

CAN A LUTHERAN SACRIFICE DURING LENT? • TITHING

FEBRUARY 2005

Forward in Christ

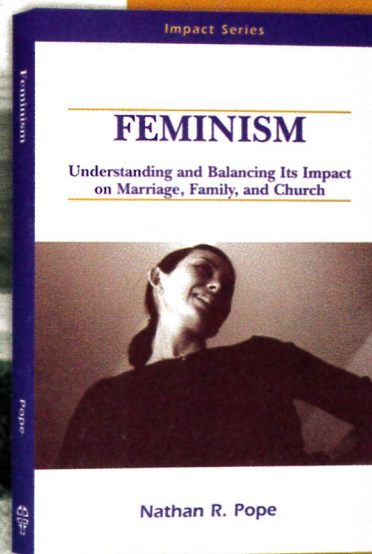
God's wisdom, WELS' witness



CHRISTIAN
PARENTING

Feminism — it was a good idea.

History reveals that feminism started out great. As time passed, it fractured into different forms and deteriorated. In *Feminism*, author Nathan Pope goes back to the days of abolition and suffrage disputes to explore the details of feminism's beginning as a movement and its development up to its current divisions. This well-researched evaluation looks at American history with frank biblical criticism to aid in understanding feminism's impact on Christian marriage, the family, and the church.



Feminism

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by Nathan R. Pope

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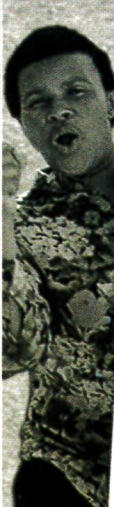


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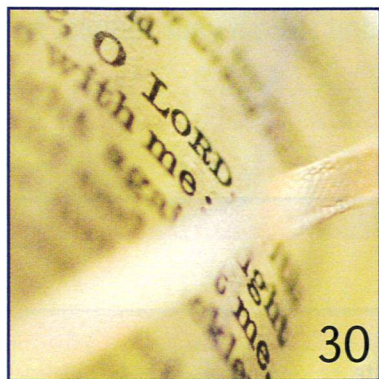
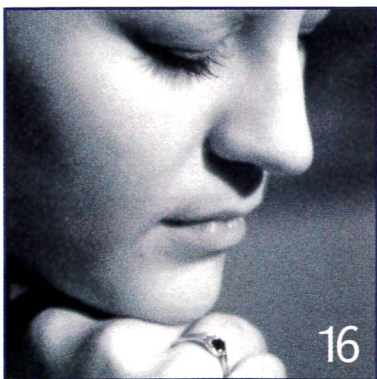
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“Mom and Dad, make time for your children.”



DESIGN PICS



Forward in Christ

† The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

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FEBRUARY

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Nicole Balza*

Money. It's not something we like to talk about. As soon as the topic is mentioned, most people start to fidget. This month, though, two *Forward in Christ* authors boldly tackle the subject. Richard Gurgel answers a question about tithing (p. 9), and Eric Hartzell paints a modern-day picture of the widow who gave her last coins as an offering to her Lord (p. 15). I was impressed with these authors' insights, and I didn't feel a twinge of uneasiness as I read either of their articles—proving, perhaps, that money does not have to be a sore subject, especially when it's considered from a Christian perspective.

This issue also includes two articles about Lent. Although March will "officially" be our Lenten issue, these articles help set the scene for what will follow. James Mattek reminds us that although it's hard to watch Jesus suffer and die, it is a beautiful picture because of the salvation Jesus' sacrifice won for us (p. 7). Amber Swenson shares the benefits she's enjoyed as a result of making small sacrifices during Lent (p. 29). Read these articles to prepare your mind and heart for the journey to the cross that you will make with Jesus this Lenten season.

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HAPPILY SINGLE

Being 45 and always single I certainly agree with Rhoda Strobel [“WELS and terminally single,” Oct. 2004]. We live in a “buy one get one free,” “based on double occupancy” world. I don’t think of myself as terminally single, though, because I know my situation could change when I least expect it. I prefer to call myself happily single. I travel, eat out, go to movies, and scuba dive alone.

At the same time, when God says it is not good for man to be alone, there’s much in that passage. Certainly from a spiritual standpoint it is good to have someone to grow with in faith. But also from major decisions like purchasing a house down to simple, everyday decisions like buying the groceries, it helps to have someone from whom you can get feedback. Our only advantage may come later in life when we don’t have to worry about losing a spouse and suddenly being alone.

Whether married or single, it’s important to keep in mind that God still has a plan for us all.

*Paul Hough
Riverview, Florida*

ANSWERING A CHILD’S QUESTION

In answer to a child’s question to God, “Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don’t you keep the ones you already have?” [“Living forever through Jesus,” Oct. 2004], Douglas Engelbrecht gave the beautiful truth that because of sin God lets us die so that we don’t have to live in this sin-filled world of trouble and pain forever. Through Jesus’ perfect life, death, and resurrection, Engelbrecht reminds us that we can live with God forever in heaven where there is no sin with its resulting trouble and pain. And he rightly pointed out that those who reject this truth do end up living forever with the trouble and pain that result from sin.

I would add to Engelbrecht’s comments and answer the second-grader’s perspective by pointing out that God does keep the ones he already has and through his Word brings “new ones” to himself as well.

*Heather Blunt
Winthrop, Minnesota*

DATE OF JESUS’ BIRTH

I am disturbed that in a fine Advent article [“Advent—a time to wait,” Dec. 2004], we are told twice that the birth of Jesus was 4,000 years after God’s promise of a Savior in Eden. Good editing should have corrected this. We should say “many thousands of years earlier.”

*Gerhold Lemke
Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

By adding the years in the lists of generations in the Bible, we get approximately 4,000 years from Adam until Christ’s birth. However, since there are gaps in the lists of generations, many Christian scholars will allow for another few thousand years.—ed.

WAITING TO OPEN GOD’S PRESENTS

I really liked the article “God wraps his presents” [Dec. 2004]. I thought that presents waiting under a tree were a good comparison to God’s promises—some fulfilled, some yet to be fulfilled.

I can totally relate to that because my four younger siblings and I have always impatiently waited for what seems like years to see what’s under that wrapping. We have always asked our parents, “Can we open them yet?”, and they always say, “Not until Christmas!” Just like God’s promises.

Maybe it’s more like Christmas Day—your parents trying to restrain you from opening presents all at once, so the surprises can last all day. It’s the same way with God and his promises.

The author of the article pointed out that some promises have already

been fulfilled, and some others haven’t. But just like those presents you know you’ll open, those promises will be fulfilled.

The author clearly got the message across. I also commend you for publishing his article.

I don’t know if you’ll print a letter written by a 12-year-old.

Keep up the good work on the magazine.

*Rebecca Rehberger
Kenosha, Wisconsin*

FALLING FROM FAITH

In “Falling from Faith” [“Question & Answer,” Aug. 2004], Richard Gurgel pointed out that there are “two sets of Scripture passages that, to our limited human reason, appear to contradict each other.”

He was speaking of the fact that some passages warn us of the danger of falling from faith, while other passages assure us that God will keep us from falling. Although I agree with what he said and am glad that he did not simply affirm the danger of falling without also assuring that God will keep us from falling, I am disappointed that he did not mention that one set of passages is law while the other is gospel. Without identifying those two sets of passages as law and gospel, the reader is left with the impression that there is a contradiction in Scripture.

It clarifies things to point out how both fit together. The law rebukes any unrepentant thoughts and desires that may arise in our hearts by warning us of the danger of falling. The gospel comforts us with God’s own assurance that he will keep us by his grace.

*Gary Branscome
LaVergne, Tennessee*

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*.

The “pretty” picture of Lent

*They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.
Matthew 27:30*

James A. Mattek

It's not pretty, and with the approach of Lent we're about to see it again. It's hard to watch what happened to Jesus. Certain things are intended to hurt, others to humiliate, some both. Jesus knew both. He was like a lamb being led to the slaughter, but along the way humiliation and hurt would be his escorts. During a mock coronation, toothless infantrymen added bite to their cruelty by spitting in his face and striking him repeatedly on his thorny crown. The saliva and blood began to flow. The spit was intended to humiliate and the hits to hurt. The soldiers felt strong and superior as they made Christ appear weak and helpless.

Sin isn't pretty

Ever done that? Maybe you've never spit at anyone or hit someone with a stick, but have you gossiped? Slandered? Have you ever raised your hand in the heat of anger or given the cold shoulder to someone you claim to love? Have you ever rolled your eyes in defiance or rolled out a powder keg of someone's failure to use as ammunition? Have you ever made someone feel bad so that you would feel good?

That's what the soldiers did to Jesus. What they did to Jesus wasn't pretty. Do we look any better? When we humiliate and hurt so that we can feel good . . . what exactly is the good that we're feeling? Isn't it a twisted and depraved good feeling?

Mark Twain once said: "People are like the moon . . . they have a dark side." It's so true . . . so sinful . . . so dark. Our sinful side tries to keep us in the dark about what we're really like. We manipulate,

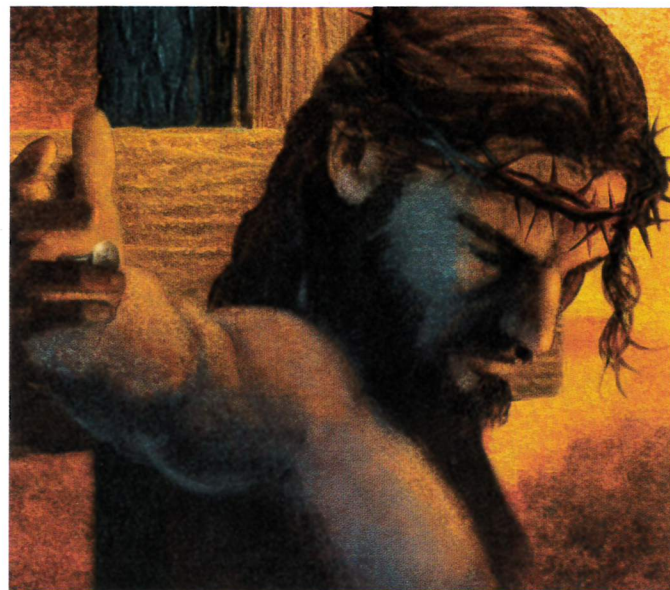
irritate, and castigate. We spit dark and biting words from our mouths and hit people again and again on the head with the black stick of sarcasm. It's not pretty. We have behaved badly and have sinned against heaven. Why should heaven want anything to do with us? Why shouldn't we be among those "for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever" (Jude 1:13)?

Good question.

Justification is beautiful

We find the answer as we escort Jesus to his execution during Lent. The sheep to be slaughtered was the Lamb of God. In a world dark with sin, Jesus was the light that shines in the darkness (John 1:5). He humbly endured the humiliation and hurt "and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8).

While Jesus hung from nails on the cross, you and I were in the crosshairs of his love. In God's mind our dark behavior and our sins against heaven must be dealt with. The cross is God's way of dealing with our darkness. Blood and saliva in the matted hair of Jesus wasn't a pretty sight. But that's not all there was. "The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). God dealt with our darkness by giving it to Jesus . . . then he punished Jesus for it. On the cross the Lamb of God became our scapegoat (Leviticus 16). We're forgiven and now stand in the warm radiance of God's smiling face.



"You are . . . a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

That's not only pretty . . . it's beautiful.

Contributing editor James Mattek, chief executive officer of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, is a member of Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

Christian identity theft

Thomas J. Jeske

Staci received an official-looking e-mail from an online seller. Very familiar with the company, she complied with a request to update its file of information—including her credit card number. Her statement one month later showed \$2,200 in charges at a Home Depot six states away.

Kim took her little boy to the matinee. When they came out into the parking lot, the afternoon sunlight revealed the window on their SUV shattered and her purse gone. Since she had her mother's name on her cell-phone directory, the thief used it to get access to Kim's bank account.

Identity theft is a big problem. Victims must phone the bank, replace all the cards in their wallet, get a new driver's license. Then the bogus charges have to be picked up by somebody.

To have one's identity seized is also an experience that shakes a person. Will somebody pluck my restaurant receipt out of the trash? Did somebody see me use my PIN number at the checkout? After a year's time, what lingers is the sense of having been violated, the sense of not being able to trust another person completely. Meanwhile, the identity thief is out there looking for another victim.

In Eden life was good. Adam and Eve knew who they were, singly and together. Their life involved daily conversation with their Creator and Father. This open relationship involved brilliant knowledge of his will as well as clear self-awareness. Fellowship with God lives and breathes trust.

