David not to take matters into his own hands, but to trust in God's hand to "hurl away" his enemies "as from the pocket of a sling" (1 Samuel 25:29). Abigail made a difference in David's life as she taught him that a wise person trusts God's promises.

The source of divine wisdom can be traced to Jesus Christ. To a world of fools God sent "Christ . . . the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). In spite of our sinful folly, Jesus confronted our sin with his perfect judgment, soothed our enmity with his mercy, and won us over to the side of peace with his gospel of free salvation. Jesus is a difference-maker. He makes us wise for salvation.

In times of confrontation, Christ's messengers of reconciliation will be the true difference-makers. Like Abigail, you can make a difference in a person's life by getting involved; confronting wrongs; and promoting peace by promoting Christ, the wisdom of God.

*Contributing editor Philip Kieselhorst is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.*

*This is the fifth of an eight-part series by Philip Kieselhorst on "Women of faith." To read the first four articles, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jump-word "ficarchive", and search by the keyword phrase "women of faith".*

This month's reading: 1 Samuel 25



*Gary J. Baumber*

## Spiritual people

Did you take the *Time* magazine quiz “How Spiritual Are You?” (Oct. 25, 2004, p. 70)? I did, and I must confess that I measured low as a spiritual person.

According to the accompanying article, my score probably shouldn't upset me. It may just mean I don't have the necessary genes.

“Genes?” you ask (or at least I did). “What do genes have to do with being spiritual?”

To those who need a scientific explanation for everything, genes have—well—everything to do with being spiritual. So, if that's the case, what are we measuring in the quiz?

In this test we are measuring feelings mostly—feelings that might be genetically programmed in us. Do you, for example, feel somehow at one with all beings and things around you? That question repeats itself in some form in six of the quiz's 20 questions.

Other questions have to do with a kind of self-transcendence—a feeling that moves you to become absorbed in what's beyond your immediate experience and makes you care about improving the world.

People who score high on this quiz are “hardwired” to think and act beyond self. They must be, I think, good people, caring people. The world benefits from having such spiritual people in it.

Now, what does that have to do with me and my low score? And why should you care?

In one sense, you and I and every human being are spiritual people. But not just with a spiritual gene that we can measure. We each have a spirit.

Even so, we normally don't attach the word “spiritual” to persons just because they have spirits. We call them spiritual when something extraordinary happens in their spirits.

And although many appear to have extraordinary spirits, the only truly spiritual persons are made by God. When God's Holy Spirit works in your spirit, then we can call you truly spiritual. Jesus says that you are born again. Paul says that you can call Jesus Lord and are made a new creature under God in Jesus.

Jesus, the baby worshiped by shepherds and adored by wise men, was the perfect spiritual man and, as such, lived and died for us. We learn of his unblemished life and his sacrificial death, carried out in his unflinching love. We hear, “He lives!” And God's Spirit enters our spirits. We trust Jesus for forgiveness, for salvation, for life—forever life. We are truly spiritual and made one with God.

I am spiritual because I can say that Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

I don't know whether that spirituality shows in my genes, but it should show in my life. I know that it will show in the lives of all who have the Spirit. It shows more and more as the Spirit strengthens our faith.

It erupts with praise to the Lord, praise that bubbles up from my inmost being. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

It helps calm me, even as I ride on turbulent waters. Be still my soul.

It humbles me in awe before the almighty and all-caring Father. God, be merciful.

It causes me to love God and to love other people with a love like God's. We love because he first loved us. In love I learn to submit, to serve, and to sacrifice for others.

It puts me at peace, and I know where to find rest. “My peace I give you,” says Jesus (John 14:27). “Come to me . . . and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

So I rest at peace, a spiritual person, thanks to Jesus and his Spirit working in me.

*A song for  
the heart  
that is . . .*

*lonely*

*anxious about  
finances*

*frustrated with  
the wicked*

*anxious about  
the future*

*feeling guilty*

*fearful of death*

*seeking purpose  
in life*

*longing to be  
close to Christ*

*seeking Christian  
friendship*

*peaceful*

*joyful*

*thankful for  
God's Word*



# *Songs for the heart*

Donald W. Patterson

When a cold front moves into your area, you get out a coat. When the rain comes, you unfold an umbrella. On warm sunny days you dress lightly and work on your tan. Different weather dictates different clothing and accessories. That's why you stock a wardrobe closet with a variety of outfits.

