

THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL • BEING SALT IN THE WORLD

APRIL 2007

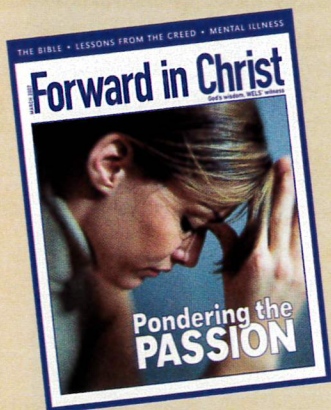
# Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness

**The Lamb of  
God LIVES!**



# Spread *the wealth!*



As a reader of *Forward in Christ*, you are familiar with the quality, Christ-centered articles and features in every 36-page monthly issue. So don't keep it to

yourself. Share the wealth of insight about Christian living and God's Word with others. Consider giving an individual subscription to a family member, friend, or neighbor. And remember, cost-saving bulk subscriptions are also available for churches, schools, and organizations!

**Need a gift idea?** Order a low-cost *Forward in Christ* gift subscription today!

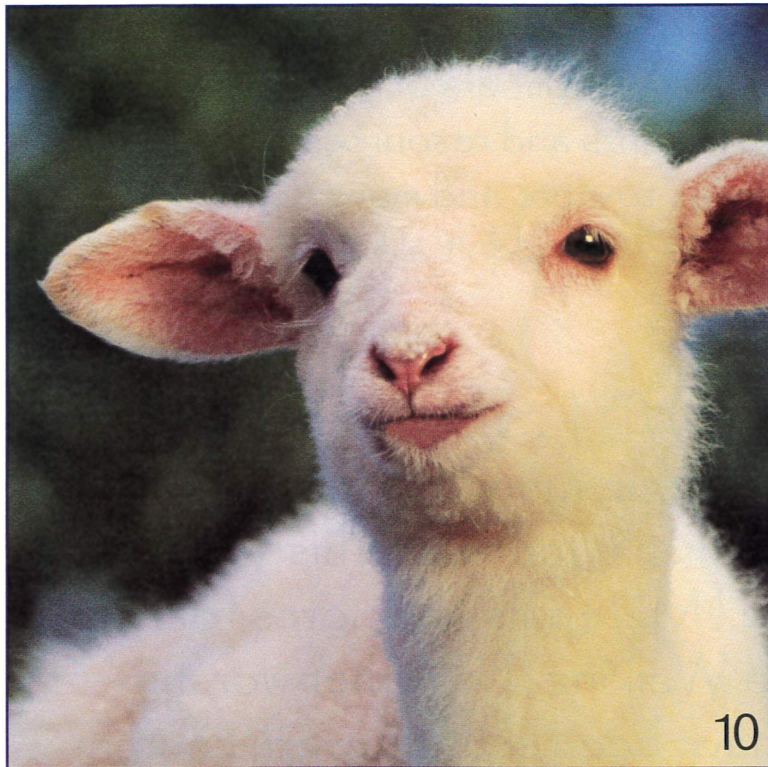
To order or to get subscription rates, call **1-800-662-6093, ext. 8**, or visit **[www.nph.net/fic](http://www.nph.net/fic)**.



Northwestern  
Publishing House  
1250 North 113th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284