Somebody, however, was watching and plotting. Some bold thief set them up and took them down. Call it identity theft classic. Adam and Eve lost the image of God. Led to abandon their trust in their Father, their unbelief transfigured each of them singly and collectively. Something inside of them died. And as God totaled the damages, he recounted grim news: their broken

trust in him consigned them to pain, bitterness, and a return to dust.

Transfigured by sin is how each of us enters life on earth. Changed from what God designed for our first parents, this is devolution. Human life fell from something lovely into something revolting, something spiritually hideous. My identity at birth was not the image of God, for I was born in the image of faithless Adam, whose identity had been stolen.

To all who have experienced this satanic seizure and loss, it is a surprise and a relief that God sent his Son to trade identities with people like us.

Six months before his appointment at the cross, Jesus halted on a mountainside. His Father transfigured him briefly. Jesus and his eyewitnesses were strengthened for the terrific life-and-death-and-life struggles that lay just down the road.

All who have been transfigured by sin are now transfigured by righteousness (Romans 5:18). We who have experienced a kind of identity theft now learn that we are the beneficiaries of identity restoration. Christ made us to be

kings and priests before his Father. Martin Luther reflected that to be a king with Jesus does not mean that we wear gold, live in palaces, and issue commands. For us, however, shame becomes honor, hell becomes heaven, death becomes life, the devil

becomes a straw man, sin becomes righteousness, misfortune becomes happiness, poverty becomes riches. Christians find in everything a reversal.

No matter what damage Satan brought to you in the past through a stolen identity, know today that there has been a metamorphosis: the Son of God became the Son of Man, so that children of Adam might become children of God. That is, transfigured.

All who have been transfigured by sin are now transfigured by righteousness.

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



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Tithing

A *Meditations* devotion included this prayer: “Lord, help each of us to see the blessing of tithing and the wonderful things that can be accomplished when we do this. Amen.” Are there certain blessings for giving 10 percent that we don’t receive if we only give nine percent?

Tithing (a 10 percent offering) was God’s command only for Old Testament believers. In many ways God treated them as little children with detailed directions on how to live to his glory. Our Lord treats his New Testament church like adults. We are no longer bound by a command to return a tenth of income. We are free to go beyond that!

That last sentence was worded for effect. In 20 years of public ministry, almost whenever I’ve heard “tithing” questions, the unspoken assumption seemed to be how much less we can do than Israel. Wouldn’t it be refreshing to hear, “We’re free to go beyond 10 percent, aren’t we?”

Don’t misunderstand. This isn’t some cold transaction in which we hunt for the “right” numbers to crunch. God isn’t a company president worrying about the bottom-line impact on his stock options.

What God wants most isn’t our gifts but us. When Israel grudgingly brought required offerings—as if they were doing God a favor—the Lord warned them: “I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. . . . If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it” (Psalm 50). God isn’t some street-corner beggar pleading, “Brother, can you spare a dime?”

What God delights in are hearts wooed and won by his unfathomable mercy in his Son. Our gifts then become loving tokens from bride (the Church) to bridegroom (Christ).

But while the gift and “amount” aren’t the key, that doesn’t render your question meaningless. No, nothing magical happens at 10 percent that doesn’t if we “only” give nine percent. But returning to God a generous proportion is important for at least three reasons:

1. It gives a tangible opportunity to trust his promise to provide our daily bread. Although we are never to tempt God, God himself begs us to “test [him] in this and see if [he] will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10). Our motivation isn’t some crass hope for a \$100 return for every \$10 given. But God is encouraging us to trust that we won’t lack because we returned to him a generous portion from his gifts to us.
2. Generous giving also spites our sinful nature. We give away a significant portion of what our flesh clings to as to life itself. The saddest result of synodical and congregational budget shortfalls isn’t that God’s work won’t get done—he will always find faithful hearts and ample resources to accomplish his will (with us or without us!). The saddest result is that if we don’t have the courage to warn ourselves and our fellow members, then misplaced priorities soon choke our faith.
3. Finally, returning a generous percentage to our Lord is a powerful public witness about what truly matters. We take our culture’s favorite god and give it away to the true God.

May I urge you to take a step of faith? First, step up humbly to the cross of Christ this Lenten season. Measure there, if you can, the width, height, length, and depth of Christ’s love. Then step up boldly to your budget. Consider devoting one percent more of income to expressing love for love received. Do that every year until an Old Testament “must” is left in the dust! Such opportunity is freely ours as New Testament believers.

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, jumpword “qa”, for more questions and answers.

THE IMPORTANCE



of parents John H. Boggs

God gives parents the responsibility of building on the foundation of faith the Holy Spirit creates in their children's hearts at baptism.

The Internet is an amazing tool of fast and easy answers to any question you could ever possibly ask. Sometimes, though, the amount of information gets a little ridiculous. Recently, I was searching for an answer to a parenting question, so I decided to type the keyword "parenting" into my Web browser. That was a mistake. What immediately popped up on the screen was the first of 16,500,000 Web links that seemingly dealt with the topic and would answer every question I ever wanted to know about being a parent—and many that I didn't.

For every Ph.D. who has written a book on the topic of parenting or for every mom who has done the same, the best tool to aid parents

in the successful raising of their children is actually the book that so often goes unread. This tool is Scripture, the one book that describes in detail exactly who children are and how they are to be nurtured and raised.

Use the expert source

Although doctors and experts have many good things to say about what our children need in life, why is it so easy to spend \$49.95 on a "how to raise your kids" manual at the local bookstore, while leaving your Bible on the same dust-covered shelf where it's been for the last year? When it comes to discussing the importance of parents and

home, nobody is more qualified or clearer on the subject than our God. It is he who reminds us, "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3). It is he who encourages moms and dads to "only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Moms and Dads, please never forget what an incredible gift your children are to you from the ultimate gift giver, God himself. Please also remember, then, that along with these gifts come immense responsibility and opportunity. You—Mom and Dad—are the persons your son or daughter will learn the most from during their formative and critical years on this earth. You—Mom and Dad—are the persons these precious gifts of God will look to for guidance, strengthening, and love. Don't take this responsibility lightly. Don't let this opportunity slip through the cracks.

See your children

Perhaps the best encouragement a young pastor can receive when going to his first congregation is to "see the people." This encouragement stresses the need to get out of the church office and into peoples' homes. This encouragement also makes sense when it comes to parents building on the foundation of faith created by the Holy Spirit in baptism.

Parents, "See your children!" Turn off the T.V. and wrestle with them on the living room floor. Go outside and rake the leaves together. Head down to the local ice cream shop and share a 4,000-calorie banana split. Take every opportunity to attend your preschooler's play. Leave work early to see your high school junior in her prom dress

before she leaves for the evening. See your children. Be around your children. Cherish your children every moment of every day.

Building a strong foundation of faith in these precious gifts from God has a lot to do with the quantity of time you spend with them. Much more important than the quantity, though, is the quality of time you spend. Although a child benefits from having his dad coach him in soccer, how much more does this child benefit from the parent who gathers the family together at night for evening prayers.

The best tool to aid parents in the successful raising of their children is actually the book that so often goes unread.

Although raking the leaves, wrestling on the floor, or heading out for ice cream all have their benefits, none of these can compare with mom or dad ending a family meal with the words, "Hey, it's devotion time."

We live in a society that never seems to slow down. Precious are the times when parents have their children's undivided attention. Precious are the times when children have the same from their parents. Mom and Dad, make time for your children. Make the most of the time

with your children. When away from them, pray for them. When together, pray with them. When you have the opportunity, share with them both what your Savior has done for you and what their Savior continues to do for them. Teach them the precious truths of God's Word, truths that someone took the time to teach you. Cherish the times you get to dress up, hop in the car, and head to worship and Bible study. Rejoice at the foundation your God has built in your heart, rejoicing all the more that he's entrusted you with the task of building on this foundation in your child's heart and life.

Praise God for his blessings

I didn't have the opportunity to browse all 16,500,000 Web links for an answer to my parenting question. I did, however, have the opportunity to study again what our God has to say on the subject. It was time well spent, time spent with a God who has blessed me with life on this earth, life eternal in heaven, and children to share both of these blessings with.

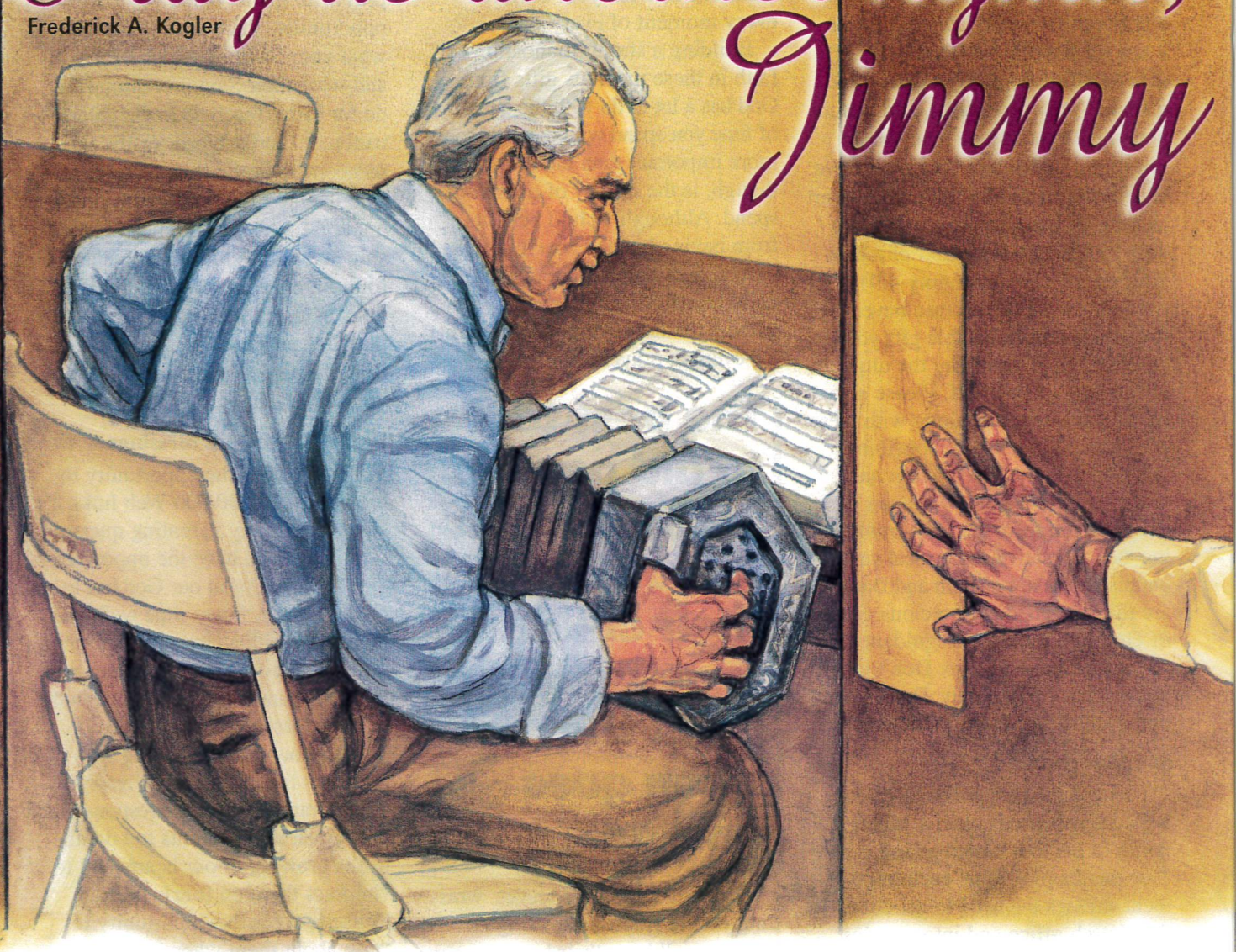
Praise our God that along with blessings like these comes responsibility. Praise him for the responsibility he's given us as parents to take the truths growing in our hearts and to "impress them on [our] children." Praise him for the opportunity to "talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up," for the privilege to "tie them as symbols on [our] hands and bind them on [our] foreheads."

Praise our God for equipping us better to "write them on the doorframes of [our] houses and on [our] gates" (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

John Boggs, dean of students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan, is a member at St. Paul, Saginaw.

Play us another hymn, Jimmy

Frederick A. Kogler



One fall evening, several years back, I was on my way to an elders' meeting. It had been a long day, and the business for the evening included having to cull through a list of non-attending members who were "under discipline." My mood was low and contemplative. I entered the church building from the parsonage side and made my way to the steps leading to the basement meeting room. Then I heard the music.