In a similar way the book of Psalms is a wardrobe closet for the soul. The spiritual and emotional weather around our lives changes regularly. When it does, we can find in the psalms a Scripture verse for every occasion—whether it is guidance, comfort, or encouragement that we need. Many of the psalms were written when the author was going through any one of the many seasons of life. So, in them we find kindred spirits who were inspired to meet our soul's individual needs.

## *Featured verses: Psalm 139:1-12*

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. <sup>5</sup>You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. <sup>7</sup>Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. <sup>9</sup>If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, <sup>10</sup>even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. <sup>11</sup>If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' <sup>12</sup>even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."

## *Points to ponder*

- Name at least four things the psalmist tells us that God knows about us at every moment.
- What does it mean that God knows our thoughts from afar?
- What comfort do you get from knowing that God goes before and after you wherever you go?
- God knows all of our words before we say them. If you could see Jesus standing next to you when you were witnessing to someone how would it help you?

## *Treasures to share*

- How would you use these verses to encourage someone who just lost his job and is feeling rejected?
- Choose a lonely person in your church and write him or her a card including these verses and some of your own thoughts.

## *Other Scripture verses about loneliness:*

Proverbs 14:10; Matthew 28:20; Luke 12:6,7

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# Timelessness



How wonderful heaven will be! No chasing, no racing, no pressures, no deadlines. Instead, endless peace.

David D. Sellnow

We thought we had just enough time for a fast-food supper. One child was finishing sports practice; another was on his way to a game; a third needed to be at play rehearsal. We had a 45-minute window in which all of us were together.

But the pick-up window at the burger joint was slow. Instead of sitting down at a table as a family, we had to grab and run, in separate cars, gulping down fries on the way here and there.

**As I drove my daughter to her rehearsal, a song came on the radio—a song about heaven.** It was a country song and not a particularly good one, but it made me think: How wonderful heaven will be! No chasing, no racing, no pressures, no deadlines. Instead, endless peace. We will rest from our labor (Revelation 14:13) with no more recurring cycle of day and night (Revelation 21:23). Time as we know it will cease, and “we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), in a place so tranquil that the surface will be “like a sea of glass, clear as crystal” (Revelation 4:6).

Sometimes people picture the peacefulness of heaven as though it is dull or tedious. Cartoons lampoon harp-playing cloud-sitters, looking as if they have nothing interesting to

occupy their eternity. Don’t think of heavenly rest that way. We will be active; we will be lively. We will be engaged in constant service in God’s throne room (Revelation 7:15). We will be singing the praises of Christ for his salvation (Revelation 5:12). We will see God’s face and will reign with him (Revelation 22:4).

## I long for the timelessness of heaven.

What will be lacking are the problems and pitfalls associated with our current time-bound existence. Temporal life, because of sin, has become defined by mortality and decay, by conflicts and complications. Everlasting life will have none of the things that cut short our time here. “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Peter 3:8), but there will be no feelings of boredom, nor a sense of time dragging. Never will we experience the anguish of an awful episode that seems like it will never end. “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4). That old order of things will have passed away.

**And don’t worry about losing your family identity.** It is true that “at the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage” (Matthew 22:30). We won’t be divided into family units the way we are now, but that doesn’t mean we lose each other. Rather, we gain all other brothers and sisters in Christ in a relationship higher and better than it ever could be in our present existence. It will be the ultimate family reunion, with no shortage of time to talk to all the clan, with nobody missing, nobody feuding, nobody going unnoticed.

At the moment, here and now, I’m two weeks behind in sending a birthday gift to my mother. In the non-momentary infinity of the hereafter, we’ll all have ample hours (what are hours there?) to associate with one another and simply to be with our Father. I’m glad for all the activities of my family on earth, glad that we find time to enjoy many good things in our world. Yet I long for the timelessness of heaven and the even greater bond of family that will exist for all of us there.

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