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JULY 2006

Forward in Christ

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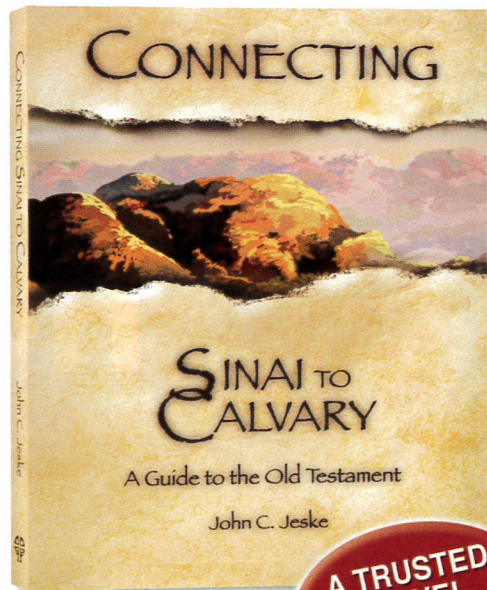
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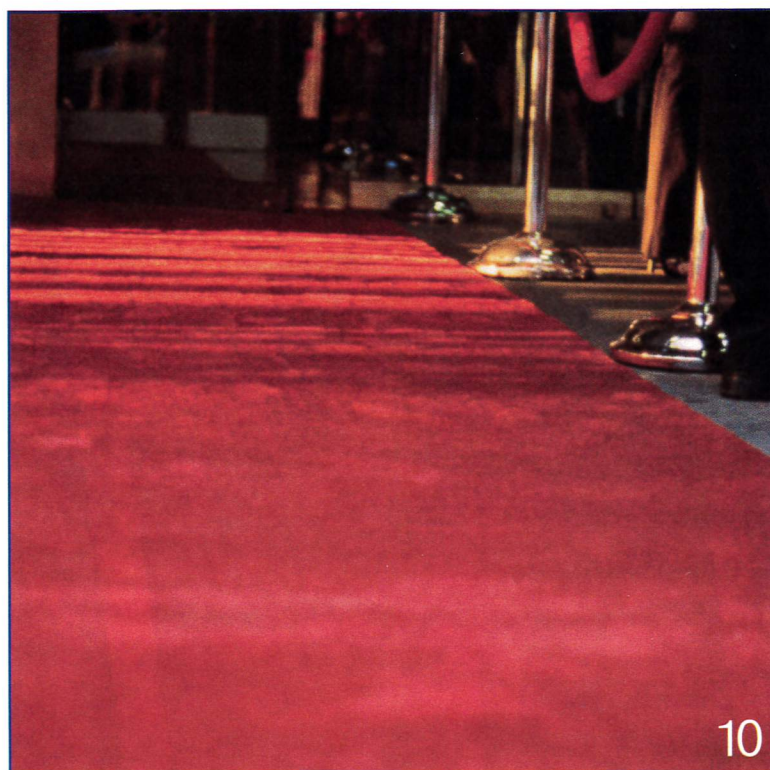
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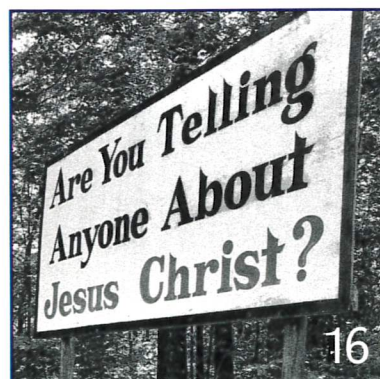
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“The most insidious aspect of Hollywood’s self-applause is that it permeates our thinking.”

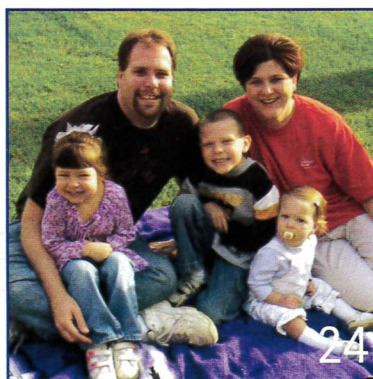


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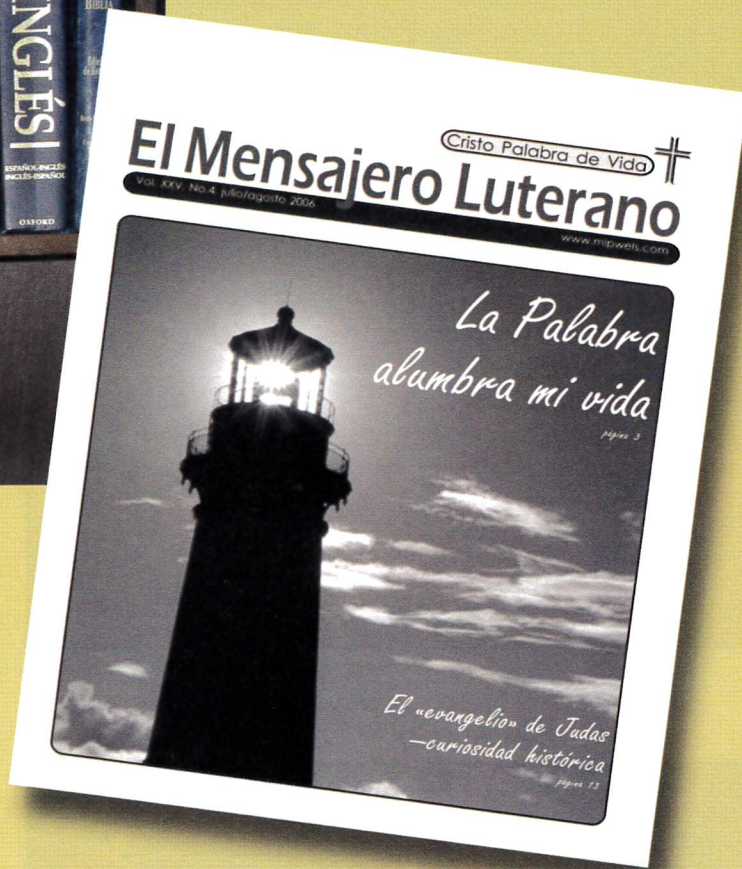
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WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

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WHAT'S INSIDE by Julie Wietzke

SOS. No, this isn't a distress call. It's a call to "Share Our Savior." Articles in *Forward in Christ* this month send out this call and tell how others are answering it.

- "Are you telling anyone about Jesus Christ?" (p. 16) gives you practical tips to help you tell others about Jesus.
- "Peppershaker evangelism" (p. 30) illustrates how you can use ordinary objects and God's Word to tell God's good news.
- "Different backgrounds, same passion" (p. 28) introduces you to three Hispanic men who make the most of every opportunity to share Christ, the Word of life.
- "Stretching across cultures" (p. 12) relates how a missionary's education prepared him to serve in Brazil.

This month you'll also see pictures of the graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., (p. 20) and a list of where they were assigned to serve (p. 22). These men have dedicated their lives to the full-time ministry of sharing our Savior. Keep them in your prayers and be ready to serve with them as we all continue to reach out with the gospel.

JULY

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KEEPING THE LAW

Jesus said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 15:10). Martin Luther reflected this truth with these words, "Therefore 'to do' is first to believe and so, through faith, to keep the Law. For we must receive the Holy Spirit; illumined and renewed by Him, we begin to keep the Law, to love God and our neighbor . . . Hence 'to do' includes faith at the same time. . . . So 'the doer of the Law is justified'; that is, he is accounted as righteous (Romans 2:13)" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 255,256).

Yet our Lutheran pastors will often instantly criticize others who speak of keeping the law as a testimony of his faith, as Paul Prange did in his article "Free forgiveness" [April]. While it is true that the doctrines of other denominations err on the side of legalism in their teaching of obedience in the Christian life, it is also true that a Christian will be compelled to obey the law through the power of the Holy Spirit—albeit imperfectly. . . . Both Scripture and Luther teach that faith can make a great difference in the daily thoughts, words, and actions of all Christians. While a Christian's good works do not earn his salvation, his life of obedience to his Lord is an integral, inseparable part of his faith. Perhaps the Baptist minister was speaking this, and conservative Lutherans are not.

*Karen Schroeder
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

PROSELYTISM

Thank you for Prof. Gurgel's response to a question on proselytizing [May]. I especially appreciated that although there is a possibility of doctrinal error, we recognize that many Christian denominations share the gospel. . . .

I do not proselytize. However I do not live in a vacuum. I live and work with Christians of various denominations, and we have conversations regarding the teachings of our churches. It is during these conversations that I can share what our church teaches. I do not call that proselytizing. I call it sharing my faith.

*Georgia Browne
Sturgis, Michigan*

KATRINA RECONSTRUCTION

I was a bit uncomfortable with "Something different" [May]. Not all paid workers who go to Louisiana to do Katrina reconstruction work are there to "line their pockets." This sounds like a greedy term. Many of these workers have families to support and really do need the extra money their labor can earn. Most are not there to take advantage of the Katrina victims. But good for those who can afford to work free.

*L. Kimble
Omaha, Nebraska*

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Pastor Buchholz's article on justification [May] was so excellent. I especially noticed this paragraph: "We share the message of sin and forgiveness because Christ's love compels us. We are witnesses to the greatest love story ever conceived: the unilateral declaration in Christ of complete justification and free forgiveness for every human being." I'm eager to read next month's sanctification article. It's the most important question about the two covenants. May God guide you in your answers.

*Earl Reichert
New London, Wisconsin*

THE DA VINCI CODE

In *Forward In Christ* you had an article written by Rev. John Braun concerning Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* [June]. In his

article he states, ". . . don't believe everything you see and hear in the movie or the book. Even if Dan Brown claims that everything is the truth." . . . Never once has Dan Brown claimed that the book in any way resembles the true Scripture. It is a fiction novel. . . . On the copyright page of *The Da Vinci Code*, it states, "All of the characters and events in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental."

Do not misunderstand me, I am not necessarily a fan of Dan Brown's writing, but this has been taken a step to far. . . . As a synod it is about time that we start focusing on our own problems (we have plenty) instead of pointing out everyone else's. Hopefully this will make you think, the way your article has made me.

*Jaclyn Enderle
Bluffon, Ohio*

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The struggle rages—the war is won

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:21-25

Stephen H. Geiger

Over our nation's history, there have been many struggles. Great wars. Moments in those wars when the fighting was furious and the future uncertain. So it is natural, in moments some still may remember, to grow weary. When struggle continues, many wonder whether victory will ever come.

We struggle with sin

Christians face a struggle all their own. Our new person, given us as faith was created in our hearts, loves God perfectly and wants only to honor him. Our old person, that wicked sinful flesh, hates God and wants only to disobey him. They fight within each of us.

The attacks of the flesh grow so violent that Christians become weary. Christians can wonder whether victory is really theirs.

Christians may ask, "How can it be true that I love the Lord when I have so many sinful thoughts? I can't seem to stop them. I want to trust the Lord in the middle of crisis. But I have doubts. I can think the worst about people. I can wear a happy face on the outside but feel so torn up within. I can't understand. What a miserable person I am."

That's honesty. Christians admit that nothing good lives in their sinful flesh. We have a body of death. If God treated us as our sins deserve, we too should face only pain-filled judgment.

But Satan wishes to take us one more step. Into our ears he whispers, "Maybe you're not really a Christian.

One who loves Jesus would not do things like that."

Honesty is one thing. Taking something true and suggesting a devilishly false conclusion is something completely different.

Look at Paul as an example. There is a battle in the hearts of Christians. As much as we might wish it to be otherwise, we remain sinners. We cry out with pained hearts and sorrowing souls, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

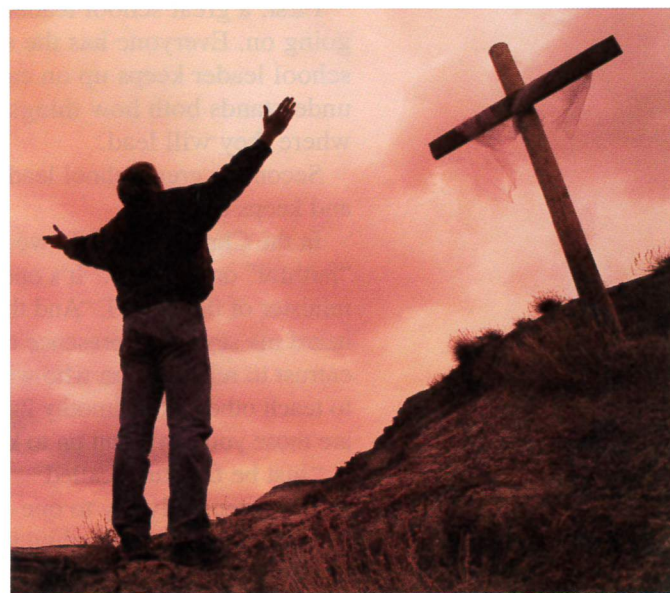
God helps us in our battle

The Spirit, at work in the battle-tested heart of Paul, replies, "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

God knows that you struggle. God forgives. In his body Jesus carried every thought that has entered your mind—though you so wished it had not—every word that slipped out—though it quickly felt so wrong—every moment when temptation snuck up behind you and caught you. Christians are not excluded from Jesus' saving work. It's exactly for you—for sinners—that Christ came to die.

Thanks be to God!

Know that ongoing struggle is no reason to doubt the victory. Ongoing struggle need not suggest that you are losing. Ongoing struggle just



means that you still have an enemy. He won't give up. So fight him. Daily call the sin of your own heart sin. Then find new life and perfect peace, again and again, in what Jesus' resurrection proclaims you—perfect and holy in his sight. In that resurrection joy, find strength to say no to wicked desires and yes to love and patience and trust.

In such a way, fight. This battle will go on.

But there's no need to grow weary. The war has been won.

Contributing editor Stephen Geiger is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Christian leaders

Paul T. Prange

A respected educational consulting company set out recently to determine what makes a great school leader. Consultants identified schools where everyone agreed that the leadership was great. Then the researchers interviewed faculty and staff, students and parents to find out why they all thought that the leader was great.

The answers revealed two traits.

First, a great school leader knows what is going on. Everyone has the sense that a great school leader keeps up on campus events and understands both how things happened and where they will lead.

Second, a great school leader makes promises and keeps them.

In the Christian church, we call such a person “faithful” or “reliable.” It’s one of the marks of a minister of the gospel. “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Reliable people are those you can count on to keep their promises.

“Just be faithful,” called workers generally say to one another. They are often thinking of faithfulness to the promises they made at their installations, promises to teach Scripture the way the Lutheran Confessions do, promises to use law and gospel properly with the souls under their care.