**Behold the Lamb of God,  
slain for our sins, raised  
again for our justification.**

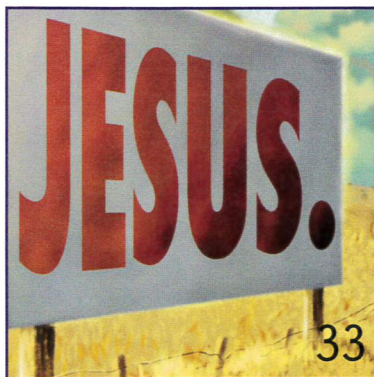


10

PUNCHSTOCK



29



33


## Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

### FEATURES


- 10 QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN HIS APPOINTED TIME** The Lord orchestrated the timing of the Jewish worship days to reveal his story of salvation.  
*James F. Borgwardt*
- 12 SERVING TOGETHER** God created us as men and women in his image. His perfect creation is marred by sin yet forgiven in Christ.  
*Richard L. Gurgel*
- 14 PERSIST IN LOVE** We can learn to anticipate and defend ourselves from Satan's attacks on love.  
*Jeff Gunn*
- 16 DON'T WORRY! WE HAVE THE REAL SCRIPTURES.** The Scriptures are true whether everyone agrees or not.  
*Brian R. Keller*
- 28 EVERY LIFE FOR CHRIST: SALT IN THE WORLD** In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described all believers as the salt of the earth.  
*John A. Braun*
- 29 ELIZABETH OF THURINGIA: GIVING FOR OTHERS** God uses his believers to dispense food, help, and kindness.  
*Theodore J. Hartwig*
- 30 I SHOT A MAN, BUT GOD SAVED MY LIFE!** Guards and inmates call her "Grandma," but she calls Jesus, Savior.  
*As told by Lucille Keppen to William J. Schaefer II*
- 36 THE GRAVE CANNOT HOLD US** Through Christ's power, all will be released from the prison of death.  
*Jon D. Buchholz*

# WALKING TOGETHER




Together  
by God's  
Grace

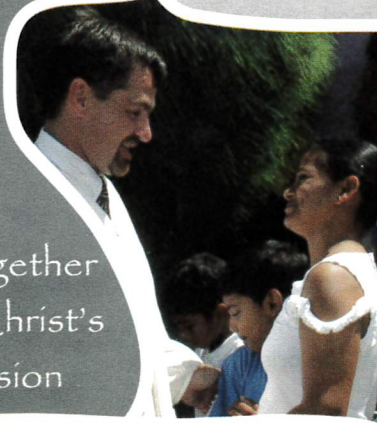
You are part of something great.  
Really great. As members of WELS,  
we pool our talents and resources  
to bring Jesus to more and more  
people in ways we couldn't alone.



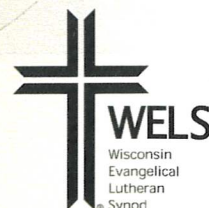
Join other WELS congregations in  
celebrating our synodical family—a tool  
through which God relays his Word to  
the world. Materials and notes for  
holding a Walking Together worship  
service have been sent to every church.



For more information, visit  
[www.wels.net/jump/walkingtogether](http://www.wels.net/jump/walkingtogether)  
or call 800-827-5482.



Together  
in Christ's  
Mission



MAY THE LORD OUR GOD  
BE WITH US AS HE WAS  
WITH OUR FATHERS;  
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US  
NOR FORSAKE US.  
*1 Kings 8:57*

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

*Forward in Christ* magazine  
WELS Communication Services  
2929 N Mayfair Rd  
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398  
Phone: 414-256-3210  
Fax: 414-256-3862  
E-mail: fic@sab.wels.net  
www.wels.net

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Rev. John A. Braun  
braunj@nph.wels.net

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Julie K. Wietzke  
julie.wietzke@sab.wels.net

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Alicia A. Neumann  
alicia.neumann@sab.wels.net

**STAFF WRITER**

Laura C. Warmuth  
laurachristine@wels.net

**SEMINARY CONSULTANT**

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

**ART DIRECTOR**

Karen Knutson

**DESIGNER**

Carianne Ciriacks

**COPYRIGHT**

©2007 by *Forward in Christ*. Printed in the USA. *Forward in Christ* grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a WELS church, school, or organization, provided that copies are distributed free and indicate *Forward in Christ* as the source. Artwork may not be reproduced except in the context of its article. For other copyright questions, contact Bob Adrian, 414-454-2112; adrianb@nph.wels.net.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

**POSTMASTER**

Send address changes to *Forward in Christ*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

*Forward in Christ* (ISSN 1541-8936) is published monthly through Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

Individual: USA—\$14; Canada—\$14.98; all other countries—air mail \$45.20. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Contact Northwestern Publishing House for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 800-662-6093, ext. 8. Milwaukee area, 414-615-5785. www.nph.net/periodicals.

**ON AUDIO**

Mission for the Visually Impaired, 375 Bridgepoint Dr, South St. Paul, MN 55075; 651-291-1536.