"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our hopes and cares to offer, to Jesus' cross I come, I come . . ."

I recognized the voice and the sound of the concertina. It was Jim. He was struggling mightily to put it all together—the words, the music, and the playing of his beloved instrument. But somehow it just wouldn't come to him. As I opened the swinging doors to the large fellowship area, he was sitting with his back to me on a folding chair with a hymnal

lying open on the banquet table before him. I approached quietly, waited until I was standing right across from him, and then said, "Hi, Jim. How's it going?"

He looked up, startled, but before he could respond, I continued, "I love that hymn. It's one my father taught me. Could I sing it with you?"

"Oh, Pastor, I'm stuck," he said.

"Okay," I continued, "let's try it again. This time I'll sing it while you play it on your concertina."

We started over. This time, as I sang the words of the hymn I had learned as a youth so many years ago, Jimmy joined in, hesitatingly at first. But when we got to: “Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer. In his arms he’ll take and shield you; You will find a solace there,” he was sitting upright, singing and playing loudly, and he didn’t miss a beat.

When we finished there were tears in our eyes. Jimmy asked, “Can we do it again?” It broke my heart to say, “No.” I had heard the guys on the elders’ board coming in, and I knew they would be eager to get started. I was shy about this whole thing, and I let the moment slip away.

My tears that night were caused by many things—the pang of loneliness at the remembrance of my dad’s death several years before, the loss of my first wife for whom the hymn just sung was a favorite, but most of all because of the losses that Jimmy was going through. He had the advancing first stage of Alzheimer’s disease, and it was as though the layers of his personality were being peeled away in an irreversible process. Like with an onion, removing the outer layer or two didn’t seem to matter too much, but as each subsequent loss took place, the tears would continue to come, until he completely lost himself.

When I first met Jim he was in his prime—a loving father, faithful spouse, and a man who loved Jesus. A couple of years after I arrived, he wound up a lifetime career at the local utilities company. He had joined the company after World War II, worked hard, remained faithful to the

company, and risen to the point of upper middle management.

In charge of many men, Jim was responsible for emergency situations. He was trusted, well liked by those whose lives he directed. He handled all of the pressure of his position with a quiet confidence of one who knew his job well, and he took great pride in being a good steward of all the Lord had given him. When he retired, it was an acknowledged loss by his company and the community, but the numbers were “right” as they said. He was given a gold watch, feted at a celebratory banquet, and let go.

How precious are those words and melodies that we have learned!

As an elder for the church, he had been in the sacristy many times to make sure that all the details of the services were taken care of and that everything was in order. When Jim was on as elder for Sunday, I was always at ease because he was so faithfully reliable.

I noticed a change in the months before he retired. He had begun to carry a pocket notebook with him. In that book he would write down things like phone numbers, men’s names, worksite addresses, and other details so that he could take care of all of them from the church when dealing with some emergency. He

noted things that I thought made him the excellent boss that he was. But, then I noticed that he began to write down things that didn’t have anything to do with his work—where to place the communion pieces on the altar; how many times to ring the church bell before the services began; and the names of people who would stop before church to speak with me, even though he had known them for many years. The early signs of Alzheimer’s were there. I didn’t know enough to recognize them, but Jim was struggling to cope with them.

For Jim, retirement wasn’t a time of travel, fishing trips, or simply completing so many “honey do” lists. He had done all that. Instead, retirement became a time of redirection for him. He intensified his service to the Lord and the church. As an elder, he visited the homebound. He ushered for church when a fill-in was needed. He was in charge of congregational recycling even before it became the thing to do.

He took up crafting stained-glass crosses, which he made for every adult and youth confirmand in our congregation. To this day, hundreds of God’s children have reminders of their confirmation and of the Savior, catching the sunshine of the heavenly Father’s providential love. The hundreds of “JESUS” plaques he made were much more than eye-catching, optical curiosities. They were little signs that assured the prominent display of his beloved Savior’s name.

He helped decorate the church for Christmas and kept in good repair the treasured nativity scene. He organized

continued on p. 14

Play us another hymn, Jimmy

continued from p. 13

the crafting of Chrismons for the large balsams that graced the chancel during Advent and Christmas.

He also began to teach himself how to play the concertina so he could sing the hymns he loved so well.

But things were changing for Jim. One day he came to church to pick up the recycling but ended up, instead, tightening pews in the sanctuary. All the time he worked in the church, his car sat, engine running, in the driveway. It took a curious police officer's kindness to bring Jim back to his original purpose by coming into the church to get Jim to tend to his overheated, steaming car.

Another time a roofing crew, replacing the roof on the three-story parsonage, was surprised when they looked up from their work to see Jim sitting on the ridge, perched like a dove, providing quiet oversight to their work. A group of nervous young workmen were assisted by an angel that day while they got Jim back down to earth.

More layers were peeled away after that incident. I had more moments of phone time with his wife as she sought to understand what was happening to her "Jimmy." She described his teeth-clenching anger that caused him to bite on the stem of his pipe, how he had taken to going on long walks, and how he made her do all the driving since the day he had scraped the side of their car while trying to park it in the garage. Sometimes she just called because she wanted to talk to someone who understood . . . but I didn't.

All I could do was assure her that God did, and I began to read and read and read. "Lord, give me the wisdom and strength to help," was my daily prayer.

Jim had driven to the elders' meeting that fall evening when we had sung together. Soon after that he lost his license. Some of the guys would drive by the house and bring him to meetings, and he would always bring

his concertina and want to sing a hymn. But then he had an "accident" in one of the guy's cars, and he didn't come anymore.

His family would describe his pacing, their tears and his, the anger, the confusion, the paranoia, and the stress. The second and third stages of Alzheimer's disease were difficult, but whenever I visited, we'd sing a hymn or "Jesus loves me . . ."

The ordeal lasted quite a while. Most folks with Alzheimer's live about eight years, but sometimes they and their families carry the burden as long as 20 years, maybe more. I learned a lot from Jimmy and his wife through his suffering. I learned more, however, about the grace of God and his merciful love from his Word. I constantly searched for some understanding, some comfort, some hope for Jimmy's family, and then, as they let their stories be known, for others with similar pain in our congregation and the community whose lives were touched by the agonies of dementia and Alzheimer's.

I learned, too, how the disease in its relentless attack on the brain reaches the music storage area last. I learned that it was through music, those hymns that so beautifully carry the message of the gospel, that I could continue to reach through the mist of failing memory to renew and refresh the darkened spirits. How precious are those words and melodies that we have learned! I came to understand, too, how important and precious the words of God as expressed through the pen of Paul are: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

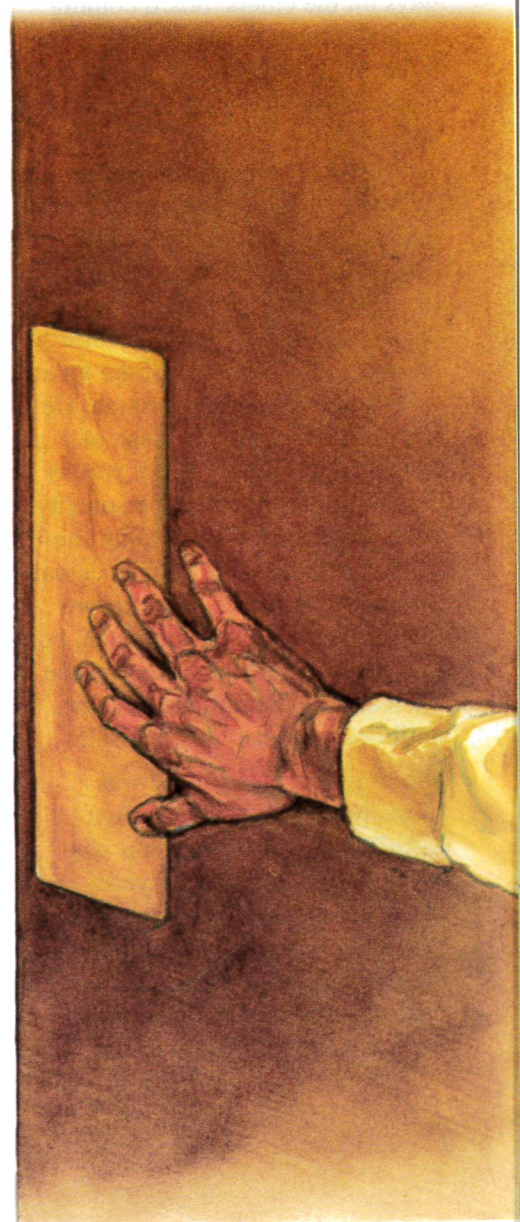
Play another hymn for us, Jimmy, and let us sing it with you:

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
(*Christian Worship* 411:1,2)

*Fred Kogler, a retired pastor,
is a member at Crown of Life,
West Saint Paul, Minnesota.*



“But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny” (Mark 12:42).



Giving everything in love

Eric S. Hartzell

If it had happened today, it could have gone like this:

Mrs. Pauper drove up to her bank drive-through window. She could hear her motor complaining through a hole in the muffler. Things besides the death of her husband had been rough on her. Bills, groceries, medicine, family had needed her money.

“How much do I have left in my account?” she shouted over the muffler, in the direction of the tube that sucked her meager deposits away on other days.

“Just a minute and I’ll check,” said the voice in the speaker.

A minute passed, there was a click, some static, and then, “Mrs. Pauper, you have \$12.53 in your checking account. And don’t forget that you have closed out your savings account.”

“Thank you,” Mrs. Pauper said and drove away. She looked at the fuel gauge on her dilapidated car. There was enough for her to get to church and maybe back home again. A little grimace flickered across her face. She glanced down at the seat and saw her checkbook. She reached down, patted it, and smiled. She really did! If you had been with her, you would have seen it.

She pulled into the church parking lot, took the checkbook, and wrote,

“My Savior’s Church.” Then she carefully wrote, “Twelve dollars and 53 cents” and signed her name. It was Saturday. She knew no one would be in the church to see her put her check in the stack of collection plates on the altar.

What made her smile? What could have possibly made her write the check for \$12.53? What made the widow in Jesus’ view do what Jesus said: “She, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on”?

Only one thing is strong enough to cause a widow to do such a desperate—and happy!—thing. Only one thing could have pried those “two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny” from her worn hand.

Love! That’s what did it—love for her Savior. Her knowledge that she could give something—everything!—to the one who had given her so much. She could give to her Savior! He received her gift. He knew about it and treasured it.

He wasn’t a Savior who had spared her from being a widow. He wasn’t a Savior who had filled her coffers or spared her from aches and pains. He was a Savior who was with her always, pointing to the sky with that knowing smile on his face. He was the Savior who held her by her right hand and

promised that after a while he would take her into glory. He was the Savior who caused her to know that her flesh and her heart would fail, but that he was the strength of her heart and her portion forever. He was that Savior.

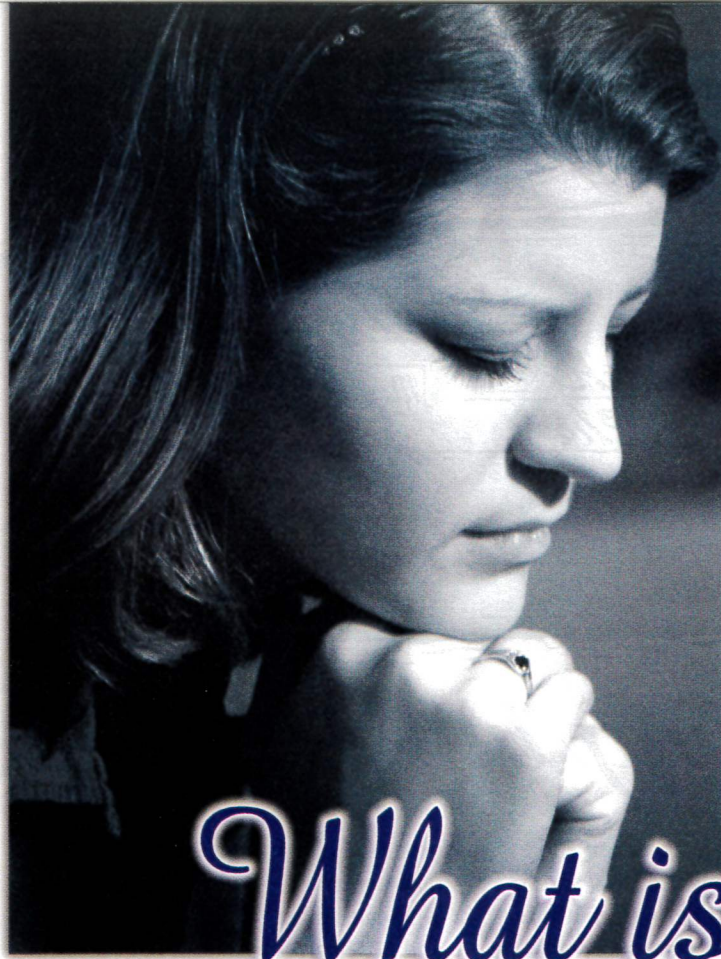
Actually, there was only one thing strong enough to get the Almighty Creator to give everything he had, too. There was only one thing stronger than the grip of that omnipotent hand on his Son’s wrist: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

God’s love for us was even stronger than his omnipotence.