My observation is that when the souls under the care of called workers hear “just be faithful,” they are often thinking of the promises the called worker makes to help them, to visit them, to bring them the Word in all the situations of their lives. It’s a solemn business, this promise to be there with law and gospel, with rebuke and forgiveness. It’s a promise.

It’s interesting that the positive trait identified by the secular consulting company is not just to keep promises. It’s also to make them. I think there is a temptation for called workers not to make too many promises or at least to hope that no one notices when they break them. Those

temptations can lead to misunderstandings and even to sin.

Yes, called workers sin when they break promises. It’s important not to let these opportunities for repentance pass by in silence. We need to confess to one another and ask for forgiveness. And we need to forgive.

When I first heard about these two traits, they resonated with me. They seemed to apply to pastors, teachers, missionaries, and principals. They do not describe the “servant attitude” that is the most important part of Christian leadership. But they do describe two attributes that make God our great leader.

God knows what is going on. Unbound by time, he sees all the connections of the past, present, and future. He knows the implications of what is happening in our lives and in our congregations. God knows, and he cares. He puts his knowledge into action, working out all things for the good of those who love him.

God also makes promises and keeps them. No

Christian leadership is possible without the promise of forgiveness of sins we have in Jesus Christ. No Christian leadership is worthwhile without the promise of resurrection from the dead, guaranteed by our Savior’s resurrection. No Christian leadership

is effective without the gospel.

Who’s in charge of our Church?

God is. He gives the gifts of Christian leaders, empowering them by his promises. They ought to know what’s going on. They ought to make promises and keep them. In any case, they serve with the confidence that despite their limited knowledge and limited ability to keep their own promises, God knows everything and promises to be with them.

No Christian leadership is effective without the gospel.

Contributing editor Paul Prange, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan, is a member of St. Paul, Saginaw.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Learning from life experience

Does the Bible say anything about people learning from life experience rather than solely from the Word?

Wherever Scripture gives specific direction for our lives, there we have something far better than life experience to go on.

Yet life experience can be a powerful teaching tool in our lives. In many ways, Proverbs is the inspired account of what Solomon's life experience taught him. Consider Proverbs 24:30-34: "I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man." By the Spirit's inspiration, Solomon shares a lesson he learned from observing life.

However, since God hasn't promised the Spirit's direct inspiration to help us evaluate life experiences, allow me to add a word of caution. Remember, it's not the life experience in itself that does the teaching. We draw lessons for life as we evaluate and interpret what we believe events are trying to teach us. That's why two people can be involved in the same life experience and come away with two entirely different lessons they believe they've learned.

For example, two adult siblings experience the life-threatening illness of their parent. One sibling evaluates that event and draws the lesson to treasure every moment with a loved one as God's gift. The other sibling evaluates the same event but allows that situation to sow seeds of bitterness, concluding that God is unfair to allow such an illness to threaten a loved one.

Therefore, when we are learning from life experience, it is important that we process what we are experiencing through the "filter" of God's mercy to us in Christ. We can never see more

than a small glimpse of the overall picture of what God is doing in our lives and in his world. Whenever we lose sight of his grace to us in Christ, we draw dangerously faulty conclusions from our experiences.

We see a biblical example of that in Psalm 73. In the midst of some discouraging life experiences, Asaph, the psalm writer, complains bitterly to God. He finds fault with God because he perceives that God allows unbelievers to prosper while bringing hardship into believers' lives: "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence" (v. 13).

However, later in that same psalm, Asaph filters what he is experiencing through what he knows to be true about his gracious God. He acknowledges how foolish it was to judge his merciful God by limited human vision. Asaph learns again to walk by faith—to filter his life experiences through the unfailing promises of God even when he has not yet seen how that fully explains every life experience. Filtering his life experience through the lens of God's grace, he learned to say: "Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory" (v. 23,24).

Thank God for the life experiences he brings you—both pleasurable and painful. Learn from them! But since "in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), be sure to see all those experiences in the light of Jesus' cross and empty tomb. His life and death clothe all our experiences in unfailing grace.

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

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Have you gone HOLLYWOOD?

We need to guard against being self-promoting like Hollywood when it comes to “advertising” our churches. Instead we need to focus on the message of sin and grace.

Silas R. Krueger

According to an article in one of the news magazines, in 2004 the entertainment industry held 564 different awards ceremonies. Think about that for a minute: 564 ceremonies. That averages out to a ceremony and a half every day of the year or 11 ceremonies each week! The halls or theatres of these ceremonies are always filled, it seems, with tuxedos and fancy gowns.

The writer of the article also reported that Hollywood bestowed 4,065 statuettes, trophies, and plaques on itself. If you do a little math, you’ll see that this averages out to close to an Oscar, an Emmy, a Grammy, or whatever every two hours for 365 days straight.

Hollywood certainly has learned how to raise the art of self-congratulation to a new level. Just about every day of the year—and sometimes twice a day—entertainers stand in front of one another and say, “Let’s hear it for me. Tell me how wonderful I am!” And they thank their colleagues for acknowledging how great they are.

We “eat it up!”

That’s a bit self-serving, isn’t it? Suppose Toyota or General Motors handed out an award every time a car rolled off their assembly lines. Or imagine the nurses in the delivery rooms of America presenting doctors with a trophy every time they delivered a baby.

But the American public doesn’t seem to mind Hollywood being so self-centered. You wouldn’t think

people would tune in to watch people praise themselves, but they do—and in numbers that are mind-boggling. The Academy Awards, the Emmy Awards, and the Grammy Awards are traditionally some of the highest-rated programs on television.

Why is that? Is it simply a case of innocent escapism? Or are our lives so dull and unsatisfying that we have to live vicariously through those we think have much more “glamorous” lives than we do? One can question how innocent it is to watch the self-congratulation of some whose morals rival those of an alley cat. One might also wonder why we would listen to someone who only has the skills to act like a character in a movie or sing songs that proclaim violence or sex.

Are we imitating them?

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of Hollywood’s self-applause is that it permeates our thinking as well. Have you seen the trophy cases of young people who have played Little League or who went out for soccer? They’re usually filled with awards and plaques and medals, even if the youngster had trouble putting on his uniform or lacing up her cleats. We give all-star status to some whose greatest accomplishment was to show up for most of the games.

Some churches have adopted the self-applause approach to marketing. Look at some of the slick ads or brochures you get in the mail. In the name of evangelism or recruitment some churches adopt the same, shameless self-applause: "Look at us!" "We are 'the place to be!'" "Church was never meant to be boring—and ours isn't!"

Where's the gospel?

Each of those slogans came directly from one of the many church brochures we've received in the mail in the last year or so. We did modify them slightly, only to protect the identity of the churches. What is significantly lacking in each of those brochures is any reference to the name of Jesus or the message of the gospel. Forget about a clear, simple statement that Jesus offered himself in our place on Calvary to reconcile us to God. There isn't even a passing reference to Christ and his cross.

So where is the focus then? It's on you! Are you having fun yet? Apparently that's the most important thing in current thinking, including the church's thinking—that you "feel good." Churches hold out the exhilaration of everything revolving around you and what you want.

An old, old approach

Self-advertising is not new. It was devised by a clever ad person a long, long time ago. That was the approach Adam and Eve fell for in the garden. The deceiver told them, "It can be all about you and what you want," and they bought it.

Some churches have adopted the self-applause approach to marketing.

Satan has been using that approach ever since. He offered Jesus a sensational program for attracting attention to himself: Leap from tall buildings; turn stones into steak sandwiches; get your name up in lights for everyone to see.

Jesus declined the tempter's offer. Our Lord made it clear that he did not come to exalt himself but to glorify his Father who is in heaven and to carry out his will. Jesus also said that the only way he could complete his work was not by seeking public applause, but by humbly walking the way of the cross.

Our Lord repeatedly warns us against putting our lives with God in the display window "to be seen of men" and to receive their acclaim. If that's the "reward" we want out of our religion, we'll get it. But that's all we'll get.

"The foolishness of . . ."


You can attract people by appealing to their instincts for entertainment and self-gratification. That will often "bring them in." On the other hand, the people of the New Testament never found the cross of Christ to be much of a drawing card. It was repugnant to the masses: foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:23).

But our Lord's first messengers didn't play down the cross in order to play up to the wishes of the masses. They knew that "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21)—and only through that message of sin and grace.

The cross of Christ is still our central message, because although it may not win everyone, those it does win will be won for all eternity.

So perhaps we need to listen to the lady who once told me: "It's high time the church got back to feeding the sheep instead of entertaining the goats."

Silas Krueger is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Carlsbad, California.



Footsteps. I still remember hearing the footsteps of the dean of students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary entering our classroom when I found out that I had been called to serve in Brazil. A few years have passed, but I remember the day well. There was a rush of emotions. The fear, the excitement, the gratitude for an opportunity to serve. And of course there were the doubts. What do I know about Brazil? What do I know about being a missionary? Have I been trained for this? What do I do now?

And now these questions come back to me as I have been asked to consider the importance of ministerial education in preparing me for my current work. A quick, uncalculated response to the question, "What training do I have for this?" could be, "None at all!" Faced with the task of leaving my homeland, moving to a different culture and learning a new language, what preparation and training had I really had? There were no Portuguese, the spoken language of Brazil, classes offered. There were no Latin American or Brazilian culture classes.

In reality, however, I am grateful for my ministerial education and the blessings and preparations that I have received from it. While the list could be more comprehensive, what follows are some ways that ministerial education has impacted my life and prepared me for my work.

"Preach the good news" (Mark 16:15).

I can't remember the first time that I was taught the importance of these words. Neither can I remember how many times I was dutifully reminded of these precious words throughout my schooling. What I do remember is the constant attention that these words received throughout my education. From a high school religion class at Michigan Lutheran Seminary that included door-to-door canvassing to the "Preach the Gospel" motto above the altar in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chapel, the message was clear. Regardless of your career decision, there is nothing more important than carrying out our Christian vocation as messengers of the good news.

I vividly recall a conversation that I had shortly after arriving in Brazil. As my wife and I were shopping to furnish our apartment, a clerk noticed our poor Portuguese and asked where we were from. After discovering we were from the United States, she couldn't help but exclaim: "Why would you *willingly* come down here?" To her it was crazy to trade in the United States way of life. Yet the words that hung in the chapel proclaim the answer to her question: Preach the gospel. I thank our ministerial education system for the constant reminder to preach the gospel.

"Stand firm. Let nothing move you" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The words of the apostle Paul to the congregation at Corinth offer encouragement to all of

STRETCHING ACROSS CULTURES

A missionary shares how his education prepared him to spread God's Word even when his path led him away from his homeland to Brazil.

David F. Bivens

God's people. May we all stand firm and unshaken in our Christian faith! But how? By our own efforts, our hopes to stand and remain firm are only vain wishes. But by the fortifying power of law and gospel, we have the resources necessary. This is one of the many strengths of our ministerial education system: the regular use of these resources in daily chapel services for the entire student body.

Imagine hearing the Word of God daily applied to your life, singing hymns and praying with hundreds of other Christians in the same place. What else can better prepare you for the daily attacks of a sinful world? What a blessing! Since I currently serve in a mission setting where the nearest congregation is a 20-hour bus ride away, I miss the treasure of daily chapel services with many other Christians. But it also has caused me to be thankful. I thank our ministerial education system for providing the means to stand firm.

“Fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:19).

One of the impressive aspects of our ministerial education system is simply the presence of numerous confessional Christians united in one place. After spending many years in our ministerial education system, one can see the different talents and abilities of God’s people surface many times. What makes it really great, however, is the fellowship in Christ—the common bond that unites God’s people and their various gifts into a singular household.

This same recognition is part of what brings the most joy to mission work. In the world mission field, it’s all too easy to focus on that which is different. People look different. People speak differently. People have different customs. In working with my congregation, however, I can focus on what is the same—the common Savior that we have and the common family that we are—regardless of culture or any other difference. As I have the privilege to work with Brazilian brothers and sisters who have many different strengths, talents, and abilities, I thank our ministerial education system for the opportunity to see the unity of God’s richly and diversely blessed household.

David Bivens is a missionary in Gravatai, Brazil.

Serving a mission setting doesn’t always mean moving to a different country. Steven Gabb, pastor at Sure Foundation in Queens, New York, shares insights on doing cross-cultural mission work within the United States.

Who are you trying to reach and how do you reach them? There are two groups we try to reach.

The first is the Spanish-speaking immigrants who live around the church. We use a variety of methods to build bridges to the Latino community, including ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. We also like to get out into the streets. In New York, there are lots of pedestrians, especially around our church where day-laborers are looking for work. It’s a great opportunity to talk to the guys on the corner while they wait for work.

The second group is WELS transplants to New York. When I learn that a WELS member has moved to New York, I invite them to lunch and, of course, invite them to church. WELS transplants are very involved with our fellowship events and do a lot of the work that keeps our church running.

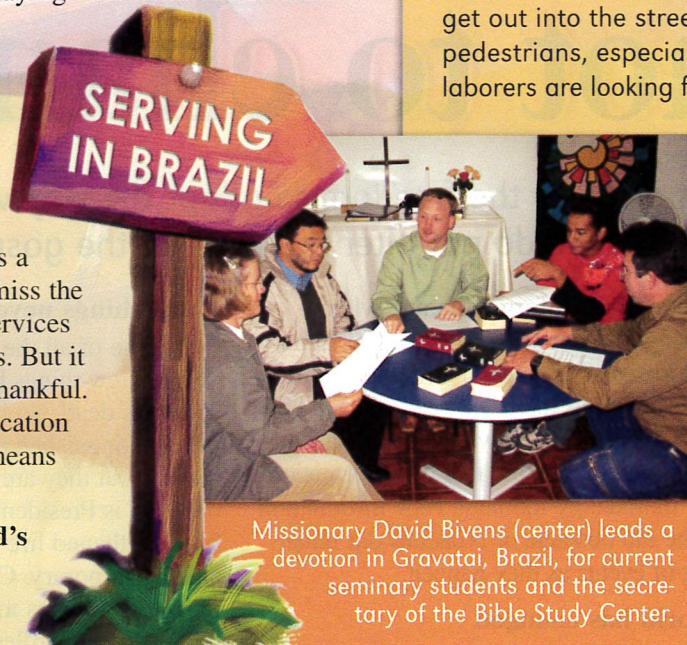
What are some of the challenges in your ministry? We have people who attend worship and Bible classes regularly, but

because they are Catholic (by culture, not by doctrine), they will never make a commitment to membership. We also have people refuse to have their children baptized at our church because we aren’t Catholic.

Other challenges include time and distance. New York is a very expensive place to live, so you have to work a lot of hours to afford the cost of living. Most don’t have enough time to “run over to church” to help out either. It takes our Brooklyn members 90 minutes by subway just to get to church. Because of these factors, it is difficult to have people come and participate.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work? The most rewarding aspect is the people.