APRIL

**WHAT'S INSIDE** *by Julie Wietzke*

“Meet the oldest inmate in the United States.” Sounds a little bit like something that you could read off the tabloids when you are checking out at the grocery store. But this month, you can read this story in *Forward in Christ*—and learn how this 93-year-old WELS woman is letting her light shine in prison (p. 30).

April is a good month for this story since it is when we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and his gift of eternal life to all believers. And as President Gurgel says in his message, “That gift of immortality and glorious, resurrected bodies fills us with a desire to live our lives for Christ” (p. 32).

That being said, what can you do this month to be salt in this world? Executive editor John Braun explores that concept further as he discusses being salt inside the salt shaker and outside of it (p. 28).

God be with you this month as you celebrate what God has done for you and consider how you can show that love to others.

**DEPARTMENTS**



- 6 FEEDBACK**
- 7 DEVOTION**  
You have life *Stephen H. Geiger*
- 8 EDITORIAL COMMENT**  
Proof positive *Paul T. Prange*
- 9 QUESTION & ANSWER**  
The origin of the soul *Richard L. Gurgel*
- 18 WHATEVER**  
Stressed out? *Stephen Apt*
- 19 NEWS**
- 26 BULLETIN BOARD**
- 27 POTLUCK**
- 32 FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE**  
We shall be changed *Karl R. Gurgel*
- 33 BIBLE STUDY**  
Lessons from the Creed *Charles F. Degner*
- 34 A THOUGHT**  
Evangelical? *John A. Braun*
- 35 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY**  
Wrestling with God: Consequences of sin *Jonathan E. Schroeder*

### LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS

I had to write in response to Jan Kolva's answer to Katrina Meinel's letter [Feb. 2007/Nov. 2006]. Jan is totally correct in concluding that it is the parent's responsibility to raise up a child in the way he should go. Her dilemma of living outside of Wisconsin, which is full of Lutheran high schools, is shared by too many parents. I was raised in Montana and went to public high school and then felt called to Dr. Martin Luther College. I remember feeling the same way as she does, that "those students who have attended only Lutheran schools" somehow couldn't relate to all those "lost souls."

Then I raised my own family. I have to say from not only my own experiences but also from seeing other students that if a Lutheran high school is available it absolutely is the better answer. I can say this for one very good reason. Every day in Lutheran high schools our children are taught the Word of God! Parents certainly need to reinforce this. But I ask you honestly, how many parents have home devotions, especially with teens whose lives become extremely busy in high school! Our society bombards us with everything anti-God and anti-faith. The only thing that will keep us on the straight and narrow path is staying in God's Word, and they just don't do that in public schools!

Our Lutheran schools go one step further. Whereas public schools constantly are pulling students away from church with their many after-school activities, Lutheran schools plan around church services, include students in chapel, and have special services. They keep the focus where it should be.

Will sending your children to a Lutheran high school assure that they will stay in the faith? Sadly, no. Will sending your children to public high school take away their faith? Praise the Lord, also, no. It is by the grace

of God that each of us comes to faith and by the grace of God that our faith is strengthened. I only know that in this world, with all the traps, seductions, and attacks on our faith, I want my child to have as many weapons in his arsenal that I can give him. I praise the Lord that he gives us Lutheran high schools even if they aren't as plentiful as we would like.

*Charmaine Greanya  
Burton, Michigan*

### LUTHERANISM

I have major concerns with what direction our synod is going. We seem to be distancing ourselves from our Lutheran doctrine, Luther, and "saved by grace," and going towards a community or non-denominational church. A pastor from the Midwest said the joint Reformation services are only being attended by the "gray-haired people." I believe we as adults are not stressing the importance of what Luther did for the Lutheran church. God used Luther as an instrument to bring his Word to the people "saved by grace," not works.

A pastor told me that when he visits the elderly they have the Bible and catechism by the bedside. I think we need to cut back on sports and entertainment with our youth and get back on track with studying God's Word.

We need to get back to preaching God's Word and not be afraid to mention how God used Luther and why we are Lutherans.