And when he gave everything for you and me, there was that smile: “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Hebrews 12:2). He who loves cheerful givers himself gave cheerfully. Everything. His very life.

When we know that, we understand a number like \$12.53 and why someone might dare to give it. We know what love is about. We know “My Savior.”

Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas.



What is Pietism?

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.

In 1675, the movement known as Pietism began. Outcomes of the movement still influence religious beliefs today.

John M. Brenner

The Pietistic movement began among German Lutherans in the late 17th century as a reaction to a perceived spiritual deadness in the state church. Pietism tends to emphasize sanctification rather than justification; deeds rather than creeds; and subjective, human, religious experience rather than the objective truths of God's Word.

Post-Reformation problems arise

The Reformation era closed with the gathering of the Lutheran Confessions into the Book of Concord in 1580. In the century that followed, the Lutheran Church in Germany faced a number of challenges. The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) devastated parts of Germany, causing a breakdown of law and order and disrupting the religious life of the people. A severe moral decline set in. Territorial governments controlled the church.

People were members of the church by virtue of their citizenship and not always by conviction. Some parishes were huge, allowing little contact between pastors and parishioners. Lutheranism was often fighting for its very existence because of the inroads of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the advance of Calvinism. Some pastors preached sermons directed only against the errors of Catholicism and Calvinism, with little direct application of the law and the gospel to the lives and hearts of their people. Confirmation instruction at times degenerated into the mere memorization of doctrinal formulas, without the study of Scripture. There were problems.

Pietism movement begins

In 1675, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), a Lutheran pastor, addressed those problems in a book entitled *Pia Desideria* (*Heartfelt Desires*). The book contained a dev-

astating account of the condition of the church, together with a six-point plan for solving the problems. *Pia Desideria* became perhaps the most influential religious book written since the time of the Reformation. The publication of this book marked the beginning of the movement known as Pietism.

Many confessional Lutherans at first spoke approvingly of the book. However, they soon became alarmed as they watched how Spener and his followers were attempting to reform the church. As Pietism developed, two main problems surfaced. First, Pietism placed the primary emphasis in religion on the doctrine of sanctification rather than justification. Second, closely related to the first problem, Pietists tended to make religion man-centered rather than God-centered. In other words, Christian experience became more important than the objective truths of God's Word.

Pietism obscures justification

The doctrine of justification (God has declared sinners not guilty for Jesus' sake) was for Luther the doctrine on which the church stands or falls. What Jesus has done for us is all-important. The very purpose of the Bible is to reveal what God has done to save us. The heart and core of Scripture is the truth that God loved this world of sinners so much that he sent his Son to be our substitute, to live and to die in our place.

Pietism, however, changed the emphasis from what Christ has done for us to what Christ does in us. The Pietists stressed holy living rather than the forgiveness of sins. Their theology and practice centered on sanctification (the work of the Holy Ghost in leading us to do good works) rather than on justification.

This emphasis on good works led to a confounding of justification and sanctification. Spener himself fell into a subtle form of work-righteousness. He wrote, "As the faith, which alone justifies us and makes holy, is inseparable from good works, so no one will be justified other than those who are intent upon sanctification" (*Erste Geistliche Schriften*). Instead of teaching that those who are justified are also sanctified, Spener makes justification dependent on the desire for sanctification. He inverts the relationship between faith and piety. He makes forgiveness dependent on something we do rather than purely on God's grace.

Pietism leads to legalism

The Pietists were disappointed in the slowness of the gospel to produce the results they were looking for. They therefore resorted to legalism. The law rather than the gospel became their means for producing the kind of behavior or lifestyle they wanted.

The Bible teaches that good works are the fruit of faith. The only way to promote good works is to promote faith. The gospel, the message of

God's forgiving love for sinners, produces a response of love in our hearts. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). When the sinner realizes that in Jesus all of his sins are forgiven, his heart will automatically overflow with love and the desire to thank the God who has shown him so much mercy. As our Savior tells us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). God will produce the results he wants according to his timetable.

Pietists tended to make religion man-centered rather than God-centered.

The Pietists wanted to foster sanctification. But by misusing the law and deemphasizing justification, they forsok the very way sanctification is fostered—the proper use and application of the law and the gospel. Pietism also went beyond God's law in establishing rules for proper Christian living, much as the Pharisees had done. They called things sinful that God has not.

Pietism emphasizes emotional experiences

The gifted scholar August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) succeeded Spener as leader of the movement. To his credit, Francke promoted mission work and did much to foster education and charitable work. However, Francke's teachings also promoted greater subjectivism. He began to stress a dated personal experience of rebirth. This involved a shift in emphasis from the objective truths of God's Word to subjective experience.

Although Pietism encouraged Bible study, Pietists often emphasized how

God's Word made one feel rather than concentrating on what God was teaching. They downplayed the importance of Christian doctrine. God's assurance of forgiveness was not as important as feeling forgiven. Pietists often directed the alarmed sinner not to the Word and sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestling with God in order that the sinner might win his way into a state of grace. They also instructed the believer to base his assurance of grace not on the objective promise of the gospel, but on the right quality of his contrition, faith, and feeling of grace.

Human beings are emotional creatures. God's Word will touch our hearts and emotions. Pietism, however, fostered emotionalism and made one's emotional response the basis for the certainty of salvation.

A Christian's certainty of salvation must always be based on the objective promises of God's Word. Even when a person is down and doesn't feel loved by God, he can be certain of God's love and forgiveness because of what God tells him in his Word: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

True piety flows from God's promises. Pietism takes the focus off what Christ has done for us and makes the certainty of salvation dependent on what we do or on what we feel.

We cannot fault the Pietists for the concerns they raised, but we must always beware of the faulty solutions they proposed.

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

This is the second of a four-part series that shows historically and biblically the struggle between piety and pietism that regularly troubles the church. To read the first article, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive", and enter the keyword "piety".

WHATEVER

Letters

From one class assignment, a student gains a faithful friend.

Catherine Cox

Every few weeks I receive a letter. My address is neatly typed on the envelope by an old-fashioned typewriter, as is the return address. It instantly brings a smile to my face as I open it. Mabel has written to me again!

Just who is Mabel? Let me tell you.

I am currently a student in the Staff Ministry program at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. One of our courses teaches the basics of counseling in a Christ-centered way. Through this class I had the opportunity to start a relationship with someone in a nearby nursing home.

I was paired up with Mabel, who belongs to St. Paul, one of the WELS churches in town. After a slow start, my visits with Mabel became a normal part of every Thursday. She talked a lot about her trip to Guadalajara, Mexico, and I talked about my many travels. It became our tradition to share pictures. Every time I came, she had a few little books of pictures out, and I brought a few from my collection. We would look at each other's pictures and ask questions, learning something more about the other each time. Then we had a devotion and prayed together. My visits were short, but they quickly became valuable to both of us.

May came around, and it was bittersweet for more than one reason. I had completed all of my college classes! The only thing left was my staff ministry internship in El Paso, Texas. I had a warmer climate to look forward to, but I had to say goodbye to my college friends.

My weekly meetings with Mabel also had to come to an end. Mabel insisted that we keep in touch, and I agreed. She gave me her address and phone number and made me promise to send her my new information. I gave her my home address in Wisconsin so we could write during the summer, and I gave her a framed picture of the two of us. I told her I didn't want her to forget me, and, with a childish smirk, she assured me she wouldn't.

So, every few weeks I receive a letter. I smile as I read Mabel's letters. I can't guess her age, but I can tell you so many other things.

I can tell you how Mabel helps everyone she can, including her neighbor who has struggled physically ever since she had a stroke. I can tell you about her daughter who has many handicaps, but whom Mabel loves more than anyone else on this earth. I can tell you about the devotions we shared, the prayers we prayed, and the hymns we read together. I can tell you her life story, her hopes, and her dreams. I can tell you that, from one class assignment, I gained a lifelong friend.

I am excited for more than one reason to go back to New Ulm in May. Graduation is already in sight for me. But I also get to see Mabel! I get to introduce her to my dad and show her pictures from my recent trip to Italy. I get to have a devotion with her, which always helps me as much as it helps her.

After May, I don't know when I will see Mabel again. But I can count on that letter every few weeks to bring a smile to my face, no matter where I am.

I thank the Lord every day for the opportunity to intern as a staff minister. It is an awesome chance to share God's love with others. Only God knows if I will receive a call. What matters to me is that I have received the training that has equipped me with the resources and abilities to spread the Word. What matters to me is that I got to meet Mabel.

Whom will I meet next? Only God knows. I eagerly wait for his reply!

Catherine Cox, a member of St. Paul, Appleton, Wisconsin, will graduate from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, in May.



God's love

Obituaries

Gary V. Schroeder 1940-2004

Gary Schroeder was born July 19, 1940. He died Oct. 9, 2004, in Hong Kong.

A 1966 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Michigan Lutheran High School, Saint Joseph, Mich.; Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.; and the WELS Hong Kong mission. Schroeder served in Hong Kong for more than 25 years.

He is survived by his wife, Carol; his mother; two sons; two daughters; and one granddaughter.

Norval W. Kock 1926-2004

Norval Kock was born June 7, 1926, in Osceola, Wis. He died Oct. 14,

2004, in Sleepy Eye, Minn.

A 1951 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served First, La Crosse, Wis.; Cross, Rockford, Minn.; St. John, Wood Lake, Minn.; First German, Manitowoc, Wis.; and St. John, New Ulm, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy; three sons; one daughter; 11 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Martin O. Rauschke 1913-2004

Martin Rauschke was born Nov. 22, 1913, in New Ulm, Minn. He died Oct. 15, 2004, in Waukesha, Wis.

He served St. Lucas, Milwaukee, and Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Agnes, and an infant son. He

is survived by one son, two daughters, and one granddaughter.

H. Marcus Schwartz 1913-2004

H. Marcus Schwartz was born July 22, 1913. He died Nov. 10, 2004, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1939 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Thiensville, Wis., he served St. Peter, Collins; St. John, East Bloomfield; St. Luke, Kenosha; St. Paul, Menominee; St. Paul, North Freedom; and St. John, Rock Springs, all in Wisconsin.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Laverna. He is survived by three sons, three daughters, 15 grandchildren, and three great-grandsons.

Untangling the Web



WELS children have been enjoying *Kids' Connection* videos for the past 10 years. Now they can also participate in *Kids' Connection's* new Web site, www.kidsconnection.tv.

Encourage the kids you know to explore the different areas and use what's there to help them stay connected to Jesus. *Kids' Connection's* Web site includes:

- the opportunity to participate in periodic live chats with other young Christians from all over the world and in discussion board conversations;
- ideas about sharing Jesus' love with others and a place for kids to submit their own ideas;
- a Q&A for kids to ask questions about school, family, friends, faith, or any other topic that they're curious about with answers provided by WELS pastors and teachers;
- fun stuff like puzzles and games and the invitation for kids to send their own "creations" for possible publishing on the site;
- sneak peeks at future *Kids' Connection* episodes and an archive of past episodes.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

MARCH 2005

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Genesis 6 | 16. Gen. 26 |
| 2. Gen. 7:1-8:19 | 17. Luke 9:57-10:12 |
| 3. Gen. 8:20-9:29 | 18. Lk. 10:13-24 |
| 4. Gen. 10:1-11:9 | 19. Lk. 10:25-42 |
| 5. Gen. 11:10-13:4 | 20. Lk. 11:1-13 |
| 6. Gen. 13:5-14:24 | 21. Lk. 11:14-36 |
| 7. Gen. 15 | 22. Lk. 11:37-52 |
| 8. Gen. 16, 17 | 23. Lk. 11:53-12:12 |
| 9. Gen. 18 | 24. Lk. 12:13-34 |
| 10. Gen. 19 | 25. Lk. 12:35-59 |
| 11. Gen. 20:1-21:21 | 26. Lk. 13:1-17 |
| 12. Gen. 21:22-22:24 | 27. Lk. 13:18-35 |
| 13. Gen. 23 | 28. Lk. 14:1-24 |
| 14. Gen. 24:1-60 | 29. Lk. 14:25-35 |
| 15. Gen. 24:61-25:34 | 30. Lk. 15 |
| | 31. Lk. 16:1-31 |

Martin Luther College students fired up by Christ's love

In New Ulm, Minn., where future WELS pastors and teachers train at Martin Luther College (MLC), it's not uncommon to trudge through a few inches of snow in December. But on Dec. 1, 2004, firefighters and volunteers were up to their ankles in butter, not snow.