We meet people who, when asked how long they’ve been in the country, can look at their watch and tell you in hours how long they’ve been here. Teaching Bible classes is what makes working with people so rewarding. We have a number of people who never had the opportunity to ask questions or talk to a clergyman at their church. These same people tell us how much they appreciate the fact that we are approachable, easily accessible, and, most important, that we sit down to listen to their questions and open the Bible to find answers.



Missionary David Bivens (center) leads a devotion in Gravatai, Brazil, for current seminary students and the secretary of the Bible Study Center.



To CHANGE? or not to change.

Christ gives us the freedom to adapt the way we do things as long as we do not alter the truth of the gospel. John A. Braun

We live in the information age when changes occur with the speed of light. Yes. Information changes. Newspapers are slow in bringing us the latest headline. We have to go to CNN or Fox News to get the latest. When we tune in, we find that the information changes moment by moment. New information makes the old obsolete or broadens our understanding of events as they happen.

Our world has changed

Our world is certainly different from the first century world of the disciples. Days passed before events in the far provinces reached the Roman Forum. Today we can spend a few hours on a plane and stand next to the Arch of Constantine or walk through the Coliseum. We dodge Roman traffic and get the money we need at an ATM. Things have changed.

Changes in the last 2,000 years are amazing. We are conditioned by those changes and the idea of progress to think that we are marching forward to greater and better things. Researchers work to analyze the changes and what they mean and will mean for us. Any reading of their work leads us to conclude that everything must change or be thrown on the garbage heap of past history. The church too? The Christian message?

We have received a great deal of mail—translate that e-mail for some—about the tension created by the concept of change. The subject is on the mind of almost everyone and deserves some thought. Let's pause a moment before we jump on the bandwagon of change and head off to the next stop in human history.

Some things never change

In spite of all the changes in the past 2,000 years, a few things have not changed. Emperor Trajan is dead. So is Constantine. They may have distinguished themselves in the pages of history, but they are dead. President Lincoln is dead; so is President Reagan. Medical science has lengthened life—made it better—but life still is temporary. Current world leaders will make no changes to that reality. It applies to all humans regardless of social status, gender, or ethnic origin. You knew that. Of course, you knew it. It's just that sometimes we forget. Maybe we don't want to think of life's end. We'd rather think about living.

History has not changed one more part of our human experience. We are flawed creatures. We get angry, jealous, greedy, pompous, arrogant, and . . . well, you fill in the adjective. We still dodge guilt and sin, like weaving our way though the traffic to reach the safety of the sidewalk. The brutality of the Roman Coliseum shows up in the streets of cities around the world. Only bullets replace the spear and sword. No change. You can still see some ancient obscene graffiti on the walls of the Coliseum. Today it's spray-painted on our railroad cars or clogging our e-mail. Once again the reality asserts that there is no real change here.

I'm not happy about these problems, but I am thankful that one other reality has not changed. Jesus. He shed his blood to wash away sin—even if most people don't want to admit their faults and sin. He paid for my sin and the sins of the millions who have walked the path of history and will walk it after we

are gone. That reality has not changed. Thank God! The Jesus who the Romans heard of in private homes and the catacombs is the same Jesus I hear of in my church.

And Jesus has come to provide us all victory over death. That's not a change. The purpose for the Savior's coming has been to address those things that do not change about the human experience. God did not want us to make up whatever comfort we thought we might need. He simply gave the world the warmth of his changeless forgiving love and the bright hope of life. The English, Romans, Greeks, Germans, Koreans, Hispanics, and all others have the same problems that Jesus has overcome.

To change or not to change

So what's all the lightening and thunder about change? I think that's simple. The answer comes from a letter we received from a gentleman who comes to church to hear about Jesus. He was worried that his church would abandon God's truth in Jesus in all the talk of change. We all get nervous in the midst of changes because we don't want to lose what is eternally essential—God's truth in Jesus.

Maybe that is something you already knew too, but not many churches deliberately head down a path to abandon Jesus as they change.

Christian churches have always adapted and changed what was not essential. Christ gives us the freedom to adapt the way we do things as long as we do not alter the truth of the gospel. Change most often comes as adaptations and improvements. Now it's English instead of German or Norwegian. Many congregations have Web sites. Some even communicate by e-mail either instead of or in addition to regular mail. Others have placed screens in the chancel for their pastor to use with his sermons.

But we must listen to the gentleman's concern. We can't just change because we get caught up in the rhetoric of progress or worry that if we don't change we will become extinct. There are two dangers

to avoid. First we could resist change so much that we become like the Amish who do without electricity and cars to avoid change. They are sincere people dedicated to their system of beliefs but find it difficult to share their beliefs with the world outside their enclaves. Second, we can't run blindly into all kinds of change either. Some subtle changes do move us away from Jesus even if we do not intend it. Others slowly erode our confession of God's truth. It's like the frog in the kettle. We get used to the heat and grow comfortable with it, until it becomes too hot for us to jump out to safety.

Love is the key

In the midst of all the discussion we also must love. Yes, love. At times love for each other takes a back seat, and we don't listen to each other. We imagine a hidden "agenda." One side accuses the other and asserts that it is eager to reject what is contemporary and innovative. At the same time it considers itself the only one looking for creative and innovative approaches. On the other side, the characterizations suggest that some are unthinking and mindless adapters of the latest fad that will lead us away from the truth. Stop. Paul wrote something important for

us, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Galatians 5:15).

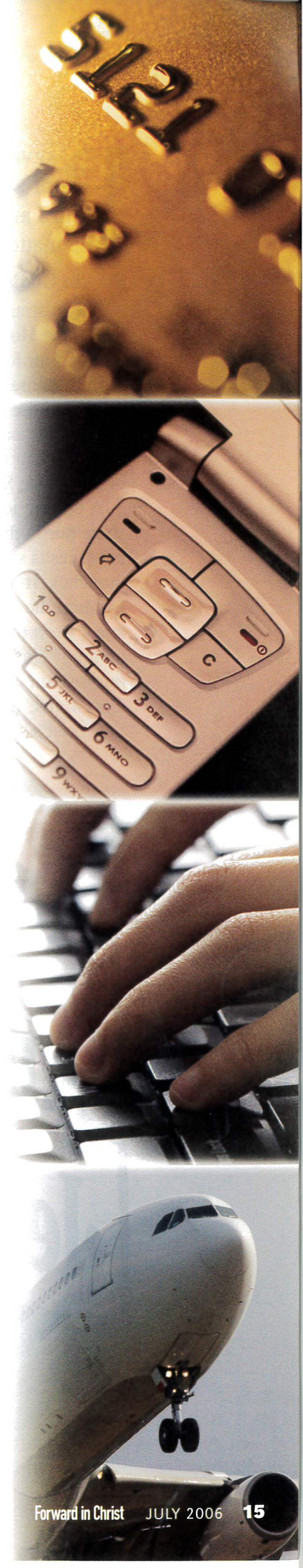
The proclamation of the ageless and changeless gospel will occur. God will see to that. He has entrusted that message to us. If we cannot proclaim it because

we are locked in conflict and disagreement over nonessentials, God will find someone else to do it. It's that simple. We will just be stuck, suspended in our struggle and unable to move either forward or backward.

What to do? Love. Listen. Love. Listen again. Run to Jesus for forgiveness and then act in love fully committed to God's truth.

John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ.

**CHANGES IN
THE LAST
2,000 YEARS
ARE AMAZING.**



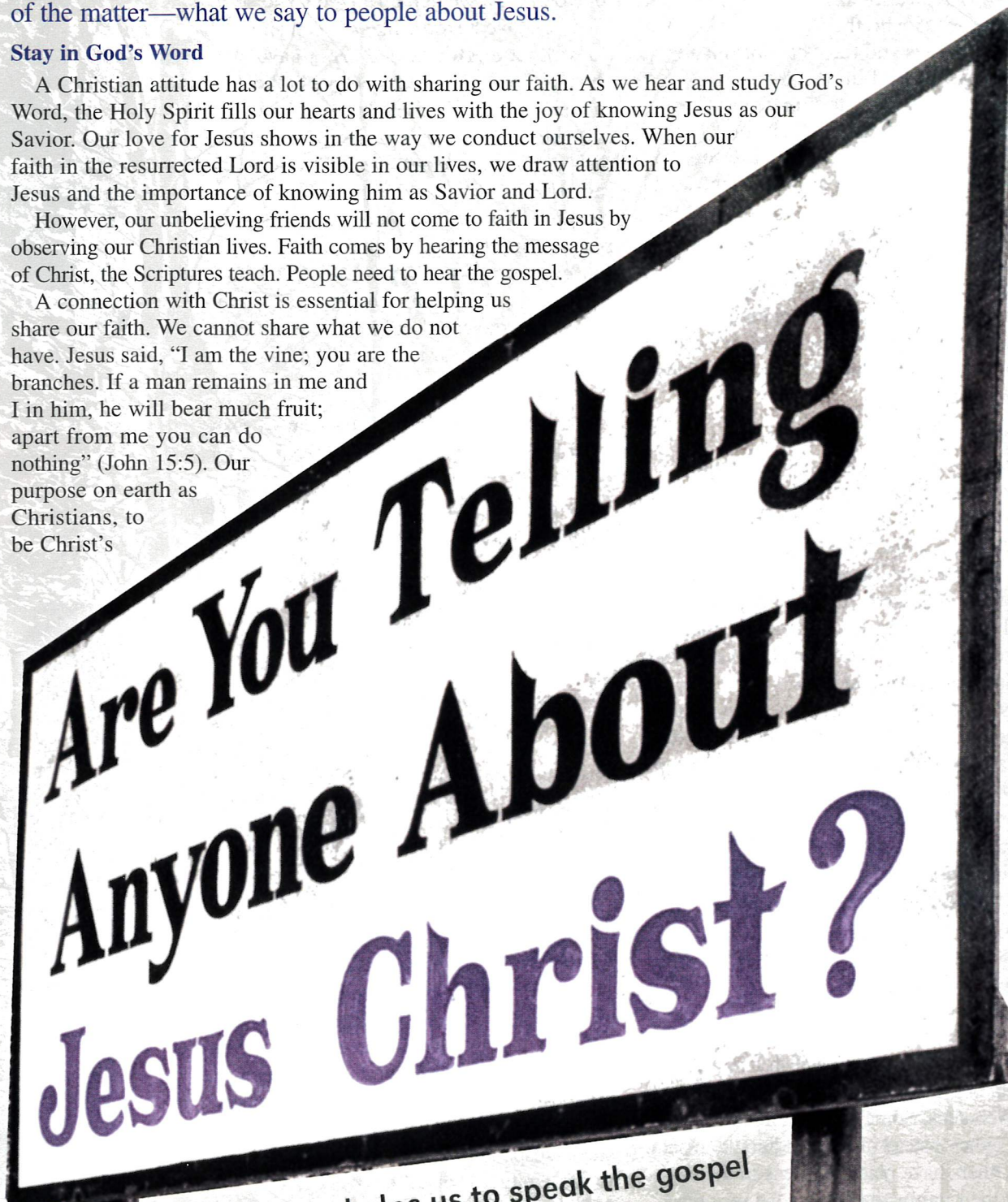
Previously in this series about sharing our faith, we considered the importance of strong relationships with people for witnessing. We took note of how to turn an everyday conversation to a spiritual discussion. Now, we get to the heart of the matter—what we say to people about Jesus.

Stay in God's Word

A Christian attitude has a lot to do with sharing our faith. As we hear and study God's Word, the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and lives with the joy of knowing Jesus as our Savior. Our love for Jesus shows in the way we conduct ourselves. When our faith in the resurrected Lord is visible in our lives, we draw attention to Jesus and the importance of knowing him as Savior and Lord.

However, our unbelieving friends will not come to faith in Jesus by observing our Christian lives. Faith comes by hearing the message of Christ, the Scriptures teach. People need to hear the gospel.

A connection with Christ is essential for helping us share our faith. We cannot share what we do not have. Jesus said, "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). Our purpose on earth as Christians, to be Christ's



**Are You Telling
Anyone About
Jesus Christ?**

Preparation helps us to speak the gospel clearly and completely so that the power of the gospel can accomplish God's saving purpose.

Michael L. Hintz

witnesses, stems from our connection with Jesus. So, in order to grow in our ability to confidently share our Savior with others, we need to remain connected to him. We do that by remaining in the Word. Ask yourself, "What will have to change in my attitude, my priorities, and my schedule to become a better student of God's Word?"

Prepare and practice your statement of faith

Growing spiritually through the power of the Word is fundamental for sharing our faith. Careful preparation is also important. The apostle Peter wrote: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). A big part of our preparation for witnessing will be to concentrate on the content of our testimony. We share a message of both law and gospel. We must speak the law because it is God's message to show that none of us can save ourselves from the punishment we deserve as sinners. The gospel is the means that God uses to work faith in the hearts of people. We gladly tell the good news of Jesus, proclaiming how he saved us from sin's punishment and that through faith in him God gives us the free gift of eternal life!

Our preparation helps us to speak the gospel clearly and completely so that the power of the gospel can accomplish God's saving purpose. Take time to think through what you want to communicate about Jesus. Write out an outline or several paragraphs that you can study and learn. Consider what Christ has done for our salvation: He *lived a perfect life* for us under God's law. He *died for us* to pay the debt of everyone's sin. He *rose from the dead* to prove and proclaim his victory for us. Let people see Jesus and the vital truth that he is the world's Savior!

If you feel that you don't know enough about the Bible to put together an adequate statement of faith, consider the familiar words of the Apostles' Creed. This confession serves well to explain the main truths of the Christian faith: God is the all-powerful Creator and Preserver of everything (First Article). God's eternal Son, Jesus Christ, in great love came to rescue us from eternal death, which we deserve as sinners (Second Article). God the Holy Spirit has given believers the sure hope of heaven and helps them through daily struggles until they get there (Third Article).

Speak from a personal point of view

Carefully thinking through the content of what we want to say and practicing it will help us overcome some of our nervousness about witnessing. It's also good to remember that sharing our Savior is more natural and less confrontational when we speak from a personal point of view. As

Christians in this world, we can tell people what wondrous things God has done for us. Through his powerful Word, he brought us to faith in Jesus and keeps us in the saving faith. We can tell about the peace that we have in God's forgiveness of sins, the assurance of his promises, and the security of his abiding presence in our lives. We can tell our friends, and everyone else too, that God's good news of salvation in Jesus is also for them!

We can explain what it means for us to trust Jesus when we hurt, face setbacks, or even experience God's blessings. It is important to remember, though, that the center of attention is not us; it is Christ. As we describe our life of faith in Jesus, we point directly to the love and power of the Lord who accomplished all for us. Our conversation focuses on Jesus and the salvation he accomplished by his life, death, and resurrection. We relate how our faith in him and our hope of eternal life because of him give us comfort and strength each day.