*Richard Andersen  
Alaska*

### STRAYING MEMBERS

Pastor Cordes' excellent article on calling back wandering sheep [Feb.] is much needed today. As passionately as Jesus calls us to share the good news with everyone, he just as passionately bids us to chase down the straying sheep and bring them back into the fold. I don't think that we do that so well in our church body right now.

Having worked for a number of years in a large, suburban congregation with many elders and deaconesses doing intensive soul care, I think there was one item that was not included in the article that needs to be remembered: the excuse-giving, obfuscation, denials, running away, and downright unbelief we Christians will face when we call people to repentance. I wish everyone did express the relief that Cordes talks about in the article when they are confronted with their sin, but my experience has been that this is an exception when it happens, not the rule. This must not deter us! The Savior's love compels us to continue. But we need to be ready for the impenitence we will inevitably face, and, when people refuse to repent, we dare not announce the Shepherd's forgiveness.

*Charles W. Papenfuss  
Pewaukee, Wisconsin*

### STAINED GLASS ON COVER

Thank you for the beautiful stained-glass picture on the cover of the February issue. Hopefully more stained-glass pictures will be used in future editions for the cover. In recent years some of the pictures used on the cover have nothing to do with our Christian faith. For a number of years when the periodical was called *The Northwestern Lutheran*, various WELS churches were featured on the cover. Those churches and now the stained-glass pictures are winners. The cover of *Forward in Christ* can instruct us about God's Word.

*Ray C. Manthe  
Oak Creek, Wisconsin*

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

# You have life

*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. . . . Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore . . . do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life. Romans 6:4, 11-13*

Stephen H. Geiger

**M**ost twins celebrate their birthdays on the same day. But has it ever happened, as the stroke of midnight was about to sound, that one twin entered the world at the end of the first day while the second emerged in the wee moments of the next?

Such noteworthy births would offer, for the rest of those twins' lives, two special days of celebration. Each would have his own birthday.

Yet most twins have the same birthday. Perhaps they have their own cakes. No doubt they open their own presents. Yet the celebrations happen together, offering the special benefit of sharing joy with another.

You may not be a twin. You may never have shared a birthday. But you do share with someone a different celebration: Easter Day.

To think of Easter is to think of resurrection. We can't wait to share with Jesus the bodily resurrection he experienced one Sunday long ago.

Yet Jesus' resurrection is ours not only for the Last Day. In our baptisms, we were connected with the dying and rising Jesus. As the curse of sin was crushed through Jesus' death, so in Jesus' resurrection we have new life.

## From death to life

Spiritual death is living under the curse of sin, expecting deserved consequences for the evils done. It's being a slave to sin, willingly offering one's body in service to the worst of masters.

It's separation from the only good Master, without help to fight those desires that destroy.

If spiritual death is all those things, then spiritual life is the opposite: enjoying freedom from sin's curse, serving the best Master, and possessing strength to fight destructive desires.

Yet how quickly a Christian can be tempted to give up the fight. Instead of confronting worries or complaints, we give in. How quickly a Christian is tempted to serve the worst of masters. Instead of running from the devil's attempts to control our bodies with intoxication or immorality, we allow ourselves careless discretion when choosing the channel or going to the movies. And how quickly a Christian is tempted to defend his sin.

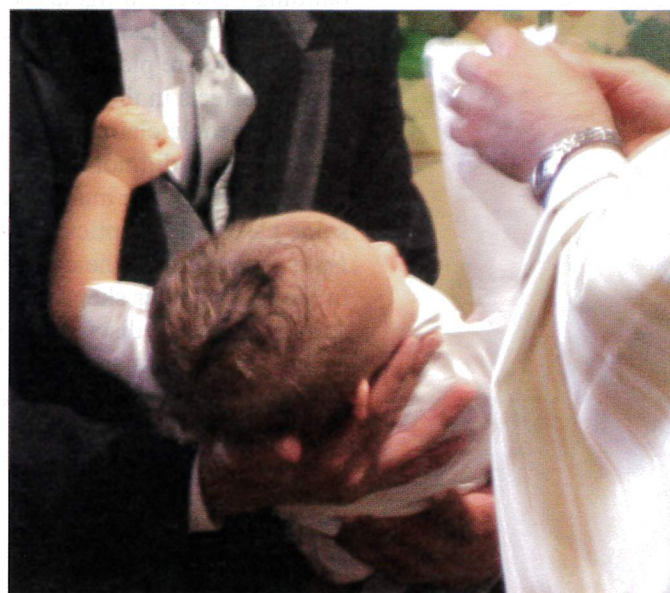
There's risk when hearts dabble in thoughts that control the minds of the spiritually dead. To grow weary of the fight, to grow comfortable with rebellion, to grow dulled to the serious threats of God's righteous anger is to be in the gravest of danger.