Around 6 P.M. that night, an employee of Associated Milk Producers, Inc. (AMPI), discovered a fire that spread to engulf about a quarter of the building. As workers from four fire departments worked to control the blaze, three million pounds of butter began to melt and flow into the streets. Although sand trucks and the cold weather helped contain it, butter still clogged sewers, and some reached the Minnesota River.

AMPI is the largest butter-packaging plant in the United States and one of New Ulm's largest employers. The fire affected 130 of the plant's 180 workers. Although some came back for clean-up, it is still unclear when the rest can return to work.

Listening to a daily chapel message about putting others above oneself, MLC student Ben Stein couldn't help but think of the AMPI employees who had lost their jobs just before Christmas.

"I'm not usually a serious guy," he said to his fellow staff ministry students during the next class period, "but take me seriously on this one." Instead of following the syllabus for that day, the class brainstormed ways to help AMPI employees and their families. Students fleshed out the details of their plan with AMPI's human resources department and then got to work. They decided to head up a citywide collection of gifts for AMPI families. Flyers directed New Ulm residents to drop off toys for the kids at the Chamber of Commerce and some local businesses.

Not only did MLC students use this opportunity to provide humani-



This fire at the largest butter-packaging plant in the United States gave Martin Luther College students the opportunity to share Christ's love.

tarian aid, but they also used it to share the message of Christ. Each gift was accompanied by a card telling how God helps his people through even the most difficult times. Students told recipients that the gifts were not only evidence of their love, but also the love of God.

"Christ's love compels us," Stein simply stated.



Let your light shine

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

In an effort to reach out to the community, new members of Beautiful Savior, LaPorte, Ind., write short stories of how they went from being unchurched to becoming members. These articles are put in the local newspaper and sent out on postcards. Jennifer Schultz wrote the following:

When I was a kid, my parents and I never attended church or heard the Word of God. God was just a god in the sky. God was not the one who directed or motivated us to live good lives. My family believed that they were in control of everything that happened. My family also believed that if you were a good person and worked hard you probably would go to heaven. As I grew up, I had no idea who Jesus Christ was, nor did I know how to get to heaven.

When I moved to Chicago, I escaped my family's mold and their beliefs. As I was trying to find my way, I visited a couple of Catholic churches. I honestly didn't get much from the sermons, I didn't understand the traditions, and I didn't

understand the Bible passages. Even though I sampled Christianity, I still knew nothing about how my sins were forgiven or how to get to heaven.

In 2002, I met Pastor Don Schultz. God worked through Pastor Schultz and turned me into a Christian. To learn more about Christianity, I took the Bible information classes that Beautiful Savior offered. I learned about Jesus, how to get to heaven, and the purpose of my life. As I took the classes, I also attended services. Every Sunday, I left church with a better understanding of God's Word.

Now that I have developed a real relationship with God, my perspective on life has changed. I realize that I'm not perfect, but it's comforting for me to know that Christ died for all my sins. This good news has brought peace and joy in my life because I know with 100 percent certainty that I'm one of God's children and there is a place waiting for me in heaven.

The message at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church is positive and uplifting. One of the reasons why I'm on this earth is to share my faith with others. It is my hope and prayer that all people find the true God in their life.

Sharing God's Word in Pakistan

WELS has been providing Christian literature to several contacts in Pakistan for the past three years through WELS Multi-Language Publications. More than 30,000 copies of various publications have been printed in Urdu, the official language of Pakistan, and are being used in eight Christian Sunday schools and at least one adult Bible class. It is reported that the Urdu version of The Promise (a book that details God's plan of salvation for the world) has reached into Afghanistan and even been in the hands of Al Qaeda members. Here is the account of one Christian in Pakistan who is distributing these materials.

Yesterday a Muslim man, simple in his appearance, came to my office and asked for the book *Bible Stories*. He wanted to buy it. He said that he has seen this book, read a part of it after borrowing it from someone, and wants to have it. He also told me that he liked it very much and wants to take it to his home to read all of it and also for his family to read it. I told him that we don't sell this book, but we can give it to him as a gift.

My wife was sitting in my office at that time. I told him gladly that she translated this book. Then the man spoke directly to my wife, saying in Punjabi, our local language, "Sister, you have done a great job in your life. You will die some day as all other human beings die, but this precious book will not die. This book, if handled with care, will not die even after 100 years, and many people in Pakistan will benefit from it and be blessed through it. This book is beautifully written, very simple and easy to understand, even a child of 10 years of age can understand it easily. The paper used for it is very nice, and the colorful pictures are also very beautiful and attractive."

After hearing these words, my wife was very happy and thanked God for

these encouraging words from a Muslim reader of *Bible Stories*.

People here in Pakistan—especially the masses, not the fundamental Muslims—are very interested and eager to read the Word of God. In the golden days of missionaries working here, there were hidden churches of Muslim people who believed in Jesus Christ in their hearts. These hidden followers of Jesus Christ have been useful in saving the lives of many Christians in Pakistan.

Many years back, a Christian village in Pakistan was attacked by fundamental Muslims at night. The Muslims burned the Christians' houses and killed some of them. They brought hand grenades with them. They used these weapons freely in that village, beating and killing the Christians.

One of our Christian friends ran out of the village to save his life. He sat in a bus that was stopped after two kilometers by the angry mob. Some young men entered the bus, hunting for Christians. They ordered everybody to take out their identity cards and show them. In Pakistan the religion is mentioned on the I.D. cards. Everybody started pulling out their I.D. cards. Our friend also took out his I.D. card and was much upset.

The man sitting beside him was a Muslim with a long beard. He hit our friend's hand, pretending it happened accidentally. By doing this, our friend's I.D. card fell down, and the Muslim man put his foot on it to hide the card. When the angry men came near to them they did not ask the bearded man about his I.D. card because his long beard was a prominent sign of his Muslim identity, but they asked our friend about his card. Immediately the man told them that our friend was his subordinate. So

they left our friend and did not ask him again about his I.D. card.



A mother and child in Pakistan look through the Urdu translation of *Bible Stories* provided by Multi-Language Publications.

When our friend came out of danger, he asked that man how he came to know that he was a Christian. This man replied, "I saw your religion on your I.D. card. That's why I hit your hand to throw the card down to save you from these foolish people, because I also believe in Jesus Christ secretly in my heart."

There are people who really want to have Christian literature and read and come to know about the Truth. Please pray that these books bear fruit in the lives of many Pakistani people that they may be saved by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Meet the editorial staff—uncut

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

A happy man

"If I could live anywhere in the world, it would be Watertown, Wis.," declares James Mattek. "Watertown isn't flashy, but it's where God put me. The people are wonderful, and my church family at Trinity is incredible."

With this statement, *Forward in Christ's* newest devotion writer establishes himself as a humble Christian who is happy with the place in life to which God has led him.

James A. Mattek was born May 9, 1955, in Manitowoc, Wis. The son of a pastor, he received encouragement to prepare for the ministry as he attended Lutheran grade school, high school, and college. After graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1982, he first served Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio, and then Trinity, Watertown, Wis. His favorite part of parish ministry was introducing people to Jesus in adult membership classes.

"In one of my former churches, I had the privilege of confirming Dave as an adult," says Mattek. "When I first met Dave, he wanted nothing to do with church and was doubtful there was a God. I'll never forget the first time Dave confessed his faith in Jesus. When that membership class was completed, he asked to take it again. Eventually, he would fill in for me and teach the class to others. He now serves as the chairman of the evangelism committee in that church. The Word works!"

In October 2004, Mattek accepted a call to be the chief executive officer of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Services, Inc. Many WELS people know Mattek as the chairman of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's governing board, a position he held for 10 years. He credits the experiences he had on that board in helping prepare him for his role at Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Services.



James Mattek is *Forward in Christ's* newest devotion writer.

Mattek and his wife, Sue, have four children—Ryan, 22; Katie, 18; Rachel, 15; and Luke, 13. A lifelong *Forward in Christ* reader, Mattek enjoys hunting, fishing, and reading poetry.

First Scandinavian vicars assigned

John Vogt was called to be a WELS friendly counselor in Scandinavia in 1999. Since that time he has established a seminary program, known as Biblicum, for confessional Lutheran church bodies in the area. Many WELS professors and pastors have taught at Biblicum. Here Vogt shares the latest news from Biblicum.

The most significant event of the past month was the assignment of our vicars to the first phase of their two-part vicar service. Three men, who have completed nearly all their classroom work in our seminary program, were assigned.

Jan-Erik Tiri has been called back to his home church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional

Church of Finland, where he will take primary responsibility for a new congregation being formed in Vaasa. This group has been having 10 to 15 visitors for each service and Bible study—an extremely impressive figure by Scandinavian standards!

Peter Oman will return from his semester at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to serve a joint call by the Stockholm/Uppsala and Vasteras/Norrkoping congregations. These two congregations are holding services in all four cities, so there will be plenty of opportunities for him to serve.

The third vicar, Hermanni Pihlajamaa, was called to split his time between assisting in the

Gothenburg congregation in Sweden, teaching Greek and Hebrew to the second group of seminary students, and assisting with the revision of the Swedish People's Bible. God willing, all three men will gain valuable experience that will further prepare them to serve the Lord in their own congregations in the near future.

There's a touch of melancholy in the above news. This past month I taught my last class to this first group of students. They have been in training since I began my service in Scandinavia six years ago. I'm going to miss having them in the classroom. The next group has begun already, however, so there's someone to fill the empty seats.

Preparing teachers for their backyard mission field

Church leaders today often reference the “mission field in our own backyard” to show us that those who live and work closely to us often need to hear about the Savior as much as those overseas do. Combine this idea with WELS’ tradition of a strong school system and a growing need for solid education in cities across the United States, and you begin to understand why both Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, are working to prepare their students to serve in urban schools.

“God is opening a huge mission field for us,” explains Jim Rahn, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College and director of the college’s Center for Urban Teaching. “Education is a big concern. Parents are looking for where their children can get the best education. And, the cities are where the people are in increasing numbers. It’s where the crossroads of the world are. This is world mission work in our own backyard.”

Taking advantage of this mission opportunity is not as easy as it may seem, though. Urban students are usually struggling with poverty and racial and cultural tensions. WELS teachers have not traditionally been trained to deal with these issues, which is why Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran College are providing special training for teachers who want to serve in urban schools.

Wisconsin Lutheran College’s Center for Urban Teaching, established during the 2001-02 school year, exposes its students to urban schools in Milwaukee, New York City, and Chicago. Students observe and participate in these classrooms, many of which are in the nation’s premiere urban schools.

In 2004, Martin Luther College began exposing its students to urban teaching. A group of 12 students visited St. Marcus and Siloah, WELS

schools in Milwaukee’s inner city. This trip allowed students to see and experience the classroom atmosphere firsthand so that they could determine whether this type of school setting might be one that they’d like to teach in.

“We hope to identify early students who would like to work in the city so that the students can gain some experience teaching in that setting,” says Phil Leyrer, the Martin Luther College professor who led the 2004 trip to Milwaukee. “In order to teach in that setting, you must have a passion for people not like you. You must embrace a culture different from your own and love all students for who they are.”

Kate Schaffer, a Martin Luther College student who participated in the urban ministry trip in 2004, saw the love that these teachers have for their students. She notes, “WELS teachers in the central city not only share the gospel and educate children, but they also act as caring role models and authority figures for their students. Through the message of Jesus’ love for all, these teachers give their students hope. These schools are a wonderful outreach tool, and we need to take advantage of every chance we have to tell others about Jesus.”

Edie Kastenschmidt, a 2001 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran College, has that opportunity to share Jesus with her students each day at St. Marcus, Milwaukee. “St. Marcus really is a mission school,” Kastenschmidt says. “Many of my students have never heard the name of Jesus. I love teaching them the gospel message. It’s incredibly rewarding.”

As Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran College work to prepare more students for teaching in urban schools, an increasing number of WELS teachers can find the joy of teaching in their own backyard mission field.

A young boy’s prayer

On Oct. 29, 2004, my three-year-old grandson fell three stories, almost 30 feet. He was in ICU in critical condition. We were afraid we would lose him. He received blood transfusions and many X-rays and CT scans. He was in a lot of pain.

I would stand by his bed and tell him that Jesus loved him. Every day I’d say, “Let’s pray to Jesus,” and all Chase could say in a tiny voice was, “Yes.”

On the seventh day, I said, “Let’s pray to Jesus.” Chase said, “Yes.” I closed my eyes, and he closed his. We folded our hands. I asked Jesus to please make Chase better, to let him come home to play with Nana and his brother and sister. All of a sudden this little three-year-old voice said, “And go get donuts, chocolate ones with sprinkles.”

Every day I’d say, “Let’s pray to Jesus.”

I opened one eye and looked at Chase. He little hands were still folded and his eyes closed. He hadn’t been allowed food for a week. He was really praying for donuts. I said, “Yes, Chase, all good things come from God, even donuts!”

Chase came home a few days later. Every day I brought him chocolate donuts with sprinkles. This last Sunday he was able to attend Sunday school and church. We stopped for treats afterwards, and guess what the church served—donuts!

Chase’s eyes got big, and he said, “Look, Nana, DONUTS!”

Pastor was standing there, and we both smiled. Jesus saved Chase, and I’m so thankful that Chase has thanked him with me.

Cherry Simpson

Adopt a sailor

On Thanksgiving Day 2004, 12 sailors piled into a rented van and traveled about an hour from the Great Lakes Naval Station to New Life Lutheran Church in Lake Zurich, Ill. As part of the base's "Adopt-a Sailor" program, the congregation had a spectacular day planned for the 12 Navy men.



These 12 U.S. Navy men enjoyed some time at the driving range before Thanksgiving dinner at New Life, Lake Zurich, Ill.

Many members of the congregation helped plan for the day. Preschoolers made a banner to welcome the sailors, and their parents brought snacks. The Lutheran Pioneers made goodie bags, and several members sponsored sailors by paying the costs of their day. Two fraternal organizations also donated funds. Members of New Life and the community worked together to cook eight turkeys to serve the 80 people who shared the meal.

Before dinner was served, Pastor Andrew Bauer explained to the sailors that on Thanksgiving it is our custom to give thanks to God, especially for the greatest gift of his Son. They were invited to sing and pray with the group if they wished.

The food was delicious, but the sailors were treated to more than just Thanksgiving dinner. Fourteen local businesses offered to help

make the day special. Gift certificates and food donations were only the beginning. The group started their day with free donuts and coffee at Krispy Kreme and then expended some energy at an indoor driving range. After dinner they watched football on a cable system installed at New Life just for the day. They finished with bowling and pizza at a local bowling alley.

Although New Life's primary goal was to provide a nice day for the sailors, the event also helped them connect with their neighbors and establish a community presence. "I was especially impressed with the non-member families who came," Bauer shares. One family recently lost a loved one and wanted to do something different for Thanksgiving. Another former Navy man brought his three teenagers to volunteer. All those who participated were grateful to be part of this unique Thanksgiving celebration.

World news

Catholics studying what happens to unbaptized babies—Pope John Paul II has asked members of the International Theological Commission to study the fate of babies who die without being baptized. These members started discussing that question during their October 2004 meeting at the Vatican. According to a statement, the discussion was framed "in the context of the universal salvific plan of God, of the uniqueness of Christ's mediation and of the sacramentality of the church in the order of salvation."

Developed in the Middle Ages, the teaching held up to this point by Catholics claims that unbaptized babies, marked by original sin, would spend eternity in limbo, a place without torments but far from God.

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod membership declining—The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod membership continues to decline, according to reports from its congregations.

The number of baptized members at the end of 2003 was 2,488,936, which is 23,778 fewer than in 2002. Total confirmed members for 2003 was 1,894,822, or 13,101 fewer than 2002. Missouri Synod research analyst John O'Hara said the membership declines "continue a trend of the past 30 years."

The 2003 statistics are based on reports from 74 percent of congregations compiled by the denomination's Office of Rosters and Statistics.

Black Americans score high on religious activity—Black Americans are the most likely to participate in religious activities, according to a survey by the Barna Group.

The survey states that 91 percent of blacks said they prayed to God in the past week, as compared to 86 percent of Hispanics, 81 percent of whites, and 46 percent of Asians.

Other practices included:

- Read the Bible in the past week:

blacks, 59 percent; Hispanics, 39 percent; whites, 36 percent; and Asians, 20 percent.

- Attended religious services in the past week: blacks, 48 percent; whites, 41 percent; Hispanics, 38 percent; and Asians, 23 percent.

The findings, based on two nationwide surveys among 2,632 adults during January and May of 2004, has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.9 percentage points for the overall sample. The margin of error related to the subgroups is plus or minus 2.4 percentage for whites; 5.6 percentage points for blacks; 5.4 percentage points for Hispanics; and 11.2 percentage points for Asians.

[From "Ethnic groups differ substantially on matters of faith," Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, Calif.; www.barna.org; Aug. 10, 2004.]

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

District news

Minnesota

On Nov. 21, 2004, members of **Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa**, dedicated their new Christian Education Center, which allows for expansion of their K-8 school.

The student body of **West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.**, participated in an all-school service project day on Dec. 7, 2004. Most students volunteered for Operation Christmas Child, packing shoeboxes for needy children overseas.

South Atlantic



The softball team of Living Savior, Asheville, N.C., swept its division its first year of play in 2003. In 2004, they moved up a division and still took the Asheville city league title.

Nebraska

On Aug. 21, 2004, **St. John, Platteville, Colo.**, participated in its town's annual parade, which had the theme "Homecoming." St. John's float carried out the theme "Homecoming in Heaven."

On Nov. 7, 2004, **Rock of Ages, Kansas City, Mo.**, held its first Hmong worship service. Services are being held every Sunday by four Hmong men who are studying to be pastors. James Plitzuweit, pastor at Rock of Ages, is supervising and assisting with Holy Communion. Attendance in November averaged 29 souls.

Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb., hosted a regional choral festival during the weekend of Nov. 14, 2004. More than 200 students from 10 synod high schools participated. The Friday night and Sunday afternoon concerts each drew audiences of 500.

Minnesota



At the Martin Luther College Fall Festival in New Ulm, Minn., the extended family of Donald and Emily Zimmerman paused to record a memorable occasion. Pictured are five Zimmerman sisters who are all Dr. Martin Luther College graduates presently teaching, with their sons, who are all currently enrolled at Martin Luther College. From left: Lois and Andrew Kruse, Eileen and Jason Draper, Leann and Jon Ross, Judy and Joel Lauber, and Jan and Seth Georgson.

North Atlantic

St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, has helped establish seven other congregations during its 130-year history. In 2004, St. Paul helped a mission congregation—Cross of Life, Mississauga, Ontario—by donating \$60,000 to Cross of Life's "property down payment fund." Members attribute their mission-mindedness to the Holy Spirit's training and the Lord's blessings.

Dakota-Montana

For three years, **St. Peter, St. Albert, Alberta, Canada**, has hosted a "Mum & Me" outreach program for mothers and children. The program includes an hour of songs, crafts, and Bible stories. St. Peter is now offering the program weekly and is averaging 20 participants, many of whom come from an unchurched background.

As part of its outreach program, **Abundant Life, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada**, sends out thousands of postcard invitations to its Christmas worship services to area residents. This approach has led to more than 50 visitors on Christmas Eve each year.

Southeastern Wisconsin

The varsity girls' volleyball team from **Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.**, won the Wisconsin State Division III Championship.

The varsity football team from **Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee**, won the Wisconsin State Division III Championship.

South Atlantic

Bethany, North Fort Myers, Fla., opened a preschool in fall 2004. The congregation of 80 members is made up primarily of retirees, but members want to use the preschool as a way to spread the good news of Jesus to their community.

On Oct. 31, 2004, **Southern Lutheran Academy, Mulberry, Fla.**, dedicated its campus in a special service. Four students are attending the academy during its inaugural 2004-05 school year.

South Atlantic District members sincerely thank everyone who prayed on their behalf during the fall 2004 hurricane season. Although certain areas were extensively damaged, the Lord graciously spared most WELS members from the worst of the storms. Members are also grateful for the more than \$200,000 that WELS members donated to provide relief from the storms' damages.

Happy Anniversary!

SC—Trinity, Temple, Texas, celebrated its 30th anniversary on Oct. 24, 2004.

SEW—On Oct. 3, 2004, members of Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis., honored teachers **Steve Garner** (10 years) and **Katherine Westendorf** (25 years) as they celebrated service anniversaries.

On Nov. 7, 2004, **St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.**, celebrated its 130th anniversary.

Mount Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis., honored **Roger Kramp** for 25 years of service in the teaching ministry on Nov. 7, 2004.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: DM—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Donald Wichmann; NA—Harland Goetzinger; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Aden, Darin D., to Bethany, Appleton, Wis.

Blauert, Timothy K., to Grace, Nelson, Wis./Our Redeemer, Wabasha, Minn.

Metzger, Paul W., to Good Shepherd, Beaverton/St. John, Gladwin, Mich.

Sulzle, Christian E., to St. Paul, McIntosh/Peace, Isabel/First English, Dupree, S.D.

Teachers

Gerner, Deborah L., to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee

Linde, Linda L., to retirement

Piske, Michelle M., to Christ the Lord, Houston, Texas

Uher, Julie K., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Bay City, Mich.—Bethel School (125). Feb. 27. Service, 10:30 A.M. Potluck dinner to follow. Clara Schultz, 989-893-1609.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Atonement (75). April 10. Services, 8:15 & 10:45 A.M. Brunch, 9:30 A.M.-1 P.M. RSVP to the church office, 414-871-3744.

Denver, Colo.—Zion (40). April 24. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Church office, 303-985-2334.

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.

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.

Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women—April 15-17. Kahler Grand Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bonnie, 507-931-1866.

Lutheran Pioneer International Pine Car Derby—April 16. Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis. Tom Deibert, 920-923-5307

WELS Church Librarians' Organization meeting—April 23. English, Viroqua, Wis. Theresa, 608-637-7389.

Concert—Cascade Lutheran Chorale, Grace, Portland, Ore. April 24, 4 P.M.

Dr. Martin Luther College class of 1993 and STEP class of 1994 reunion—Onalaska, Wis., area, June 18. dorannmahnke@hotmail.com.

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

Wisconsin Lutheran High School class of 1995 reunion—Oct. 1. New Berlin Hills, New Berlin, Wis. Send contact information to Jennifer (Snell) Schultz, 262-524-1637 or 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 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.

Presenters—for EduTech 2006, a national WELS conference on teaching, learning, and technology. Include presenter's contact information and specialty. edutech@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.

Fort Drum, N.Y.—WELS soldiers deployed in 10th Mountain Division. Cross of Christ, Liverpool, N. Y., wants to "adopt" area servicepeople. bethfitting@usadatanet.net.

ADDRESS CHANGE

Good Shepherd, Pipestone, Minn.—711 5th Ave SW, Pipestone MN 56164.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Individuals to teach English in a foreign country—one-year commitment. All expenses paid. 651-267-1044 or sbahme@hotmail.com.

Deputy director—English-as-a-Second-Language Outreach Program and Lab School, Gethsemane, Milwaukee. Qualifications: B.A. in Spanish, English, education, English as a second language, or staff ministry. Computer literate. Fluency in spoken and written Spanish. Study and/or work experience in a Spanish-speaking country or environment. Intercultural communication skills. Ability to learn project management and administration. Visit www.wels.net, jumpword "bulletinboard" for more details. Send cover letter and resume by attachment to Beth Thompson, bthompsn@dias.net.

Bethany Lutheran College (ELS)—Mankato, Minn., has faculty positions available for the 2005-06 academic year:

- Psychology
- English/Communication
- Physics
- Sociology
- Secondary Education Coordinator

Send nominations or applications, including resume, academic transcript credentials, and three letters of recommendation to Bethany Lutheran College, Attn: Paulette Tonn Booker, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001. Visit www.blc.edu for more information. Application review begins Feb. 1.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod—seeking an ELS or WELS member to lead the development of its Lutheran Schools Initiative. Must have passion for and experience in education; leadership, business, and management skills; fundraising experience; and public-speaking skills. Contact ELS President John Moldstad, 6 Browns Ct, Mankato MN 56001; 507-344-7356.