In whatever manner you share your faith, do it confidently by placing your trust in the Lord's promises. Jesus said, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We are not alone in the mission of sharing our faith. Jesus is with us, and he is the one to whom "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given" (Matthew 28:18). His powerful presence helps and encourages us as we

share the message of his salvation.

As you prepare to share the Savior with those people you know, remember the love that Jesus has for them, too. He loves and cares for them even more than you do. He paid the tremendous price of his blood to redeem their souls. He has a passion for them to be connected to him by faith, and, like branches joined to the vine, he wants to give them spiritual life. He desires to have them as members of his eternal kingdom and longs to have them live with him in heaven.

God promises, "My word . . . will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). He will use our witness—however simple or inadequate it may seem—and make it serve the purpose that he intends. Trusting God's promises, we know that God will bless our preparation for witnessing and help us to share the message of salvation through Jesus.

Michael Hintz, administrator of the Commission on Evangelism, is a member at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.

Next month: Following up on our spiritual conversations

This is the third of a four-part series on confidently sharing Jesus with our friends. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/ficarchive, and search by the author's first and last name.

As Christians in this world, we can tell people what wondrous things God has done for us.

WHATEVER

Forgiveness

God helped my family cope when my parents' marriage was in trouble.

Stephanie Radloff

Has someone done something bad, and you just don't know if you can forgive them? Forgiveness is a hard thing to give, but with God's help it can be done.

About four years ago, I came home from school to a house full of crying family members, some of whom I had never seen cry. I sat down to find out what was going on. To my surprise my dad had been having an affair.

I guess my parents had been having problems for years and I was just too young to know. They never fought in front of any of us kids, but now that I think back, they never really talked much either. My mom worked third shift, and my dad would stay home with us. I never noticed that he was always going out because I was in bed before he would leave.

We learned the name of the woman that my dad had been seeing. He had told her that he and my mom were going to get divorced. My dad always figured that once he told my mom what was going on she would automatically want one. He was wrong. My mom was brought up in a Christian family and was taught that marriage is forever and that you have to work out your problems. My dad never expected that.

So what do you do when you have a wife who wants to work out the problems and a girlfriend who wants you to leave your wife? My dad thought the perfect thing to do was to tell them both what they wanted to hear. My dad told my mom that the affair was over and that he wanted to be with his family. My mom believed him, but he never stopped seeing his girlfriend.

My mom finally told him that he either had to stop seeing his girlfriend or live somewhere else. He ended up moving out of our house.

I didn't like my dad's girlfriend because she was the one that "made my daddy leave us."

However, that Christmas my dad asked me to come to her house with him. I was really nervous, but when I met her she wasn't that bad. I actually kind of liked her. That scared me. I couldn't let my mom know that I liked her because that would hurt my mom's feelings, but I wanted to like her and give her a chance.

I talked with my mom about it, and she told me that it was my choice and that she wouldn't be mad at me. It made me feel a lot better.

A year after my dad moved out, my mom finally told my dad that she wanted a divorce. That was when my dad realized that if he didn't straighten up he was going to lose my mom forever. My dad ended his affair for good, and my parents are more happily married than they have ever been.

The whole point of the story is that no matter how bad your situation gets, God is always with you. He can get you through anything. My mom always tells me that if God hadn't been with her she never could have done what she did. But God was with my mom and dad while all of this was going on. God can help all people with their troubles, and we need to trust him. We need to pray to him daily to thank him for what his Son, Jesus Christ, did for us so that we too may be forgiven.

It is very hard to forgive a man that has been lying to you and cheating on you for three years. But just as God has forgiven us, we need to forgive others. Pray to God, and he will be with you through everything.

Stephanie Radloff, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at St. John, Watertown, Wisconsin.



Obituaries

Gerald P. Mallmann 1920-2006

Gerald Mallmann was born Nov. 28, 1920, in Chicago, Ill. He died March 26, 2006, in Bristol, Wis.

He served Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.; and Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Mickey; four sons; two daughters; 10 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Marilyn R. Godfrey 1938-2006

Marilyn Godfrey (nee Heier) was born Aug. 30, 1938, in Watertown, S.D. She died April 20, 2006, in Crete, Ill.

A 1959 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Bloomington, Bloomington, Minn.; Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.; First, La Crosse, Wis.; King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.;

Our Savior, Pomona, Calif.; and St. Paul, North Hollywood, Calif.

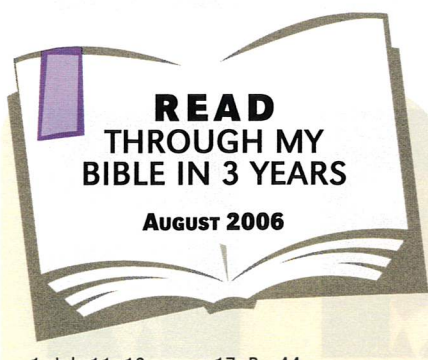
She is survived by her husband, William; three sons; one daughter; and three grandchildren.

Dale W. Arndt 1938-2006

Dale Arndt was born Nov. 10, 1938, in Echo, Minn. He died April 5, 2006, in Marshall, Wis.

A 1963 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served congregations in Richwood and Hubbleton, Wis.; St. Matthew, Flora Township, Wis.; Bethany, Emmet Township, Wis.; St. John, Newburg, Wis.; Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn.; St. Peter, Balaton, Minn.; Good Shepherd, Pipestone, Minn.; and St. John, Sheridan Township/St. Paul, Seaforth, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Gloria; two sons; one daughter; and five grandchildren.



| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Job 11, 12 | 17. Ps. 44 |
| 2. Job 13, 14 | 18. Ps. 45 |
| 3. Job 15-17 | 19. Ps. 46-48 |
| 4. Job 18, 19 | 20. Ps. 49 |
| 5. Job 20, 21 | 21. Ps. 50 |
| 6. Job 22-24 | 22. Ps. 51 |
| 7. Job 25-27 | 23. 2 Samuel 1 |
| 8. Job 28, 29 | 24. 2 Sam. 2, 3 |
| 9. Job 30, 31 | 25. 2 Sam. 4:1-5:16 |
| 10. Job 32, 33 | 26. 2 Sam. 5:17-6:23 |
| 11. Job 34, 35 | 27. 2 Sam. 7 |
| 12. Job 36, 37 | 28. 2 Sam. 8, 9 |
| 13. Job 38:1-40:5 | 29. 2 Sam. 10, 11 |
| 14. Job 40:6-42:6 | 30. 2 Sam. 12:1-13:37 |
| 15. Job 42:7-17 | 31. 2 Sam. |
| 16. Psalm 42, 43 | 13:38-14:33 |

Online quizzes offered

Forward in Christ offered online quizzes for the first time in 2006.

Jon Buchholz, pastor at Emanuel, Tempe, Ariz., developed these quizzes to go along with essays on justification that he presented at the 2005 synod convention. When he wrote a series of article for *Forward in Christ* based on those essays, putting a shortened form of these quizzes online seemed like a natural fit.

"The concept of justification by grace through faith is critical to any Christian church," says John Braun, executive editor of *Forward in Christ*. "We wanted to help people explore the idea through the online quiz and make *Forward in Christ* a little more interactive. We will look for other opportunities to involve our readers."

Sixty-three people have attempted the first quiz and 35 the second (as of early June). You can still take the quizzes at www.wels.net/jumpword/ficquizz.

Forward in Christ hopes to continue to augment its online offerings. Currently it offers a searchable archive of articles dating as far back as 1979. It also offers background on its contributing editors and general magazine information. You can access these at www.wels.net/jumpword/fic.

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WISCONSIN LUTHERAN Seminary graduates

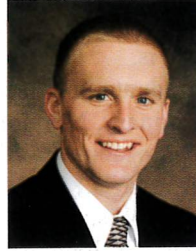
At the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation service on May 26, 43 graduates received diplomas for successfully completing their seminary studies. Look for where they were assigned on p. 22.



James D. Backus
Hemlock, Mich.



Joshua J. Becker
Milwaukee, Wis.



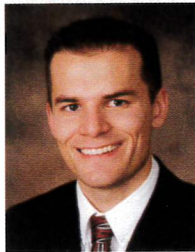
Timothy R. Berg
Oshkosh, Wis.



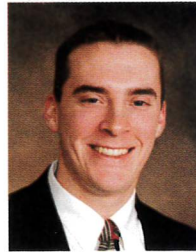
Philip J. Bigelow
Lake Villa, Ill.



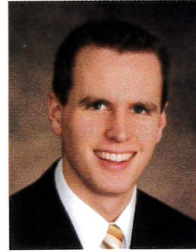
Daniel R. Burgess
Anderson, Calif.



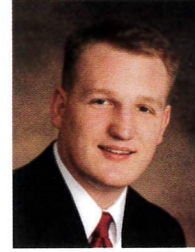
Caleb C. Davisson
Belhaven, N.C.



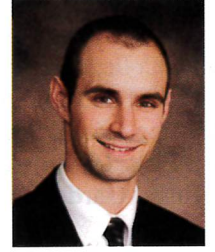
Matthew A. Ewart
Broken Arrow, Okla.



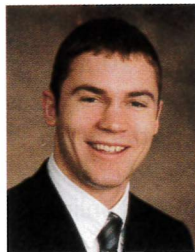
Nathan E. Fager
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



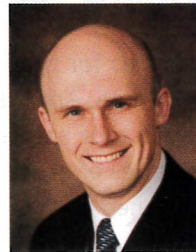
Jonathan D. Fischer
Wilmot, Wis.



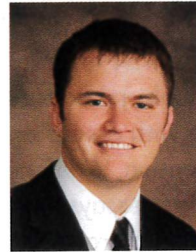
Matthew P. Frey
Seward, Neb.



Matthew S. Hennig
Campbellsport, Wis.



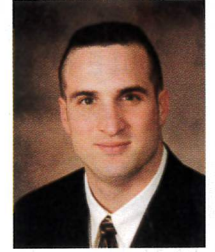
Paul D. Jansen
Onalaska, Wis.



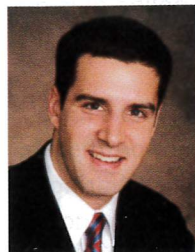
Andrew M. Johnston
Milwaukee, Wis.



Peter J. Kesting
Boltonville, Wis.



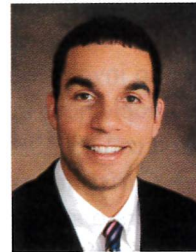
Jeremy M. Koehler
Watertown, Wis.



John R. Koester
West Allis, Wis.



Benjamin J. Kuerth
Watertown, Wis.



Carlos C. Leyrer
Wauwatosa, Wis.



Andrew T. Luehring
Appleton, Wis.



Matthew D. Luetke
Olivia, Minn.



Adam S. Manian
Germantown, Wis.



Micah A. Martin
Muskego, Wis.



Matthew C. Minzlaff
Pleasant Prairie, Wis.



Andrew W. Mueller
Oconomowoc, Wis.



David C. Naumann
Benton Harbor, Mich.



Daisuke Nakamoto*
Savage, Minn.



Aaron J. Ody
West Allis, Wis.



Steven R. Oldre
Lewiston, Minn.



Daniel S. Olson
Evans, Ga.



Dam Park
Seoul, South Korea



Bryan L. Prell
Hillsboro, Wis.



Greg E. Pufahl
Lake Mills, Wis.



Benjamin P. Schmeling
River Falls, Wis.



Daniel T. Schmidt
Kenai, Alaska



Carl J. Schroeder
Parma, Ohio



Aaron C. Schultz
Juneau, Wis.



Fred G. Schurman III
Rawlins, Wyo.



Adam J. Seelow
Port Huron, Mich.



John W. Stelljes
Round Rock, Tex.



Gregory A. Tobison
Coleman, Wis.



Benjamin J. Tomczak
Monroe, Mich.



Daniel J. Walters
Savage, Minn.



Benjamin J. Zahn
Alpharetta, Ga.

*a graduate of the Asian Ministry Training Program,
a program that works in harmony with the Pastoral
Studies Institute.

Assignments

At the call assignment service held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on May 25, 39 men received assignments. Thirty-four of these men graduated in 2006. Two were assigned from the class of 2005, two from the class of 2004, and one from the class of 2002. Five were reassigned to their present fields.

Backus, James D., to St. John, Florence, Wis.

Berg, Timothy R., to Zion, Akaska/St. Paul, Mound City, S.D.

Bigelow, Philip J., to St. Peter, Savanna/Trinity, Mt. Carroll, Ill.

Boehringer, Luke J., to Salem, Owosso, Mich.

Burgess, Daniel R., to Bethany, North Fort Myers, Fla.

Davisson, Caleb C., to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.

Ewart, Matthew A., to Brighton Mission, Brighton, Colo.

Fager, Nathan E., to Risen Savior, McFarland, Wis.

Fischer, Jonathan D., to Resurrection, Virginia Beach, Va.

Frey, Matthew P., to Living Word, Montrose, Colo.

Glende, Andrew J., to Shepherd of the Valley, Terre Haute, Ind.

Hennig, Matthew S., to Christ/Hugo Outreach, North St. Paul, Minn.

Jansen, Paul D., to Holy Scripture, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Johnston, Andrew M., to St. John's, Antigua, West Indies

Koehler, Jeremy M., deferred for one year for military service

Koester, John R., to Trinity, Temple, Tex.

Kuerth, Benjamin J., to Franklin Mission, Franklin, Wis.

Leyrer, Carlos C., to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.

Lindner, Daniel M., to St. John, Minneapolis, Minn.

Luehring, Andrew T., to Immanuel, Lakeside, Ariz.

Luetke, Matthew D., to Ascension, Rochester, Minn.

Martin, Micah A., to St. John, Appleton, Wis.

Mueller, Andrew W., to Ascension, Roseville/ Macomb County, Mich.

Naumann, David C., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Ody, Aaron J., to St. Peter, Eldorado, Wis.

Oldre, Steven R., to St. Peter, Chaseburg/St. Peter, Hamburg, Wis.

Olson, Daniel S., to Sure Foundation, New York City, N.Y.

Park, Dam (Tom), to Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D.

Pufahl, Greg E., to Star of Bethlehem, Savoy, Ill.

Schmeling, Benjamin P., to Abundant Life, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Schmidt, Daniel T., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Schroeder, Carl J., to St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

Schultz, Aaron C., to Beautiful Savior, El Paso, Tex.

Schurman, Fred G. III, to Grace, Burke, S.D.

Stelljes, John W., to King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.

Sternberg, Peter D., to St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.

Tobison, Gregory A., to Grace, Hutchinson, Minn.

Tomczak, Benjamin J., to St. Mark, Duncanville, Tex.