"Repent," God begs.

To consider how I have drunk death's poison is to marvel that God still calls to me.

## New life today

In your baptism, Jesus' death became your own. His resurrection



became yours as well—and not just for the Last Day. You have life this day. Yes, you are free from the curse of sin. You are also free from slavery to sin. You no longer have to obey the wicked master. Your new Master gives you strength to say no. Mark every sin as an enemy and fight. Offer yourselves to God, for you have been brought from death to life.

Jesus is risen. You have life now.

*Contributing editor Stephen Geiger, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Risen Savior, Milwaukee.*

# Proof positive

Paul T. Prange

Thierry Meyssan, a French author, claims that an airplane didn't hit the U.S. Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. In a book titled *L'Effroyable Imposture*, he makes the case that something else must have happened, something sinister. It's all a conspiracy by the United States government.

These claims fly in the face of historical facts. There are eyewitness accounts of the building before, during, and after the airplane hit. Documents describe the carnage in chilling detail. There are pictures of the damage. There are aftereffects in the lives of many people.

Some people claim that Jesus' resurrection from the dead did not happen. Skeptics claim that something else must have happened. In some cases, the skeptics paint a scenario of Jesus swooning on the cross but then reviving in the tomb. Other skeptics claim a great conspiracy by Jesus' disciples, who are supposed to have made up many details in order to keep their movement going after Jesus died.

In an account before he died, Jesus predicted such skepticism (Luke 16:19-31). Knowing that people are always looking for proof of life after death and aware that such proof is offered again and again in the Holy Scriptures, Jesus predicts that people will not believe what the Bible has to say. In fact, he says, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

But claims that Jesus did not rise from the dead fly in the face of historical facts. There are eyewitness accounts of Jesus' dead body, his burial in a tomb, and his appearances after his resurrection. Paul tells us, "He appeared

to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time. . . . Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also" (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

Documents describe the resurrection in amazing detail. Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20-21 have the ring of historical documentation, not myth. They do not sound like the work of people working a conspiracy. They do, however, sound like what eyewitnesses have to say.

There are aftereffects of the resurrection in the lives of many people. The disciples traveled throughout the world. They gave their lives in service. Do you think that people would be inspired to such great lengths for something they knew to be a lie?

Jesus is still alive. We still give our lives today in service to this message. Since Christ has been raised, our sins are forgiven, and our proclamation of his message is powerful. We too will rise (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

We don't need all of the proof we have. The simple Word of the Lord is enough for us. We have the word of the prophets made more certain. We have Jesus' promise

that the disciples put the events down correctly under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor (John 14:26). We have Moses and the Prophets. Let us listen to them.

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

**Claims that Jesus did not rise from the dead fly in the face of historical facts.**





at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: The origin of the soul

**At what point does the developing human being have a soul? Does a zygote (union of egg and sperm) have a soul? If human life begins at conception, does an in vitro fertilized zygote have a soul? This is a troubling issue, particularly with embryos being harvested/destroyed in stem cell research.**

Theologians have advanced three explanations for the origin of the soul. However, only one of those explanations can be reconciled with all scriptural evidence.

The two explanations that cannot pass the test of Scripture are called “pre-existentism” and “creationism.” (Don’t confuse this creationism with the more common use of the word for the belief that true science supports creation not evolution.)

Pre-existentism teaches that in the beginning God created all the souls for all people who would ever live. At the moment a “body” is conceived, God adds a pre-existing soul to that body. Creationism teaches that God directly creates each soul either at the moment of conception, or, some say, up to 40 days after.