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

Don't forget

to send us your answer to the January Potluck poll that asked, "What is the first page of the magazine you turn to each month when you receive *Forward in Christ*?" Send your answer by Feb. 10 to *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.

Results will be printed in the April issue.



Picture this



Krystal Krueger, a sophomore at Marquette University and member of Grace, Manitowoc, Wis., and four of her friends volunteered to help with two soccer camps in South Dakota in August 2004. Prince of Peace, Yankton, and Christ our Savior, Vermillion, each sponsored a two-day camp for community children. "Under the theme 'Soccer is the Sport; Jesus is the Life,' our time wasn't used to just teach soccer," Krueger shares. "Rather, we took breaks and had devotions and miniature skits focused on how soccer relates to our spiritual lives. The kids [had] a great time. And they learned a lot, as did we." Here, volunteers are pictured with participants in the Vermillion camp.

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.

Sports logic

Many people are sports fans. I am. You might be also. The pastime of sports is one of God's many gifts to us. But if you've ever spoken with someone who was drifting from church, try to follow their logic using the following sports illustration:

I've been a sports fan all my life—football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and baseball in the spring and summer. But I'll never go to another game again because . . .

- . . . they always asked me for money (tickets & concessions).
- . . . the people I sat with weren't very friendly.
- . . . the seats were too hard.
- . . . the coach never asked my advice.
- . . . the referee made some bad calls.
- . . . some people seemed to care more about their looks than the game.
- . . . the band played some numbers I didn't know.
- . . . too many games didn't fit into my busy schedule.
- . . . my parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- . . . I once read a book on sports and now I know more than the coaches.
- . . . I don't take my kids to any games so they can make their own choices about what sport they like best.

Submitted by Scott Oelhafen, pastor at Trinity, Waukesha, Wis. Original author unknown.



I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Psalm 122:1

Sing to the Lord

A woman discovers that the Lord's plans for her include cancer—and singing.

Julie K. Wietzke

When Lynne Barber was a little girl in Oregon, she dreamed about living in an older house with lots of woodwork and being able to walk to church. She also dreamed about becoming a singer.

Dreams do come true. Living in an older home in Milwaukee, Wis., Lynne attends her neighborhood church, St. James, with her husband, John. She also sings jazz every week at a local restaurant.

But not everything in her life was exactly how she dreamed. She never expected to get cancer as a “retirement present” in 2001. She didn’t think it would reoccur in 2004. But she sees how it is all part of God’s plan.

“I wouldn’t be singing if he hadn’t given this cancer to me,” says Lynne.

She continues, “You think that you have it all figured out. But it’s not you at all.”

Lynne discovered her God-given gift of music at a young age. “When I was two years old, I could carry a tune, and I had rhythm,” she says.

She started singing professionally at age 17. By the time she was 19, she had moved to San Francisco to continue her career. There she sang with some of the jazz greats—Vince Guaraldi, Dodo Marmarosa, and Dizzy Gillespie—but didn’t trust in the Lord.

“I was at the age when I didn’t need the Lord,” she says. “I knew everything.”

She adds with a smirk, “What a surprise when I discovered that I didn’t.”

The music scene started changing. Rock ‘n’ roll was in; jazz was out. Lynne moved to Los Angeles, where she started attending church again. She also met her husband, John, and introduced him to the Lord.

In 1975, Lynne and John moved back to Oregon to take care of Lynne’s mother, who was terminally ill with cancer. Job and family responsibilities took on new importance, and she stopped singing. She even stopped listening to music. “That would make me long to sing,” she says, “and other things came first.”

In 1982, the Barbers moved to Milwaukee to work at WELS Mass Media Ministry. It was there that Lynne started listening to jazz again, though she wasn’t ready to sing.

“If it hadn’t been for my faith, I wouldn’t have gotten through anything at all,” says Lynne as she thinks back over her life, especially when she discovered she had cancer in 2001. “I would talk to the Lord all the time, and he just took care of things.”

After her surgery, she decided that she was going to take lessons and start singing again.

“God gave me singing as a gift,” she explains. “For years I didn’t use it, but he never took it away. He was just saving it.”

Even though she had terrible stage fright, Lynne started singing jazz at clubs in Milwaukee. She was feeling great. But the Lord had other challenges for her. Doctors discovered another mass in 2004, and Lynne went through surgery and chemotherapy treatments again.

“The first time I had cancer, the thought of dying didn’t bother me,”



says Lynne. “I was ready. Now I think, ‘Not quite yet.’”

Right now Lynne is cancer free, though it will be a few years before doctors can declare her to be in full remission. She lives one day at a time and never loses her sense of humor. “I hate wearing wigs. I resent getting dressed up and having to put on my hair.”

But she is at peace. “Every day is new and filled with blessings,” she says.

Lynne is sharing these blessings with others. One day a week she works with young children at a public school, sharing Jesus whenever she has the opportunity.

She and John are also planning to present “witness” concerts to WELS congregations. These outreach events will share Lynne’s life story and how God has blessed her. They will be filled with songs of praise and thanksgiving—including some of Lynne’s jazz favorites. Says Lynne, “There are a lot of gorgeous tunes out there, and I want to do them all.”

Julie Wietzke is assistant editor of Forward in Christ.

Lenten sacrifices

Why a Lutheran might consider giving something up for Lent.

Amber Swenson

It used to be that when people asked what I was giving up for Lent, I answered that I was Lutheran, as if that was reason enough not to give anything up. But when I decided last year to make a sacrifice for the Lenten season, I found that I was in the company of all kinds of Christians—even other Lutherans.

I have always believed that Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate sacrifice, the only sacrifice that mattered.

Because of this, I didn't think that giving up candy, meat, or a bedtime snack could possibly have any significance for me. Although it is true that anything I give up has no bearing on my or anyone else's eternal salvation, I learned that little changes during Lent draw me closer to Jesus on his path to the cross.

Within a few days of minor changes to my lifestyle, I started realizing how easy it would have been for Christ to come down from the cross. Each minute of torment he endured with the weight of all our sins would have been unbearable for any of us. Remembering that made it easier to resist the temptation to falter on my promise. The act of giving something up reminded me every day, sometimes several times a day, of the great sacrifice Christ made.

Giving something up also brought a serious mood to the season. Making a change in my daily routine required

a certain amount of concentration. If I didn't stay focused on my goal, I easily might have done exactly what I promised I wouldn't do. Focusing on my lifestyle led me not only to give something up, but also to look more closely at what I needed to add—namely, a daily dose of God's Word.

I learned that little changes during Lent drew me closer to Jesus on his path to the cross.

From Scripture we see examples of God's faithful people giving things up. Esther asked all the Jews to fast for three days before she went to the king. In 1 Corinthians Paul talks about husbands and wives abstaining from sexual relations by mutual consent in order to devote themselves to prayer. Even Christ fasted for 40 days.

Today we are surrounded by luxuries and conveniences of every kind. The world looks at Americans as self-indulgent,

unable or unwilling to give anything up for anyone. Fasting is not something modern-day Lutherans give a lot of thought. But by not considering fasting, or any number of other sacrifices, we may be missing out on a very personal means of worship. Giving something up is a tangible way to say, "Lord, you gave everything up for me, and I know the little I am giving up is no comparison, but I am happily doing this to follow you on your road to Calvary. With a thankful heart for all you've done, I ask you to accept my sacrifice."

As Lutherans we are not called upon to give something up for Lent. Christ walked the same path to the cross regardless of our actions. But this year you might want to think about eliminating something from your daily routine. Not only might you find six weeks later that you can possibly live your whole life without whatever it is you gave up, but you also might find yourself walking closer to Jesus.

Amber Swenson is a member at Ascension, Rochester, Minnesota.



Thy will be done

Praying for solutions to God's answers

Wayne A. Laitinen

Each Sunday morning our little flock prayed that God would heal a woman who was dying of cancer. Finally, a man in the congregation took me aside and told me that the reason she wasn't getting any better was that we kept adding to our prayer that pesky, fatalistic phrase, "... if it is your will."

I was taken aback, because I knew the man was well-versed in the Bible and a veteran in the Lutheran faith. Once I rallied my wits, I mentioned that "your will be done" had divine precedent. Jesus used those words in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed that the cup of suffering be taken from him. Furthermore, Jesus taught his disciples to pray (among other things), "Thy will be done." Was the holy Son of God a fatalist? Was he teaching his disciples spineless resignation?

Undaunted, the man continued, "How in the world can you expect to get anything from God if you don't storm the throne of grace with confidence?" I tried to point out that our Savior's

prayer in Gethsemane was a prayer of confidence. Nevertheless, his Father gave him just the opposite of what he asked. In the end, the Father's answer was the salvation of all mankind. Likewise, St. Paul prayed three times that his "thorn in the flesh" be removed, but God refused. Instead, he gave the apostle grace to bear the affliction and used it to enhance God's glory (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Since then I've thought about our discussion. As so often happens, I think of other things I could have said—long after we parted. First of all, it is important to distinguish between God's hidden will and his revealed will.

God's hidden will

God's hidden will has to do with those things that he has chosen not to tell us for our own good. For instance, if we knew that God was going to give us good days and health, the natural tendency would be to put off seeking a Savior and to find false security in tomorrow's good fortune. Then the Lord's judgment upon the carnally minded would fall upon us: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12:20). For the sake of our eternal soul, God shrouds our future in mystery so that, in our ignorance and helplessness, we may turn to his Son for deliverance.

On the other hand, who of us would want to know the trials that await us? I would be a basket case if I knew the hour was approaching

when I would be in a car accident, suffer a broken relationship, become terminally ill, or die. God hides some things from us so that we will not fall into despair and lose faith. In his own time and in his own way, God makes his hidden will known as the events of this world unfold.

God's revealed will

God's revealed will is found only in Holy Scriptures. There, at the cross of our Savior, we find that the just and holy God unleashed all his wrath toward us on his only begotten Son. At Jesus' empty grave, we find that our Father wants to be known chiefly for his compassion toward mankind. Only at Christ's open tomb does God give us "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Here, in God's revealed will, we have the certainty that God will give all who believe in his Son health and life and joy without end.

God makes his hidden will known as the events of this world unfold.

Praying that God's will be done

This brings us back to that "pesky, fatalistic" phrase. Since the cure for that woman's cancer lay in the hidden will of God, we prayed that he restore her to health, "if it is your will." For all we knew, God may have given her to us for

another day, another month, or another year. God has revealed, however, that sinful flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, it would be a cruel God who, on one hand holds out to us eternal health, but on the other hand binds himself to grant our every prayer for temporal health. Under those conditions she would be doomed to live forever in a place that is just enough like heaven to whet her appetite for something she can never attain . . . and just enough like hell to torment her without the hope of deliverance. Who could call that living?

For that very reason God drove Adam out of Eden with the words: ". . . he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). In a world gone wrong, death is the ultimate mercy for those who trust in Jesus. God revealed in the Bible that his will is to change our corruptible body so that it may be like Christ's glorious body. To effect this wonderful change, God requires his saints to return to dust so that he may, once again, form life and immortality from dust—this time without the interruption of sin.

After all our praying, God's answer was to let cancer have its way with our sister. To borrow a phrase from St. Augustine, God, in his wisdom, exchanged her mortal life for a vital death. Far be it from me to pray for a solution to such an excellent answer!

Wayne Laitinen is pastor at St. John, New Ulm, Minnesota.

President's day

Fifty years ago, as a young school boy, I looked forward to February. Not only was it the shortest month of the year, it was shortened even more by having two days off for presidents' birthdays. In those days, at least at my school, we had off for Lincoln's birthday on Feb. 12 and for Washington's birthday on Feb. 22. Today those two days off have been combined into one, President's Day.

It's a day, somewhat like the fourth of July, to extol the virtues of living in the United States. These virtues are not enjoyed everywhere. As I'm writing this in early December, Ukraine is struggling to have free and fair elections. Iraq is involved in bloodshed, seemingly warring against the freedom many Americans have sacrificed so much to win for them. Freedom, though one may speak of it as an inalienable right, is not universally enjoyed.

And so during February in the United States, in particular on President's Day, we thank God for civic leaders like "Honest Abe" Lincoln. We appreciate George Washington who reportedly said, "I cannot tell a lie." It's in celebration of these virtues, among others, that we observe President's Day.

In another way, president's day is every day for me. It's a privilege—it brings me pleasure—to serve as WELS president. But, perhaps, you are just a bit curious as to what fills my days. The days are complete with consulting, composing, coordinating, and confessing.