Vogel, Michael J., to St. Paul, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Zahn, Benjamin J., to Amazing Grace, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Open gym opens new avenues for fellowship

Staff Minister Kevin Walker says that what started out as an idea to get just one person involved in the church has turned into a blessing for many. He's referring to the open gym program that started in 2005 at Cross of Life, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

It all started simply enough. Cross of Life member, Andrea Clarke-Thompson, was looking for a way to get her son, Matthew, more involved in the church and with other kids his age. She mentioned to Pastor Joel Schulz how nice it would be to rent the gym they were worshiping in for an extra two hours after the service for basketball games. What evolved was a program of fellowship and exercise for all ages, with 40 percent of the small congregation taking part.

Walker notes, "During the winter months many people hole up for the icy-cold conditions. It's especially during this time that people are craving community and the heat. Our open gym concept offers both." The open gym concept offers a non-threatening way to get out of the house; get some exercise; and bring non-member friends along for food, fellowship, and fun. Cross of Life has seen a number of visitors take part in the open gym and sees it as an important outreach tool.

But it isn't only an outreach tool.

It's also a fellowship tool for members. Walker explains, "Not only do we get to hear the Word of God, but we also get to spend extra time with our brothers and sisters and step into a deeper relationship with them. We get to see many of our members in a new light. Young and old play together and encourage one another.

Member Ellen Keesling says, "Our open gym is a great time for Christian parents and kids to have fun together. Laughing is a big part of the day, and this emotional response is one that helps us all remember the fun time and look forward to the next one."

Walker also says that the program has helped develop leadership within the congregation with members stepping

forward to organize the open gym program. When the program looked like it might be hampered due to lack of funds, members stepped up to support the program. A gift was also given by the Women of St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario to help keep the program running through the winter of 2006-07.

The open gym concept is not a new idea, but it is one that has worked well for Cross of Life. What started out as a mom trying to get her son involved in the church has turned into a blessing for everyone.



All ages enjoy a game of basketball during Cross of Life's open gym.

Where are they now?

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

In the November 1976 issue of The Northwestern Lutheran, we told you about the reopening of Christ Lutheran School, N. St. Paul, Minn.

Here's a recap

On a swelteringly hot day in September, Christ Lutheran Church reopened the doors of its Lutheran elementary school after almost 50 years without a school. Almost as exciting—the first 24 students with their two new teachers and their pastor were featured on the cover!

So what is happening now?

The school has seen blessing after blessing in its 30 years of existence. With a kindergarten to grade eight enrollment of 196 students, Christ Lutheran School is the 15th largest school in WELS. An additional 30 preschoolers also meet. The faculty now stands at nine full-time and two part-time teachers. Cynthia Kemnitz Christianson, the first teacher of

Principal Mark Dobberstein, "Having Cindy here for 30 years provides a common thread, creating a consistent Christian atmosphere, emulating our Savior through true servitude."

A unique aspect of Christianson's ministry is "grand-students"—students who are children of former students. She states, "Being able to see not only hundreds of students being blessed daily by his Word but also seeing his promises repeated through generations has been one of my most precious experiences."

Christianson says teaching has changed in the last 30 years: "I have to move around a lot more. Information is given in short bits (like TV commercials). I try to incorporate a lot more music and art and technology to a greater degree, and there is much more training available in recognizing and assisting students with learning disabilities."

The congregation has also begun a second worship site in Hugo, Minn. The seeds of Christian education have already been planted there with the birth of a Sunday school. And you've probably guessed that Sundays now find Christianson heading

up the first group of Sunday school teachers at the Hugo site. The blessing of hundreds of children trained in the Word of God clearly stands out as the greatest blessing.

Ann Ponath



Christ Lutheran School—then and now.

grades one to three, continues to teach first-graders. ("I kept my favorite grade," she says.) The other teacher, Dianne Gernes Nehring, retired last year, after 29 years of teaching kindergarten. Two building additions, but no debt, rank high on everyone's list of special blessings.

Although Christianson would not admit it, another wonderful blessing is the fact that she has been with the school for its entire history. Says



New name unites ministry

Cristo Palabra de Vida (Christ Word of Life) is the new name of WELS' outreach ministry to Hispanics and Latinos. The name, which takes the place of the former Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training (HLOT) moniker used by the Board for Home Missions, will help to unify Hispanic ministry nationwide.

"Cristo Palabra de Vida is a name that all congregations can adopt so that our Spanish-speaking members can go from one place to another and instantly know it is part of the same ministry," says Mel Schuler, associate administrator for the Board for Home Missions. Pastor Michael Roth, mission development coordinator, adds, "By congregations adopting the name Cristo Palabra de Vida and adding that it is a ministry of their church, congregations can make use of their good reputations within the community and not worry about communicating incorrectly."



Communicating and reaching out to the Hispanic/Latino community was the goal of HLOT when it started as a task force in 2003. It has since grown to more than 40 congregations conducting outreach and ministry programs.

Roth notes, "HLOT is a very institutional title, and it served our purposes in the beginning because that was who we were. However, it doesn't translate into Spanish well and doesn't communicate to the people we are trying to reach out to."

Pastor Mark Goeglein, theological educator, adds, "In choosing the name, the Hispanic leadership decided that the emphasis should be on Christ and that Christ is the Word of life. With this name, we can easily explain to Spanish-speaking people that our ministry is about Christ and the Scriptures."

continued on p. 24

Long distance love in the Lord

Carl Schroeder, a recent graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., shares how his life was touched by WELS congregations throughout the United States.

What do many WELS members in Ohio, Texas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Colorado, and Alaska have in common? Out of love for our Savior, these caring people, most of whom I

HOW CAN I HELP?

Carl Schroeder's story is not unusual. The vast majority of students studying to be a pastor, teacher, or staff minister in our synod receive student assistance.

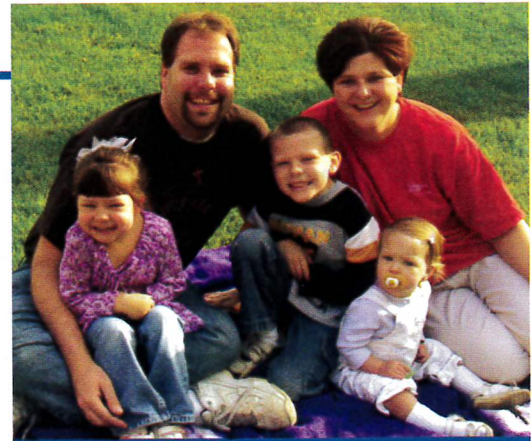
Have you considered how you can assist students studying for the ministry? You could

- send financial gifts to the WELS Student Assistance Fund, which is distributed completely to support students at our four ministerial education schools;
- start a ministry training fund for students from your own congregation;
- adopt a student through the Mission Partners program;
- leave a portion of your estate to the new Ministerial Education Endowment Fund; and
- pray that God will bless these students and their future work.

have never met, have been praying for me and my family and supporting us spiritually and physically for the last six years of my pastoral training. WELS members have carried us along with food items, clothing, calling cards, Christmas presents, study supplies, children's toys, financial support for school, moving help, and other gifts of selfless love. We have been overwhelmed by grace.

Most recently, I received a phone call from Christ, Juneau, Alaska. I was not sure what was going on but was informed that our family was about to receive a gift of Christian love. On speaker phone, members of this WELS congregation that I had never heard of, and in a geographical location thousands of miles away, bestowed grace. Out of love for the Savior, they announced their plan to pay for my entire final semester school expenses, no strings attached. The positive effects on my study time, family time, financial stress level, and faith life were instant and overwhelming.

Have you ever been hit by such a truckload of grace? That is in fact what makes our Christian faith distinct from everything else in the world. Through-



Carl Schroeder and his wife, Stacey, with their children (left to right) Hannah, Noah, and Rebekah. Schroeder graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May and will be serving St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

out my schooling, I have been thankful to benefactors I may never meet face to face until paradise. I can think of no other act of love that parallels Jesus' mercy like this. Undeserved, unasked, and unconditional! The givers carry all the cost, and the receiver is struck dumb with amazement.

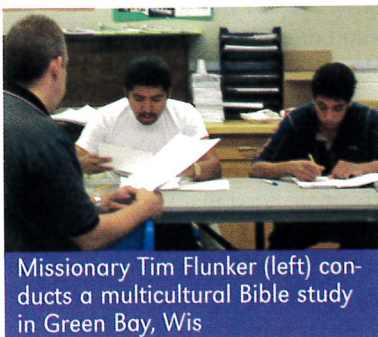
Sometimes God pulls back the curtain and shows you a glimpse of his own heart in the care he provides for you through his own people. Sometimes he lets you be the one to use your gifts to serve and support others. Either way, glorify him in your prayers. Trust him with all of your cares. And be thankful for the kindness he shares.

New name . . . continued from p. 23

The name change, however, will not change the many resources available to congregations, including Spanish and simplified English publications

through Multi-Language Publications, leadership training opportunities for Spanish-speaking members, outreach materials for congregations, and assistance

with starting a Cristo Palabra de Vida ministry. Spanish resources to strengthen faith are also available at www.cristopalabra.com. Goeglein



Missionary Tim Flunker (left) conducts a multicultural Bible study in Green Bay, Wis

notes, "I think an important thing to remember is that you can make Spanish-speaking people feel welcome even if you don't speak Spanish yourself."

Those involved with the original HLOT program point out that in less than three years, the ministry has been met with great success. Not only is there a great response within the United States but it has also allowed there to be a reciprocal relationship with WELS World Missions in Latin America. Members of Cristo Palabra de Vida ministries in the United States are telling family members in Latin America about WELS or seeking out Cristo Palabra de Vida ministries in the United States because of contact they've had with WELS world missions in Latin America.

Leadership among Spanish-speaking people is also strong, as evidenced by the nine Hispanic students attending the summer session at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to further their pastoral training.

Roth adds, "Cristo Palabra de Vida isn't something for five years from now. It's already happening. There is reason to rejoice and give thanks to God because good things are happening."

To learn more about Cristo Palabra de Vida or to begin an outreach program to Spanish-speaking members in your community, contact Mel Schuler, associate administrator for Home Missions, at 414-256-3283; cristopalabradevida@sab.wels.net. To learn more about the men who are helping lead Cristo Palabra de Vida, turn to p. 28.

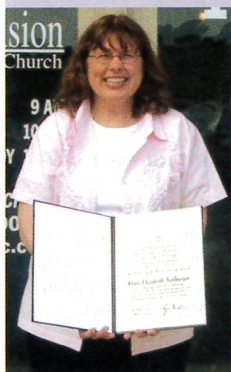
District news

Arizona-California

Five students from **East Fork Lutheran High School (EFLHS), Whiteriver, Ariz.**, attended the Native American Scholars Banquet in Hon Dah, Ariz., on May 16. The banquet honored students who have excelled academically during this school year and included EFLHS students Christopher Chatlin, KJ Hill, Tashina Smith, Shelby Burnette, and Michael Dazen.

Rachel Sebald, a second-grader at Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz., was recently recognized as a state winner for the Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest at the second grade level. Sebald was one of 144,000 entrants nationwide for the 15th annual contest.

North Atlantic



Mary Kollmeyer, a member of Ascension, Jacksonville, N.C., and a teacher at Lejeune High School on Camp Lejeune, N.C., was honored May 11, with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science

Teaching, the nation's highest honor for teaching in these fields. Kollmeyer received a \$10,000 grant from the National Science Foundation and a VIP trip to Washington D.C. Kollmeyer is a 1979 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Cox Communications and the Arizona Interscholastic Association recently named **Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA), Phoenix, Ariz.**, as a finalist for the Blue Cup Award. The award, presented at the Everyday Heroes gala event, recognizes Arizona high schools and their people for outstanding achievements on and off the field. Also recognized were ALA coach, **Doug Meyer**, a finalist for Coach of the Year, and **Drew Schroeder**, who was named as the AIA Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

The girls' volleyball team of California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif., was rated first for highest team grade point average among small schools in Southern California by the California Interscholastic Federation. The team was honored at a Los Angeles Angels' game in April.

Minnesota

In April, Congressman Gil Gutknecht (R-MN) honored the more than 70 members of **SOAR (Standing on a Rock) at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.** SOAR members worked in teams of 10 for a week at a time gutting homes in Louisiana during the 2005-06 school year.

Michael Klatt, president and chief executive officer of The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn., has been

Northern Wisconsin



Maniwoc Lutheran High School, Maniwoc, Wis., celebrated its 50th anniversary with a number of events during the weekend of April 29-30. More than 150 alumni participated in the Alumni Reunion Choir and Band Concert on April 29. On April 30, more than 160 fifth- through eighth-graders from federated congregations (shown practicing) joined in praise during the contemporary "Growing" concert.

appointed to serve on the Minnesota Board of Aging by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Nebraska

The **Eagle Choir** from **Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School, Northglenn, Colo.**, performed the national anthem for the opening of the Colorado Rapids (Colorado's professional soccer team) game against D.C. United on May 6. Seventeen thousand people were in attendance.

Happy Anniversary!

MN—Christ Lutheran School, North St. Paul, Minn., celebrated its 30th anniversary on May 7.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Frederick Casmer; CA—Hermann John; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Harland Goetzinger; NE—Donald Wichmann; NW—Joel Lillo.

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

- Want to keep up-to-date on what's going on in WELS? Sign up to receive timely news announcements from WELS Communication Services. These news releases will be delivered right to your e-mail. To sign up, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/welsnews, and enter your e-mail address in the "Subscribe" box in the upper righthand corner. You'll find previous news releases there as well.

- For years, *Forward in Christ* has been printing "Defining Religion," simple, accurate definitions for religious words that are written by John Brenner, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Now you can find these definitions online, complete with a searchable index and cross-referencing. The online "Defining Religion" will make it even easier for you to access religious terms and their definitions for yourself or to share with a friend. You can find the glossary at www.wels.net/jumpword/definingreligion.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Flunker, Charles H., to retirement
Glende, Timothy P., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
Kuckhahn, Richard J., to retirement
Moll, Walter H., to retirement
Prange, Joel W., to retirement
Schmidt, David W., to Our Redeemer/
 St. Paul, Grant Park, Ill.
Stuebs, Joel P., to Christ, West Salem, Wis.
Zuberbier, Michael J., to St. Peter, Fond du Lac,
 Wis.