Both of those approaches run into significant scriptural problems especially when it comes to original sin. In fact, most who teach either pre-existentism or creationism reject the biblical doctrine of original sin. They may tend to see the soul as holy while sin is located essentially in the body. This is similar to Eastern religious philosophy which teaches that matter is evil while the soul is pure. Scripture clearly indicates that sin is located in the soul of man.

Much more in keeping with biblical teaching is what is called “traducianism.” Traducianism teaches that God maintains in man and woman the wondrous ability not only to conceive a body (merely a potential human being) but also a complete human being with body and soul. Traducianism acknowledges that exactly how this happens is a mystery of God. It simply marvels that God allows human beings to play an integral role in the propagation of other body-and-soul beings.

Consider how this best fits biblical evidence. Consider David’s familiar words in Psalm 51:5: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Notice David’s mother didn’t conceive an “it.” She didn’t conceive merely a body. David confesses she conceived “me.” Notice also that what she conceived was already sinful. As Scripture defines sin, it is not something that springs from our bodies but from our souls—our hearts—which are by nature hostile toward God (Matthew 15:19; Romans 8:7).

So where does that leave us? Anytime we deal with a fertilized egg we aren’t dealing with merely a “potential” human being. Call it what you will—zygote, blastocyst, embryo—a fertilized egg is a human being with a body and soul no matter how much physical and mental development may still remain.

That’s why we don’t treat human beings at any stage of development as disposable biological material. At whatever state of development, a human being is a sinful body-and-soul creature known to God and redeemed by Christ.

What further confuses this issue is how so much of the media simplistically distorts the stem cell issue. They often report on the issue as if the only viable research is embryonic stem cell research that treats human embryos as so much disposable biological material. Much of the most promising stem cell research is being accomplished without compromising any human lives at any stage of development. That’s medical research we can all live with!

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

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

# Questions answered

The sacrifice of the Passover lamb celebrated how the Lord freed Messiah. The Lord carefully orchestrated the timing of the special

**H**oly Week is not your typical worship week. It's not supposed to be. Not only do we travel to church more often, but once we're there, it feels different. One service is solemn and dim. The next is louder, brighter, and more joyful than ever.

When children notice these changes, they'll ask why. "Why are we going to church at night?"

"Why do we have to get up so much earlier this Sunday?"

The first moon of spring, in the Jewish month of Abib, signaled a change in the worship routine for the Israelites. Peculiar customs, special sacrifices, and mandatory pilgrimages to Jerusalem marked the time for the Feasts of the Lord. Children probably asked questions then too.

"Why does our lamb have to die?"

"Why are we burning all this bread?"

"Why are we going to the temple?"

Feast literally means "appointed time." The Lord carefully set these days aside and orchestrated the timing of these special worship days to reveal his story of salvation. God expected children to ask questions about these special days. He even scripted some of them.

## PASSOVER

"What does this ceremony mean?" was asked each year on the 14th of Abib. It was the Passover Feast (Exodus 12:26). The head of the family would recall the day the Lord freed the Jewish slaves from the oppression of their Egyptian masters. For the tenth plague, God had condemned to death every firstborn male in the land, but he also provided deliverance. Each Israelite family sacrificed an unblemished lamb and stained the doorposts of their homes with its blood. God had promised them, "When I see the blood I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). Their firstborn sons were spared. God had rescued his people, and they walked away from slavery.

But this feast was more than remembering the exodus. The lamb sacrifice also anticipated the Messiah, who would rescue them from a plague far worse. For most of 1,500 years they used the lamb as a proxy sacrifice until the Baptizer proclaimed that the two-legged sacrifice had finally arrived: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The disci-

ples followed him, believed in him, and witnessed how the Lord himself observed his own appointed feasts.

They celebrated the feasts as the other faithful did. But in the days leading up the final Passover in Jerusalem, they realized that this one would be different. As other pilgrims began their preparations to secure and present their families' required sacrifice, God marched his Lamb through the city gate. The pilgrims cheered "Hosanna!"—save us!

But the high priest and his gang worked to keep the old sacrifice instead of embrace God's plan. "They plotted . . . to kill him. 'But not during the Feast,' they said, 'or there may be a riot among the people.'" Jesus reminded his disciples that this was God's appointed time: "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified" (Matthew 26:1-5).