The hymn writer is right: "Let each day begin with prayer" (*Christian Worship* 478:2). How can we ever consult about spiritual matters if we haven't consulted with our God first? Prayer and a devotional reading of Scripture head each of my days as president. And as I consult with others, I'm grateful others also respect the absolutes of God's revealed truth.

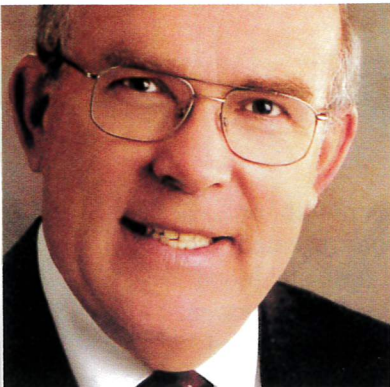
What a privilege to compose messages based on God's inspired Word! Since I

no longer have one specific congregation to pastor, I'm called, in a certain sense, to serve all of you. I enjoy preaching, proclaiming God's saving truth, to a variety of WELS audiences. I'm grateful for every occasion to present God's truth to you. It's a pleasure writing this column for *Forward in Christ*.

Forward in Christ highlights for us the wide variety of things we do together, carrying out the Savior's Great Commission. It all needs coordination. With so many wonderful things to do, all advancing God's kingdom, and so many committed people carrying them out, how can we ever choose between them? It's all part of my day to help coordinate these activities, keeping in mind both our God-given assignment and the directions we have set for ourselves as WELS: "With North American outreach as the springboard, WELS people will proclaim Peace through Jesus—by all possible means—to more and more people."

It's a large task we have assumed together, and we don't always get it just right. That's where confession comes into my days. Any time we are in the presence of God, consulting with him, confession is the only proper place to begin. Confession acknowledges that on our own not one of us can stand upright before him. But when he pardons us, he lifts us to our feet. His forgiveness composes the songs of thankful praise on our lips and in our lives. Seeking to praise him in all we do makes coordinating our efforts possible. Each day that we together enjoy his eternal pardon through Jesus our Savior, we have reason together to proclaim his praises.

President's Day, a day off from school, may give children a lift. A president's day for me raises me in thankfulness to an always gracious God who gives me the privilege, the great pleasure, of serving all of you, each day, as WELS president.



Karl R. Gungl

Women of faith: the Samaritan woman

Faith in Jesus as the Christ empowers the Samaritan woman to enthusiastically invite her neighbors to hear Jesus' words.

Philip L. Kieselhorst

He was the enemy. There was no doubt about that. He was another of those snobs from Judah who wouldn't even associate with their next-door neighbors, the Samaritans. And yet, here he was, not only asking her for a drink of water, but also discussing her relationships and her worship life with her.

The enemy of empty love

The discussion about her relationships revealed a long history of love gone wrong. This woman's relationships didn't last. Love, in her experience, didn't last.

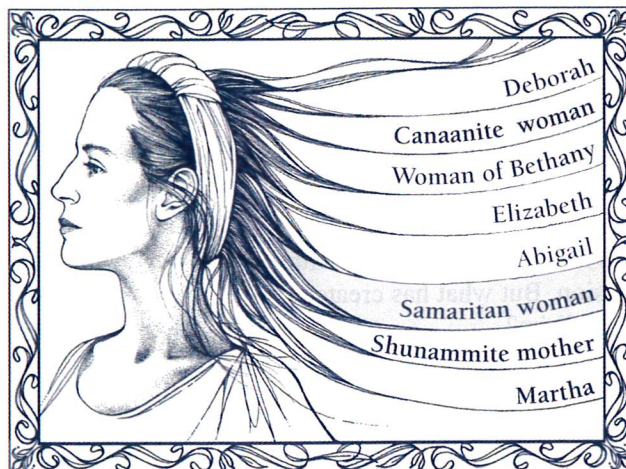
Jesus was the enemy, but not the enemy she may have expected. He was the enemy of her empty relationships. "The water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Jesus introduced her to a relationship that would be fulfilling and eternal . . . a relationship with the Lord. This promise got her attention, but she was not yet fully convinced.

The enemy of empty worship

She wanted to make sure he was the enemy, so she brought up a matter of national pride—the worship practices of the two nations. This would certainly cause this man at the well to show his true colors. It did.

Jesus was the enemy, but again not the enemy she expected. He was the enemy of her hollow worship. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know" (John 4:22).



The woman protested, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he" (John 4:25,26).

He wasn't her enemy. He was her Savior.

Jesus is the enemy of a hollow worship of the unknown. To not know what God thinks of you, what your sins do to you, what God does for you, what waits for you beyond death, only leaves a person hollow.

But the Messiah has come. He has explained everything to us. Our worship is in no way hollow because we now worship what we know—Jesus is the Christ. Salvation comes through him.

Faith in the enemy

This man was the enemy of this Samaritan, wasn't he? After listening

to Jesus, she realized he was not her enemy. He was the enemy of those things ruining her life. He wasn't her enemy. He was her Savior.

Faith in Jesus as the Christ moved her to do an amazing thing. She went back to her town to invite all of her neighbors to meet Jesus! Her enthusiastic testimony drew them out to hear what Jesus had to say. After two days of listening to his words, they too came to believe.

They too came to know that Jesus was not their enemy. He was their Savior.

They said to the woman: "Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

Empty love and empty worship are everywhere. Like Jesus and this Samaritan woman, go to your next-door neighbors and invite them to come and listen to Jesus' words of grace and truth. He is not their enemy. He is their Savior from the emptiness that ruins lives. Invite them to hear his words. "And because of his words many more became believers" (John 4:41).

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

This is the sixth of an eight-part series by Philip Kieselhorst on "Women of faith." To read the first five articles, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive", and search by the keyword phrase "women of faith".

This month's reading: John 4

It's a family matter

In a recent nationwide Barna poll, 75 percent of adults said that children are not well prepared morally, and 71 percent said they are not prepared spiritually.

Did anyone think to ask why?

Let's assume that the survey reflects accurately the prevailing moral and spiritual condition of children in the United States. Who but adults—the very adults polled—need to prepare the children? Children cannot grow morally and spiritually without guidance.

Probably, those answering the poll feel that others, not themselves, are failing to prepare the children. That could be, and I'm not prepared to argue with that conclusion. But what has created this state of affairs?

Some will say, "Look at the churches."

I'm reminded how some 35 years ago already a young girl came home from Sunday school at a Christian church. "What did you learn today?" her mother asked.

In response the girl proudly held up the picture of an Easter bunny she had colored—on Easter Sunday.

To the extent that churches across the land give up on teaching God's Word and, particularly, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to children, they share the blame. They warp the moral and spiritual foundation of the children entrusted to them.

But not all churches are like that.

Some will blame society. What do we expect in a society where morals are devalued and spirituality is held to be anything spiritual you want it to be? (Unless, of course, you insist that true spirituality is found alone through Jesus!) Discipline and moral teachings are swept out of public schools like so much cafeteria garbage.

We teach children to tolerate everything, to judge nothing, and to do what-

ever feels right to do. Perhaps the surprise should be that some in our society recognize that we don't prepare children well morally and spirituality with that kind of amoral, pan-spiritual approach.

But not all of society is like that.

We clearly do not have to look far for amoral and anti-spiritual forces that affect our children negatively these days. But what—or who—is the first cause of the moral and spiritual void?

Who has the single greatest moral influence on children? Who helps form their habits before any outside influences can get to them: teaches them to sing "Jesus loves me" and to fold their hands in prayer; teaches them about forgiveness and heaven? Who chooses the church where their formal spiritual training takes place? Who warns about all the dangers in society? Who teaches them right and wrong?

Yes, the father and mother do all those things—or at least should. It's a family matter. The family that prays together not only stays together, as the saying goes, but it trains its children in the ways of the Lord.

Are children not well prepared morally and spiritually? Look at what's been happening to the family. Let society know that the village cannot replace dad and mom. Let society know that the family provides its moral backbone. Is it too much to suggest that as the families go, so goes the nation?

Let the churches do all they can to strengthen the families in their midst, to get the parents to teach God's ways in the home, to make sure their children are well prepared morally and spiritually.

And let the parents take heed. Dad and Mom, your children need you.



Gary S. Baumler

*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

Have you ever worried about money? Almost everyone has. It often seems to be the underlying reason that we feel that we must get ourselves out of bed and off to work in the morning. The loss of it seems to be the cause of sorrow when an appliance breaks in our home or the car won't start in the morning. The fear of not having enough of it keeps many awake at night. People who have enough money often worry about losing it.

God isn't worried, though. He has all the money he needs. He owns everything. We are just his guests in his world. He wants us to learn to trust him and relax about our financial needs.

When we take time to dwell on his promises to provide for us, we receive his peace.

Psalms help us to do that. They give us promises set in beautiful words on which to rest our thoughts. In Psalm 37 we find words that comfort us when we are worried about our money or our earthly needs. They come from a seasoned veteran at trusting the Lord: David. Remember all of the times he learned to trust God to take care of him. Think of his fight with Goliath, his several years running from Saul, and his flight from Absalom. God inspired David to teach and comfort us from his own rich experience toward the end of his life.

Featured verses: Psalm 37:23-26

"If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; ²⁴though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand. ²⁵I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. ²⁶They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed."

Points to ponder

- How can we be sure that the LORD delights in us?
- How can a Christian stumble financially?
- How does God hold us with his hand when we hit a financial difficulty?
- What made David so confident that God promises to take care of all of us (v. 25)?
- How does it help us to be generous when we trust God to provide for us?

Treasures to share

- How could you use this psalm to encourage someone who is considering bankruptcy?
- Next time you sit down to dinner with your family, share verse 25 with them and ask everyone at the table to tell of an experience when God provided for them or someone they knew in a special way.
- When you pay your bills this month and start to worry about finances, write out a check to your favorite charity with faith that God will bless you.
- Write these verses on a notecard and tape them to the front of your checkbook to remind you that God will always provide for you.

Other Scripture verses to fight worry over finances

Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 6:19-34; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

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

Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net, jumpword "fic", and click on "Songs for the heart." Answers will be available after Feb. 5.



What type of Christian ARE YOU?

Are you a thermometer, a thermostat, or a rheostat?

Bob Gove

Let's take a look at an interesting little measuring device. You probably have several of them—each designed for a specific job. I am referring to the thermometer. You may have one to tell you the temperature outside. Another tells you how warm it is in the house. Another is used to determine whether your body temperature is normal. Still others are used in cooking.

The thermometer is a useful measuring tool, but that's as far as it goes. It tells you the condition, but it can't do a thing about it.

But there is another device in your home that goes the second step. It not only knows the temperature in your home, but depending on how you adjust it, it will also take appropriate action to make a change occur. If it's too cool in your house, it will turn the furnace on and keep it on until the desired temperature is reached. If it's too warm, this clever device—called a thermostat—will bring the air conditioner on for as long as it takes to cool your place down.

Did you know that there are “thermometer Christians” and “thermostat Christians”? Thermometer Christians can tell you what needs to be done. They know someone must take the gospel to the lost. They know someone must disciple the children. They know their neighbors need to hear about Jesus. They know someone must maintain the church building. They know someone must finance it all. They even know their own spiritual condition.

But they seem incapable of doing anything about those things.

Thermostat Christians know someone must take the gospel to the lost, and they go do it. Or, they support those who do, by prayer and giving. They know someone must disciple the children, and they go do it (or they support those who do). They know their neighbors need to hear about Jesus, so they go next door and tell them. They know someone must maintain the church building, and they go do it. They know someone must finance it all, and they do it.

Thermometer Christians can tell you what needs to be done.



A third device that you may have in your home is called a rheostat. This little dandy is used to adjust the brightness of a light fixture. If the adjustment knob is turned way down, the light is very dim. As the knob is turned, the light gets brighter. In other words, the rheostat limits the amount of electricity reaching the light

bulb. Unfortunately, a rheostat doesn't save much electricity because when it is turned down it absorbs the power that could be flowing to the light bulb and wastes it by getting hot.

Most of us are rheostat Christians. We limit the flow of God's powerful love that could surge into this lost world. We allow a little blessing to get through—although some are turned up more than others. We help get the gospel to the lost a little bit. We help

disciple the children a little bit. We tell our neighbors a little bit about Jesus. We help maintain the church building a little bit. We give a little bit to finance God's agenda for the world. But a lot of the powerful blessing that could be flowing through us is wasted as we absorb it.

I'm going to look in the mirror and see if I can tell if I am a thermometer, a thermostat, or a rheostat.

Bob Gove is a member at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.