Teachers

Anderson, Jennifer L., to St. John, Neillsville,
 Wis.
Averbeck, Robert L., to retirement
Benz, Marilyn D., to retirement
Berg, Theodore F., to retirement
Biebert, Cara A., to St. John, Newburg, Wis.
Bintz, Kathryn D., to David's Star, Jackson,
 Wis.
Blauert, Joan L., to retirement
Brandel, Jodi L., to Ascension, Plymouth,
 Minn.
Bryson, Carolyn A., to Zion, Torrance, Calif.
Cortright, Patrick C., to St. Matthew,
 Spokane, Wash.
Eggert, Julie A., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Eisenmann, Lori K., to St. Peter, Appleton,
 Wis.
Eisenmann, Mark R., to Fox Valley LHS,
 Appleton, Wis.
Farstad, David R., to retirement
Fein, Carolyn D., to retirement
Fliester, Abigail M., to Divine Peace, Largo,
 Md.
Fredrich, Edwin J., to St. John, St. John's,
 Antigua
Gawrisch, Susan C., to retirement
Glodowski, Janelle A., to Mt. Olive, Las Vegas,
 Nev.
Goede, Deborah L., to retirement
Groth, Arleen R., to Eternal Love, Appleton,
 Wis.
Hanneman, Barbara J., to Trinity, Belle
 Plaine, Minn.
Helwig, Donald W., to retirement
Holman, James R., to Wisconsin
 Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Izzat, Ruth Ann, to retirement
Jahns, Joanne L., to retirement
Jungemann, Helen M., to retirement
Karpenko, Ann M., to retirement
Keller, Wayne H., to retirement
Kellermann, George D., to Trinity, West
 Bend, Wis.
Krohn, Leah J., to Wisconsin School-
 Lower, Racine, Wis.
Kunz, Daniel L., to retirement
Lai, Shu-Ting M., to Holy Trinity, Okauchee,
 Wis.

Lamas, Stephanie A., to King of Kings,
 Garden Grove, Calif.
Lanphear, Joan I., to retirement
Lindke, Sarah E., to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.
Lund, Janet P., to retirement
Manthe, Karen M., to retirement
Martens, Eric, to Great Plains LHS, Water-
 town, S.D.
Moldenhauer, Patricia, to retirement
Muchka, Katie N., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
Nagel, Louise B., to retirement
Nelson, Joshua J., to Siloah, Milwaukee
Noon, Barbara J., to Beautiful Savior, Clarks-
 ville, Tenn.
Oldenburg, Margene L., to retirement
Olson, Rebecca L., to King of Kings,
 Garden Grove, Calif.
Paulsen, John W., to retirement
Philip, Linda A., to retirement
Reinke, Dorma J., to retirement
Rusch, Dorothy A., to retirement
Schuh, Cheryl A., to Lord and Savior,
 Crystal Lake, Ill.
Schuh, Timothy B., to Lord and Savior, Crystal
 Lake, Ill.
Semon, Margo E., to retirement
Sickinger, Earline J., to retirement
Stindt, Kathleen L., to retirement
Sydow, Gloria M., to retirement
Thiesfeldt, Jennifer, to Reformation, San
 Diego, Calif.
Underwood, Sarah M., to Bay Pines, Seminole,
 Fla.
Zahn, Ronald P., to retirement

ANNIVERSARIES

Watertown (Richwood), Wis.—St. Mark
 (100). July 16. Service, 10:15 A.M. Clint
 Burow, 920-262-0327.
Sodus, Mich.—St. Paul (90). Aug. 6. Services,
 9 A.M. & 3 P.M. Dinner, 4:15 P.M. RSVP, 269-
 925-5940 or rduehlme@comcast.net.
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.—Salem (125). Aug.
 20. Service, 10:15 A.M. Dinner, 11:30 A.M.-
 1 P.M. RSVP, John Seelman, 920-743-6683
 or seelmanj@doorpi.net.
Lime Ridge, Wis.—Trinity (100). Aug. 27.
 Services, 10:30 A.M. & 2 P.M. Dinner,
 11:30 A.M. 608-727-4271.
Merrill, Wis.—Christ (25). Aug. 27. Com-
 mission of bell, 9:30 A.M. Service, 10 A.M.
 Program and catered dinner to follow.
 RSVP, Roger Schmoldt, 715-722-5050.

COMING EVENTS

**Northwestern Publishing House new music
 reading workshops**

- July 8—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
- July 9—St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
- July 15—Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
- Aug. 26—Northdale, Tampa, Fla.

Workshop information, including online
 registration, is at www.nph.net. Cheryl

Nolte, 800-662-6022, 414-615-5763, or
noltecl@nph.wels.net.

OWLS Convention—July 11-13. Holiday
 Inn and Austin Conference Center, Austin,
 Minn.; owls@newulmtel.net.

**Training Camp—A Lutheran Camp for
 Kids**—July 30-Aug. 4. YMCA Camp Duncan,
 Ingleside, Ill. Visit www.newlife-wels.org
 for information or to register.

Tree of Life Lutheran Bible Camp—July
 30-Aug. 5. Weimar, Calif. Prospective
 campers (grades 4-12) and staff, contact
 Timothy Mann, 650-853-1304 or visit
www.treeoflifebiblecamp.org.

**WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of
 Hearing Convention**—Aug. 4-6. Mt.
 Calvary, Waukesha, Wis. Dean
 Weigand, 262-547-3096 (V/T) or
mdhhdliweigand2005@sbcglobal.net.

**WELS retired called workers get together
 including DMLC alumni**—Aug. 16. 11 A.M.
 Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis. RSVP, Betty
 Wolf, 920-756-2835 or wobt5@aol.com.

**WELS North Atlantic District Annual
 Labor Day Retreat**—Sept. 2-4. Camp
 Taconic, Hinsdale, Ma. Studies, recreation,
 and worship for all ages. Meals included.
 Lois Becker, 603-472-5551.

**WELS/ELS Women's Conference on
 Mormonism**—Sept. 22-24. University of
 Utah. Hosted by Light of the Valley, Layton,
 801-444-1591; Prince of Peace, Taylorsville,
 801-261-3808; and Hope (ELS), West
 Jordan, Utah, 801-963-4151.

Christian Singles Fall Retreat—Sept. 29-
 Oct. 1. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.
 262-534-7852 or share@wels.net.

A day at the Seminary—sponsored by Wiscon-
 sin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Oct. 1, 8 A.M.
 to 1 P.M. Worship, 9 A.M. Barb Bergquist,
 414-476-2384 or barbie33@netzero.net.

NAMES WANTED

**Soldiers and families at Fort Drum,
 N.Y.**—Jeremiah Gumm, 315-622-2843 or
pastorgumm@yahoo.com.

Binghamton, N.Y. region—Jeremiah Gumm,
 315-622-2843 or pastorgumm@yahoo.com.

Land O' Lakes/Connertown, Fla.—Michael
 Weigand, 727-967-4649 or pmweig@ij.net.

Portage, Ind.—Hope (ELS), 6322 Portage Ave.,
 Portage IN 46368 or pastor@hopeportage.org.

**Soldiers and families at Fort Bragg,
 N.C.**—Jason and Karla Wideman, 910-
 717-4864.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Preschool teacher—Christ the King,
 Palatine, Ill. 25 hours per week. 847-358-
 0230 or pastor@byfaithalone.org.

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](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/bulletinboard).

Salvation's story in song

We not only hear God's Word through the Bible readings and sermons on Sunday mornings, but we also sing of the salvation story in the many beautiful hymns of Christian Worship. Here are some lines that continually touch my heart as I sing them in church and hum them to myself from time to time.

On Christmas day, the babe, the world's redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face. Away in a manger, the little Lord
Jesus laid his glory by. He was born that I no more may die.

My adoration leaves no room for pride, for his still,
small voice would cry one day for me—chief of sinners, though I be.

His perfect life of love ended there on Calvary. Nails and spear
pierced him through. Oh, who am I that for my sake Jesus poured
the life-blood from his sacred veins? I dare not think of sin but
lightly for my doom should here be written. But instead, through
Jesus' sufferings, death, and merit, I eternal life inherit. Beautiful
Savior, though despised and gory, I joy to call you mine.

Had Christ who once was slain not burst his three-day prison,
my faith would be in vain. But I know that my Redeemer lives!

Ever glad at heart I am. I am content. Love's redeeming
work is done. Crown him the Lord of love—
behold his hands and side. My Jesus lives again!

Jesus, lover of my soul, take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of your love. Take the world—all the vain
things that charm me most—but give me Jesus! My hope
is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
And should my heart for sorrow break, my trust in him no one
could shake. One word of his supporting breath drives
all my fears away. In every change he faithful will remain.

I'm but a stranger here. Heaven is my home. Jesus lives
my mansion to prepare where I'll be no more a stranger
or a guest, but like a child at home. Lord, let me never,
never outlive my love for you. When my time comes,
hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes. And may my
faith cry, as fails each sense, "Jesus is my confidence!"

Laura Warmuth

The above lines are from the following hymns from *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*: Of the Father's Love Begotten, 35; Where Shepherds Lately Knelt, 54, ©1987 Jaroslav J. Vajda; Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, 61; What Child Is This, 67; Away in a Manger, 68; Glory Be To Jesus, 103; O Sacred Head, Now Wounded, 105; My Song Is Love Unknown, 110; Upon the Cross Extended, 113; Christ, the Life of All the Living, 114; When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, 125; Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted, 127; Oh, Perfect Life of Love, 138; Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won, 145; Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, 149; I Know that My Redeemer Lives, 152; I Am Content! My Jesus Lives Again, 158; This Joyful Eastertide, 160, From *Cowley Carol Book*; When in Our Music God Is Glorified, 248, ©1972 Hope Publishing Co.; Crown Him with Many Crowns, 341; Take the World, but Give Me Jesus, 355; Jesus, Lover of My Soul, 357; Beautiful Savior, 369; My Shepherd Will Supply My Need, 374; My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less, 382; Chief of Sinners Though I Be, 385; Be Still, My Soul, 415; I'm But a Stranger Here, 417; I Am Jesus' Little Lamb, 432; Lord, You I Love with All My Heart, 434; Take My Life and Let It Be, 469; Abide with Me, 588

Picture this




Kati Lin, daughter of James and Katrina Brohn, heard President Gurgel talking about leftovers in his message about the blessings of Easter leftovers in the April edition of *WELS Connection*. She decided to share some of the imaginary food that she was eating with President Gurgel, thinking that he would appreciate her food since he may have been tired of leftovers. The Brohns are members of St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

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.

“Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.”

—Martin Luther



Different backgrounds, SAME PASSION

Meet three Hispanic men involved in sharing Christ, the Word of life.

Julie K. Wietzke

With more than 40 million Spanish-speaking people in the United States, chances are that your neighborhood or a neighborhood close to you is the home to a Hispanic community. This opens up an incredible mission field, right in your backyard.

What is WELS doing to take advantage of this mission opportunity? Cristo Palabra de Vida (Christ Word of Life), WELS' ministry to Hispanics and Latinos, is helping congregations reach out to Spanish-speaking individuals, training Hispanics for leadership positions in WELS, and developing Spanish materials (see p. 23). To further expand this outreach ministry, three Hispanic

men—Reinaldo Rivera, Juan Garcia, and Gonzalo Delgado—have joined the leaders of this ministry.

“The object in the end is that this is their ministry. It’s ministry in their communities,” says Mel Schuler, associate administrator of the Board for Home Missions. “Why should we, as Caucasians who don’t walk in their shoes, impose on them a specific worship style? How can we, without their input, tell them how to reach their community?”

He continues, “If we’re going to have a ministry that deals with their society and the world that they live in, should it not be them that direct it?”

These three men come from different Spanish-speaking countries, have experienced unique journeys to WELS, and bring diverse backgrounds and ideas to the team. Yet they share the same passion—they want to tell the good news of Jesus to their fellow Hispanics. And they’re not afraid to do it. Whether it’s in their native lands or in the United States, whether it’s playing soccer or distributing Hispanic materials, whether it’s to their family or to those they’ve never met, these men make the most of every opportunity to share Christ, the Word of life.

REINALDO RIVERA

Reinaldo Rivera was born in New York City, where his parents, originally from Puerto Rico, had settled. When he was six, his family returned to Puerto Rico, where he went to school and became a mechanical engineer.

Rivera first heard the gospel from Missionary Ron Baerbock, who was teaching Rivera’s mother-in-law at Rivera’s home. His wife and, eventually, he and his three sons took classes and joined the Lutheran Church in Puerto Rico.

Rivera was very involved with the church in Puerto Rico. Besides serving as treasurer, he participated in a program in which Puerto Rican church members traveled to Antigua twice a month to teach God’s Word to the Spanish-speaking people there.



Reinaldo Rivera and his wife, Lourdes Ochoa.

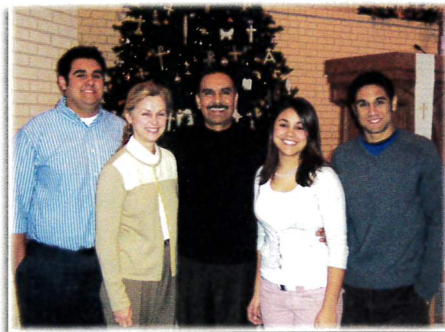
GONZALO DELGADILLO

When he retired in 2003, he moved to Orlando, Fla. Before buying his house, he told his wife, “We’re only gonna buy a house there if there is a church near the house.” They settled down near Risen Savior, which at that time only had English services. With his help and that of Gonzalo Delgadillo, the church now has Spanish-speaking services as well and is working to reach out to the Hispanic population in the area.

“This is an important committee because we’re working for the Latin residents in the States,” says Rivera about his work with Cristo Palabra de Vida. “It is interesting and challenging work that has to be done.”

JUAN GARCIA

Juan Garcia was born in 1956 in Mexico City, Mexico. “I was one of those water, rice, and earth Catholics,” he says. “You



Juan Garcia and his family (left to right): Alex, Susan, Juan, Sara, and Victor.

go to church when you are baptized, you go to church when you are married, and you go to church when you are buried.” Although his parents encouraged him and his six brothers to attend church, services were in Latin and had no meaning for him.

After he finished his schooling, he moved to Cancun for two years before settling in Houston, Texas, in 1978. It was there that he met his future wife, Susan Mueller. “My wife was the instrument the Lord used for me to get closer to him,” says Garcia. Through Mueller, Garcia met Pastor Stephen Valleskey at Abiding Word, Houston. Eventually he began attending services and joined the church. He currently is president of the congregation.

Abiding Word just offered its first Spanish service this past Easter. Garcia preached the sermon. The congregation also has been offering English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for the past 10 months.

Garcia, marketing director for AeroMexico Airlines, uses his hobby as a way to reach out to fellow Hispanics. Every Saturday morning he plays soccer at a park about a block from the church. “I blend in and make friends with them,” says Garcia. “Then I invite them to church and witness to them. I haven’t seen them in church yet, but it’s not my time. It’s the Lord’s time. He will decide when he will move people’s hearts.”

Gonzalo Delgadillo, from Bogotá, Colombia, came into contact with the Lutheran church when he was just nine years old. He attended a Christian day school that was part of an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America mission. He was deeply involved in church work, including assisting with worship, teaching Sunday school, and even serving as secretary of the Colombian Synod.