As the 14th of Abib began at sundown, the Lord hosted the Twelve at the last Passover meal and replaced it with his new Supper. He looked heavenward and prayed, "Father, the time has come" (John 17:1). Before the next sunset marked the Passover's conclusion, God's Lamb was sacrificed and buried in a tomb.

It was a Friday. We don't normally call it festive, since we realize that our sins nailed his body to that cross. But with remarkable understatement we call it Good, for, on that appointed day, the Lord delivered us forever from the punishment of sin. When we have questions about the guilt that plagues us, his new meal provides the answer: "For the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

## UNLEAVENED BREAD

A second feast followed. The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the 15th of Abib, the day after Passover. The Jews often combined them, referring to them as one.

This feast demanded unusual preparation. God commanded the Jews to remove anything that might contain yeast, or leaven, from their homes. Loaves, crusts, even crumbs were zealously searched for and swept outside to be burned. Only bread without yeast could be eaten that week.

Yeast was God's object lesson for sin. It multiplies and grows, causing juices or bread to ferment or decay. It permeates everything it touches, just like sin. God's

# in his appointed time

the Jews from their Egyptian masters. But it also anticipated the Jewish worship days to reveal his story of salvation. James F. Borgwardt

people, delivered from sin's punishment, would sweep its corruption out of their lives.

A later generation of Jewish and gentile believers in Corinth missed that message. They allowed a gross, outward sin to remain unchallenged in their church. It would soon infect everything and everyone. The apostle Paul appealed to the feast's object lesson:

Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

In the year of fulfillment, the First Day of Unleavened Bread fell on a Saturday—a Sabbath day of rest. Christ was dead and buried. His followers quietly mourned.

Churches today are relatively quiet on Holy Saturday, but some still hold a late-night vigil. Especially in the early church, this vigil was when new Christian converts were baptized and began their new life in Christ. When we question what baptism means for our daily life, Lutherans have learned that baptism delivers us from the power of sin. Paul says in Romans 6:4, "We were therefore buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

## FIRSTFRUITS

Indeed, baptism connects us with the third day—the day on which the third feast fell. On the 16th of Abib, the rays of sunlight stretched over the ripening barley crop. The first sheaf of grain—or firstfruits—had already been marked for harvest. The priest cut the sheaf and presented it to the Lord. The Lord's acceptance of the firstfruits was his pledge for a full harvest to follow.

That same morning, the Sunday sunlight revealed a promise far greater—the empty tomb. "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