In the 1980s he met WELS missionaries Carl Leyrer and Geoff Kieta, who helped him see the doctrinal errors in his beliefs. “Thanks to God for WELS World Missions,” says Delgadillo. “They taught me what I need to learn.”

Delgadillo became a member of the WELS mission in Colombia and helped with translating work and teaching Sunday school. When our missionaries left Colombia, Delgadillo and three others took responsibility for preaching and teaching in our churches in Bogotá.

Delgadillo and his family moved to Orlando, Fla., in 2003 and joined Risen Savior (the same church as Rivera). He began studying to be a pastor in 2005 and helped conduct Spanish services at Risen Savior.

Late last year, Delgadillo became the Director of Spanish Publications for Multi-Language Publications, El Paso, Texas, a division of the WELS Board for World Missions. There he helps coordinate, edit, and distribute Spanish publications. He is also continuing to study to become a pastor.

Says Delgadillo: “I often ask myself, ‘If I could have all the money in this world, what would I do?’ My answer: ‘I’d like to read the Bible all day.’ And now I’m doing that.”

The leadership of these men in Cristo Palabra de Vida will help enhance outreach to the Hispanic community. But these men are just some of the dedicated Hispanics who are serving in WELS churches worldwide. Nine are studying for the pastoral ministry. Dozens more are involved in their home congregations. Their backgrounds are different—from each other and from the majority of WELS members. Yet together we can work to fulfill Christ’s command to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.

Watch for future articles concerning WELS’ outreach to Hispanics. Next month we will take on the hot topic of immigration and learn how this provides opportunities for outreach. In September, you’ll hear more from Rivera, Garcia, and Delgadillo, as they discuss the Hispanic culture and the challenges and opportunities they see as we reach out with the gospel.



Gonzalo Delgadillo (left) and his family, Ines and Juan. The Delgadillo’s other son, Gonzalo, lives in Colombia.

A fictional account shows how a man uses a pepper-shaker and a coffee mug to share the good news of God's salvation with Mormon missionaries.

Reynold Heuer

There was a knock at the door. Jim didn't need to look outside to see who was there; instinctively he knew. With some effort Jim managed to push himself up from the rocker where he had been reading. He made his way to the door and, with his aged and crooked fingers, firmly gripped the doorknob and swung the door open.

There they were, just as Jim had envisioned. Bike helmets tucked under one arm, knapsacks dangling behind their shoulders, white shirts, black slacks, and ties. Young, so very young.

"Good morning, sir. I'm Elder Johnson, and this is Elder McKenzie, and we'd like just a few minutes of your time to speak to you about Heavenly Father."

"Heavenly Father. Yes, of course," said Jim. "I know him very well. He's my constant companion, you know. We talk often."

"You talk with Heavenly Father?" said Johnson.

"Yes, talk," he replied. "He's the only one who listens to an old man like me anymore. But you didn't come here to listen to me go on about my

problems! Come in. Have a seat at the table. Can I get you boys something to drink?"

"Just water," they answered, almost in unison.

"Sir," said McKenzie, "you said you talked with Heavenly Father. Does that mean he speaks to you as well?"

"Yes. I mean, he lets me know what he's thinking and what he needs me to do." Jim pointed a crooked finger in the direction of the rocker and the worn and tattered Bible resting on the table next to it. "He speaks to me though his Word, the Bible."

Jim could see the tension begin to leave young McKenzie's face. Now it was Johnson's turn, "Then you believe in God?"

"Why not?" Jim bellowed. "He believes in me! Now, let me ask you a question. Do you believe God?"

"Yes sir. We both believe in God." Again with the unison!

"I didn't ask if you believed in God. I asked you if you believed God."

"Well," stammered McKenzie, "isn't that the same thing?"

"Of course not!" said Jim. "Satan believes in God. Doesn't help him much, does it? What I asked you is if you believe God. When he says something is so, do you doubt him or try to find some way around believing it?"

"Well, no," said Johnson.

Jim smiled. "Good to hear!"

Jim reached across the table and picked up a peppershaker. "Now, do you boys know what this is?"

"It's a peppershaker."

"Not just a peppershaker," said Jim,

"but a very expensive, lead crystal shaker imported from Scotland. It's an antique, more than 70 years old. Look closely at it," he said as he handed it across the table. "See the intricate detail, the way it feels in your hand, its weight, and the solid silver top. Looks perfect in every detail, doesn't it?"

"Yes sir. It's a beauty. You could say it was perfect."

"Yes, I guess you could—but you'd be wrong," said Jim. "If you looked closely, you'd begin to see little flaws in the glass, a bubble or two, or maybe even a scratch. Look at the inside. It's dry and dusty—blackened from years of holding pepper—and the top has some tarnish on it. Things—people too—are not always what they seem. That's what Jesus was talking about when he told the Pharisees that they were like whitewashed tombs, full of dead men's bones. They did everything just right and kept the law as much as any human could. But Jesus saw beyond that. He saw their hearts. He could see the scratches and tarnish. Now, does it still look perfect to you, Elder Johnson?"

"No, I guess if you look close enough at anything you can find a flaw."

Jim looked intently at the young man. "And do you think there is anything you or I could do to remove the imperfections and make it perfect?"

"Well, no," stammered Johnson. "You can't take something that was made with imperfections and turn it into something it's not!"

"Right you are, Elder Johnson! Well done," said Jim, taking the shaker and placing it back on the table.

Peppershaker

Then he reached over and picked up a large coffee mug, one with obvious chips, cracks, and stains.

“Now, look at this mug. No doubt that this is imperfect, is there?”

The elders shook their heads, wondering where this long examination of Jim’s tableware was going.

“Oh, but it is perfect! It does everything it was made to do and does it perfectly. It bears the scars of long and faithful service, the stains of taking in all the liquids I have ever wanted it to hold. It has never failed me.

“Do you remember what Isaiah said about Jesus? He would come to his own people, and they would not recognize him. He would bear the scars and stains of sin and take them to his death. To the people he would appear a frail man, and he would die the death of a criminal. To God he was the perfect one to do the job that God had set before him.”

Now Jim placed the old mug over the peppershaker. “Now, tell me how does the peppershaker look now?”

“I can’t see it! You covered it up with the mug,” said Johnson with a nervous laugh.

“Then I guess the peppershaker is perfect now, right?” said Jim as he leaned back in his chair.

“Well, we can’t see the shaker. All we see is the mug.”

“Exactly right!” exclaimed Jim. “You can’t see the imperfections, the tarnish, or the dried-out black pepper. All you can see is the perfection of the mug. This is what Paul was talking about when he said we would be clothed with Christ’s righteousness.

When God looks at me all he sees is Jesus. Jesus is perfect, so God sees me as perfect.” Jim paused for a moment to let that sink in.

“Gentlemen, someday soon I expect to wake up in heaven. I know that for a fact. Not because of anything this old peppershaker has done, but because of what Jesus did. Are you boys going to heaven?”

The elders glanced at each other, neither one wanting to be the first to answer. Finally Johnson spoke up. “Well, I hope to, if I’m good enough.”

The smile Jim had been wearing since the young men arrived left his face as he gazed solemnly at the two young men. “I see. Well, this has been a nice visit. I’m sorry that you both must leave.”

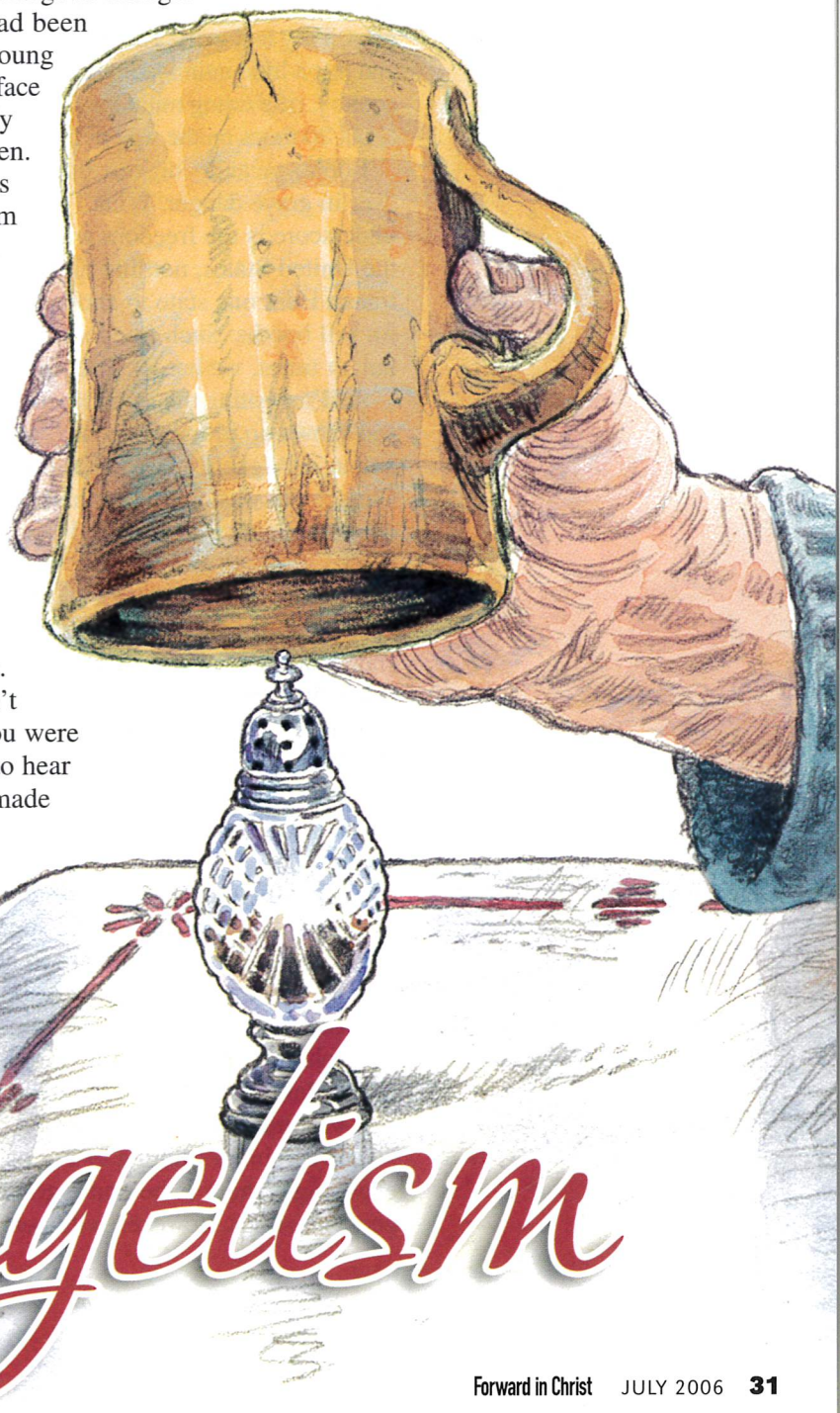
The boys looked shocked. They had hardly gotten to speak during their visit and spoke up in protest. “But sir, we haven’t had a chance to tell you about . . .”

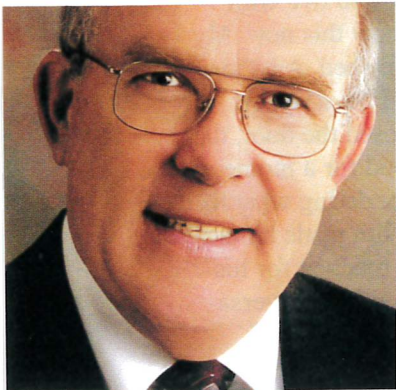
Jim cut them off politely. “No, that’s quite all right. You see, you weren’t sent here to talk. You were sent here to listen, to hear the truth. God has made

arrangements for you to live with him forever. You know this now. My work with you is finished. Another will pick up where I have left off.”

After Jim had closed the door, the two young men stood for a moment on the doorstep, wondering what had just happened. But Jim made his way back to his rocker, reached for his Bible, and picked up his conversation right where he had left off.

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





Carl R. Gungl

My brother's keeper

We're so blessed living in the United States. Sometimes we don't even realize how blessed we are. Too easily we take our everyday freedoms for granted.

Over the years I've served as WELS president, it's been my privilege to travel to some of our foreign mission fields. While entering into most countries is relatively easy, a number of times the passport control officers were equipped with more than pens. They had guns. The guns were loaded and just a little intimidating. In one African country, rifle-toting militiamen stopped us about 20 times on the way to the airport.

I don't mean to suggest that we were ever in grave danger. What I do want to underscore is the freedom we enjoy. In the United States, nothing hinders our transit from one state to another, except for toll booths. Such freedom we enjoy, but, at times, we hardly give it a thought.

As I'm writing this, another mosque was blown up in Iraq. Recently, we heard, a man in Afghanistan who converted to Christianity was on trial for his life. Freedom of religion isn't practiced everywhere, is it?

Freedom of religion isn't always practiced in the United States either! Average church attendance in the United States is below 50 percent. Even in WELS congregations it's just over 40 percent per Sunday. We don't always practice what we preach. We preach freedom of religion, but, it would seem, many practice freedom *from* religion.

If roughly half of WELS people aren't in church on any given Sunday, that means a lot of people are in need of spiritual encouragement. The sooner we can visit someone who is staying away from church, common sense would tell us, the less likely their non-attendance will become habit forming.

The seminary training of our pastors encourages them to be home-going and people-visiting. However, with potentially

half of any congregation to visit in any given week, there aren't enough hours to visit everyone, especially if pastors are the only ones making visits. But who said they were alone in this?

A person, sarcastically, once asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain didn't think he had any responsibility for his brother, Abel. God felt differently. "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). God didn't accept Cain's lame excuse. God held Cain responsible for Abel's death.

While being murdered is a terrible way to die, physical death isn't the worst thing that can happen to an individual. That's the intent of Jesus' words in Matthew 10:28: "Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Eternal death, endless torment separated from God forever, is much worse than any earthly death we can imagine.

Thanks be to God it's so unnecessary! It's why Jesus died and rose again. His death freed us from the guilt of our sin. His resurrection guarantees our own. Through faith in Jesus, all of this becomes the sinner's possession. And faith, we know, is generated by the Spirit through the hearing of God's Word.

That's why we all need to be concerned about those who are not hearing the Word either for the first time or on an ongoing basis. We want everyone to know and continue to hear about the gift of salvation. That is why God makes us our brother's keepers. He wants us to join our pastors in being concerned about church attendance.

It's disappointing when we see people abusing their earthly freedoms. It can be eternally disastrous when people abuse their eternal freedom. Let's use the earthly freedoms we enjoy to call people's attention to the endless freedom found in Jesus. It's all a part of making every member a missionary.

I rejoice whatever the circumstances

Philippians 4:10–14

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength. ¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

What a blessing from God to be able to rejoice no matter what.

Paul E. Zell

It's one thing to rejoice when sweet dreams are coming true. Everyone smiles when everything's coming up roses. It's quite another matter to do so with hopes dashed and dreams gone sour. Yet what a blessing from God to be able to rejoice no matter what!

The apostle Paul urged such joy in the last chapter of his epistle to the Philippians. "Rejoice in the Lord always!" he wrote (Philippians 4:4). Then he took his own encouragement to heart and announced that he personally rejoiced whatever the circumstances.

Pleased with your expressions of concern

From early on the Philippians were generous supporters of Paul's mission efforts. More than once they had sent offerings to the apostle when he was down the road in Thessalonica and Corinth. For several years Paul was far away and on the move, and the Philippians had no opportunity to help him. Yet now that Paul was under house arrest in Rome, the church at Philippi was able to send another gift. "I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me," Paul told them.

The apostle wasn't in desperate straits. Experience taught him that he could get along fine "whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Still, Paul wrote, "it was good of you to share in my troubles." Simply knowing that the saints at Philippi were thinking of him gave him great joy.

Confined to her home, the believer may have learned to accept the troubles of ill health. Yet what a joy when someone from church stops by to visit and read her a devotion. Christ's people keep learning over and over "the secret of being content in any and every situation." Yet all are pleased when fellow saints show concern and love. Even the simplest such expressions can stir up great joy.

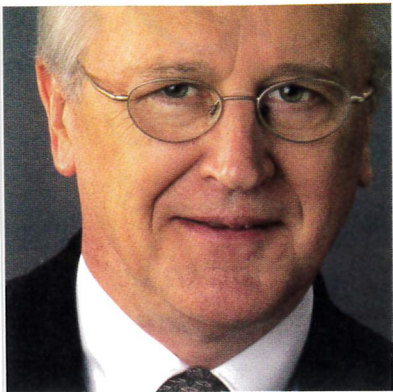
Prevailing in the strength of the Lord

Paul was about to stand before Caesar's throne and speak in his own defense. Should the emperor release him, Paul would head back out on the missionary trail. There he would face a long and familiar list of threats to body and spirit. (See 2 Corinthians 11:24-29.) No matter. He wrote the Philippians: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

You and I compare our zeal to Paul's and lament all the more our sinful weaknesses. Daily life would be a sad struggle if we were left to ourselves. But Jesus purchased us with his holy precious blood, and the Redeemer has joined his power to our weakness. "Those who hope in the Lord," the prophet assures us, "will renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).

The promise holds true, in fact, whatever our tasks or our tests. We will prevail in the strength of the Lord. We rejoice. "I will say it again," Paul reminds us: "Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

Contributing editor Paul Zell, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



John A. Brann

Forgiveness transforms us

While watching television the other night, I saw a commercial for a church that proclaimed, “We don’t reject anyone.” It pictured various people coming into a church. Some of them were obviously from a different cultural and economic class. Some were ethnically different. Still others were obviously same-sex partners. All those that were different were ejected from their seats like a pilot ejected from a crippled fighter plane.

The point is one made by many in our world: the church and the people of the church should be tolerant of all differences and all lifestyles. According to that theology the church should proclaim love and tolerance for everyone, accepting all as they are. This creates a gospel of tolerance where nothing is wrong and everything is right.

It’s a subtle distortion that attaches itself to gender issues. I’ve read the documents of one church body that desires to accept practicing gays and lesbians and ordain them for ministry. Their argument was simply that love demands tolerance and understanding.

One cannot so easily dismiss the denunciations of God about homosexuality or any other sin with a gospel of tolerance. Then you change God’s clear message and allow human behavior to go on unchecked and unchanged. God’s forgiveness changes people; tolerance leaves things as they are and hides human faults under layers of rationalizations. A gospel of tolerance that ignores God’s law does not prepare anyone for eternity. It only avoids the concept of sin and dodges conflict. It is no gospel at all.

Who would disagree that the church’s doors should be open to everyone. Christ died for all people. Yes, we have our problems living up to that truth. Sometimes the idea is repeated so often we don’t think what it means in the real world. At other times we let the idea of “all people” mean

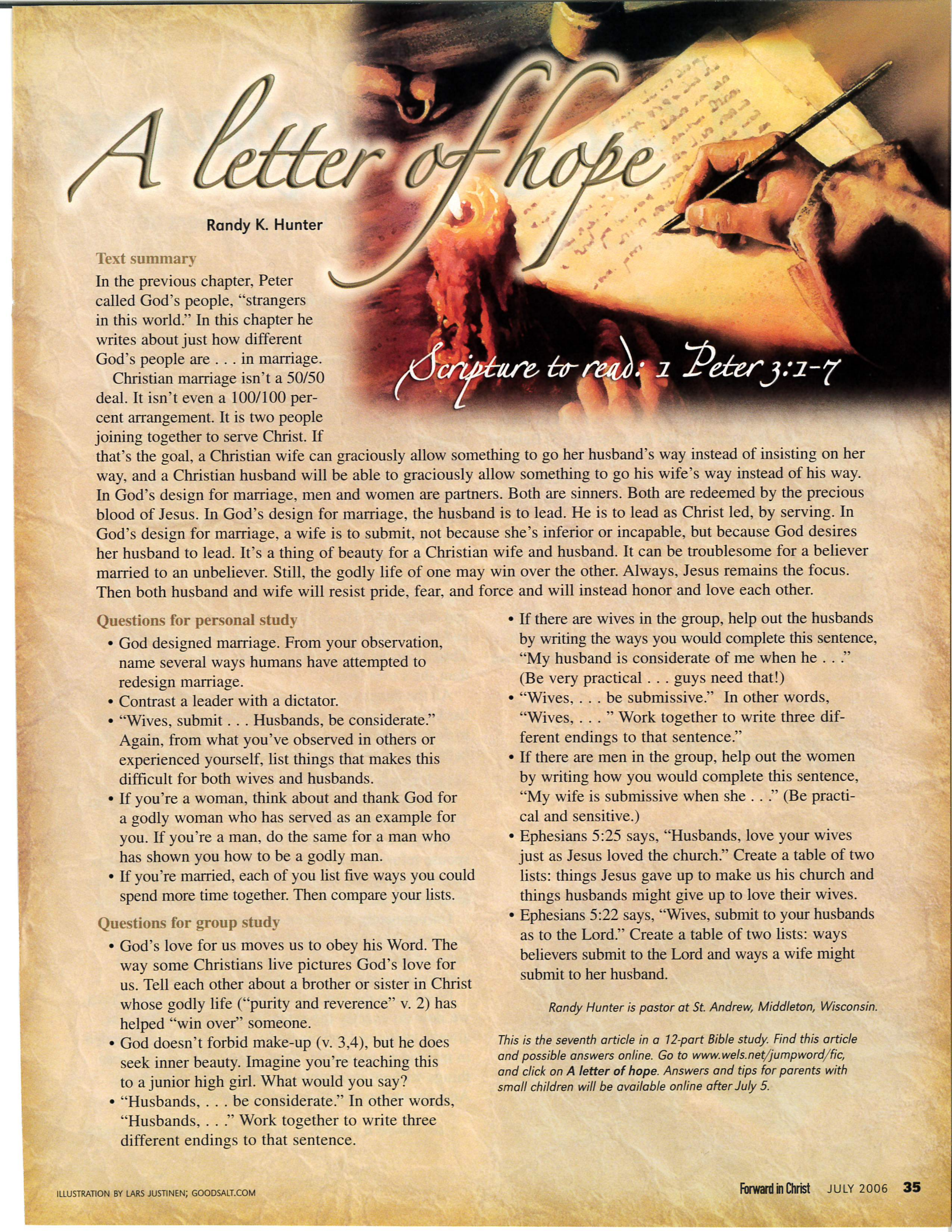
“all people like us.” We do struggle with our sinful inclinations to accept only those who look like us and think like us.

That’s why the doors are open to all—to us, too—so that all hear the message of forgiveness in Christ. Then his forgiveness changes sinners. It has changed all believers. Forgiveness cannot change the color of anyone’s skin, poverty, gender, or culture. But the warmth of forgiveness in Christ provides the power for change. From the selfish, indulgent, racist, and egocentric creatures that we were, God forgave us in Christ and made us believers who exhibit concern for others, self-control, and compassion. We’re not perfect yet, but the forgiveness of Jesus has changed us and given us the power to continue to battle against every inclination that God opposes.

Those changed by his forgiveness abandon what is contrary to the will of God. They seek God’s will not their own. Zacchaeus didn’t hear a gospel of tolerance; neither did the thief on the cross. Instead they turned away from what was contrary to the will of God. Today the forgiveness of Jesus changes addicts of all kinds—it’s no easy task. Gays and lesbians leave behind their behavior too. That change has been difficult, but it has happened.

The point is difficult to make in a world of political correctness where everyone is equally right and where every challenge to sinful human behavior is considered to be arrogant, ignorant, judgmental, and without love.

But God did not treat sin with blind indulgence or uncritical tolerance. The bloody and bruised face of Jesus reveals the seriousness of sin and the lengths God went to remove it. He did not simply forget it and allow humanity to meander though history without a real remedy. Jesus preached such a gospel of forgiveness. When he announced forgiveness, the Scriptures tell us his message transformed thousands. It still transforms sinners.



A letter of hope

Randy K. Hunter

Text summary

In the previous chapter, Peter called God's people, "strangers in this world." In this chapter he writes about just how different God's people are . . . in marriage.

Christian marriage isn't a 50/50 deal. It isn't even a 100/100 percent arrangement. It is two people joining together to serve Christ. If

that's the goal, a Christian wife can graciously allow something to go her husband's way instead of insisting on her way, and a Christian husband will be able to graciously allow something to go his wife's way instead of his way. In God's design for marriage, men and women are partners. Both are sinners. Both are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. In God's design for marriage, the husband is to lead. He is to lead as Christ led, by serving. In God's design for marriage, a wife is to submit, not because she's inferior or incapable, but because God desires her husband to lead. It's a thing of beauty for a Christian wife and husband. It can be troublesome for a believer married to an unbeliever. Still, the godly life of one may win over the other. Always, Jesus remains the focus. Then both husband and wife will resist pride, fear, and force and will instead honor and love each other.

Scripture to read: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Questions for personal study

- God designed marriage. From your observation, name several ways humans have attempted to redesign marriage.
- Contrast a leader with a dictator.
- "Wives, submit . . . Husbands, be considerate." Again, from what you've observed in others or experienced yourself, list things that makes this difficult for both wives and husbands.
- If you're a woman, think about and thank God for a godly woman who has served as an example for you. If you're a man, do the same for a man who has shown you how to be a godly man.
- If you're married, each of you list five ways you could spend more time together. Then compare your lists.

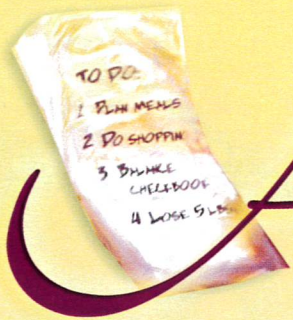
Questions for group study

- God's love for us moves us to obey his Word. The way some Christians live pictures God's love for us. Tell each other about a brother or sister in Christ whose godly life ("purity and reverence" v. 2) has helped "win over" someone.
- God doesn't forbid make-up (v. 3,4), but he does seek inner beauty. Imagine you're teaching this to a junior high girl. What would you say?
- "Husbands, . . . be considerate." In other words, "Husbands, . . ." Work together to write three different endings to that sentence.

- If there are wives in the group, help out the husbands by writing the ways you would complete this sentence, "My husband is considerate of me when he . . ." (Be very practical . . . guys need that!)
- "Wives, . . . be submissive." In other words, "Wives, . . ." Work together to write three different endings to that sentence."
- If there are men in the group, help out the women by writing how you would complete this sentence, "My wife is submissive when she . . ." (Be practical and sensitive.)
- Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives just as Jesus loved the church." Create a table of two lists: things Jesus gave up to make us his church and things husbands might give up to love their wives.
- Ephesians 5:22 says, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." Create a table of two lists: ways believers submit to the Lord and ways a wife might submit to her husband.

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

*This is the seventh article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net/jumpword/fic, and click on **A letter of hope**. Answers and tips for parents with small children will be available online after July 5.*



A tale of two spouses

Do we serve because we have to or because we want to?

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Maybe you've heard this already.

A woman finds herself married to a real ogre.

She tries her best to make him happy, but it's no use. Nothing she does is ever good enough. He criticizes her relentlessly: her appearance, her housework, her cooking, the way she raises their children. He makes long lists of things for her to do each week and posts them in their home: "1) Plan the meals; 2) Do the shopping; 3) Balance the checkbook; 4) Go to work and bring me home a nice paycheck; 5) Lose five pounds." He checks nothing off the list until it is done to his complete satisfaction, which doesn't happen often.

The wife apparently isn't "liberated" enough to tell the guy to go jump in the lake. Each week she dutifully tries to comply with his list of demands. Still, he's never happy. Not surprisingly, neither is she.

Time passes, and perhaps because of his increasingly cranky disposition, the husband develops serious health problems. Eventually he dies. Some time later, the woman remarries.

Her second husband is everything the first one was not. He loves and accepts the woman she is. He sets about trying to make her happy in every possible way. He praises her beauty, her talents, her noble character.

He encourages her to develop her talents and pursue interests of her own. He seems to care more about looking good for her than having her look good for him.

When she does make a mistake, because of her past experience, she points it out to her new husband with a fair amount of trepidation. But his patience with her seems endless. He never fails to forgive her and to suggest ways that they can fix the problem together and move on.

One day, as the wife is doing the laundry, she finds in the pocket of her old jeans one of the "to-do" lists that her first husband used to make for her. She unfolds it and reads down the list.

She is stunned.

Every single item on her first husband's list is something that she has been doing for her second husband—and doing well. The meals in her house are better planned and taste better than they ever have. Their house is neater. Their finances are in terrific shape. And she's happier than she's ever been.

All the things her first husband demanded from her, she has been doing for her second husband, who never seems to demand anything at all. And up until this moment, she hadn't even noticed that she'd been doing them.

Which things are an allegory.

The law is the first husband. Jesus Christ is the second. The woman represents all of us.

Sadly, it's common and frustrating to see a battered spouse refuse to leave a dangerous, abusive relationship. The same thing can happen with the law. Slavish obedience to the law is an abusive relationship that we need to escape.

Unfortunately we cannot escape by our own power. But Jesus has released us from the law's slavery and warmed our hearts with his love and forgiveness so that we are eager to please him in all we do.

Freed from the law, joined in marriage to Jesus Christ, we now do exactly the same things that the law was always trying to force us to do. The law only succeeded in making us miserable. Now, very often, we do those things without even noticing that we've done them. And we are happier than we've ever been.

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