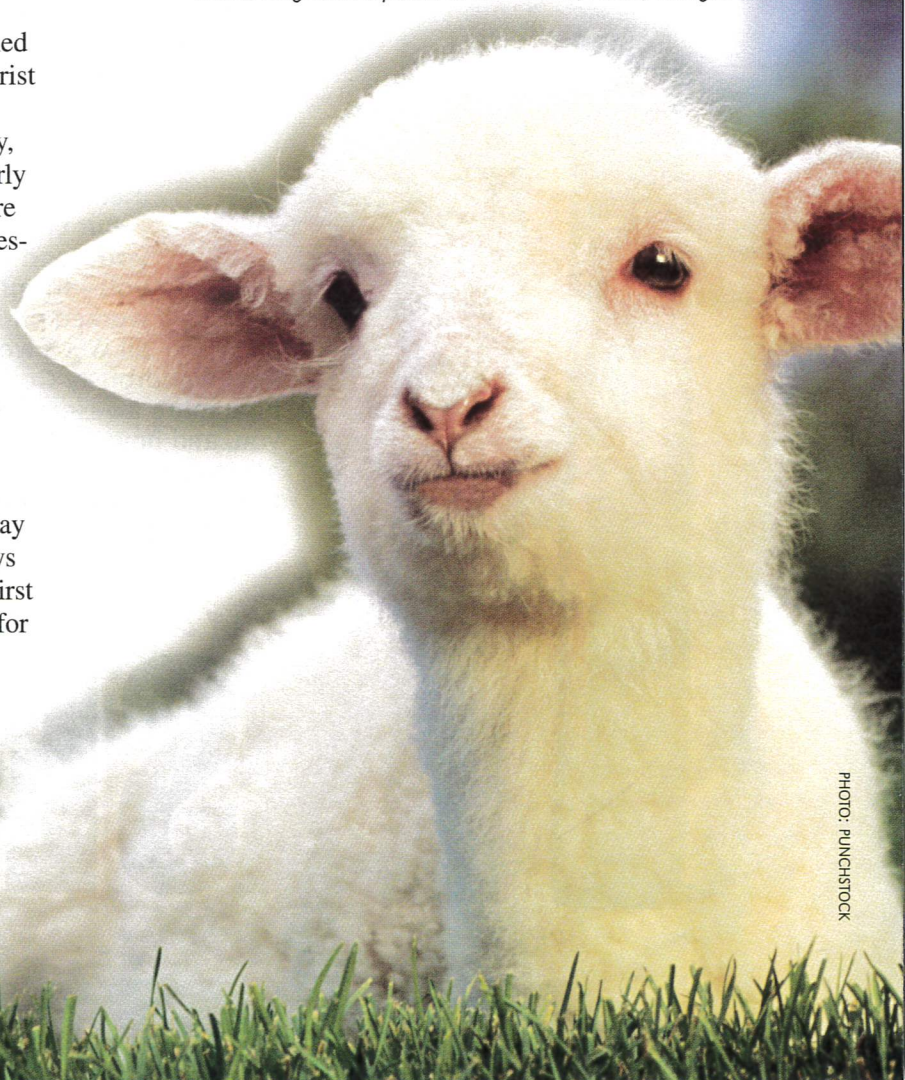
Christ's resurrection answers the greatest questions of life and death. Maybe your child has already asked them as he's walked with you down the carefully lined rows of burial plots. "Will we ever see Grandma again?"

Jesus answered, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

There's nothing final about this resting place. "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power" (1 Corinthians 15:42,43).

Behold the Lamb of God, slain for our sins, raised again for our justification—the firstfruit of all who sleep in death.

*James Borgwardt is pastor at Risen Savior, Pooler, Georgia.*



**We are confronted by gender issues and must wrestle with the roles God lays out for us in Scripture. Future generations also will struggle with them. These articles, written as a series of e-mails from a grandparent to a grandchild in the year 2032, share wisdom from our study of the Scriptures to the next generation. This series follows the outline of a Bible study prepared by WELS Adult Discipleship's Women's Ministry Committee. The study will be available this summer.**

Dear Emily,

Grandma and I enjoyed your e-mail. We're delighted your pastor asked you to teach a women's Bible study! Long before you were born, Grandma and I prayed that our Savior would bring our grandchildren to faith. Now God's not only keeping your faith growing, but he's also using you to help others grow!

I was surprised at the Bible study the pastor suggested using—as surprised as you were to see my name on it. It's been 25 years since I helped write it. That study reflects how our generation sought to confess these teachings faithfully and clearly.

Now it's your generation's turn! Every generation must wrestle anew with all the doctrines of Scripture. Only then can we avoid merely "parroting" words of our spiritual fathers and mothers! The Spirit will bless such wrestling with his Word so that you truly make the common faith we treasure your own. If a "grandpa" Bible study can help your generation find anew the beauty of God's Word, I rejoice!

Now understand, Emily, this study wasn't just written for a women's study group. It was written for young and old, men and women alike.

But we especially had you—and others like you—in mind as we worked on it. We wanted all WELS women to know how wondrously God created you, how more awesomely he redeemed you, and how magnificently he gifted each of you with talents to use to his glory. We wanted to emphasize all of this while also holding

without apology to Scripture's principle of head and helper.

We knew how easily we lose our grasp on the scriptural truth that Christ's body struggles when any member's gifts aren't used as he designed. We also knew, that in our world that measures accomplishment in headlines and bottom lines, how easily the quiet service many women and men were rendering was not honored as the glorious service Christ makes it.

I regret—forgiven though I am!—how often I allowed a very good thing—honor for God's principle of head and helper—to morph into a failure to acknowledge and use in appropriate ways the gifts of Christian women. It was easy to rattle off what women couldn't do. It was harder to remember and rejoice in the myriad avenues for service the Savior gave them!

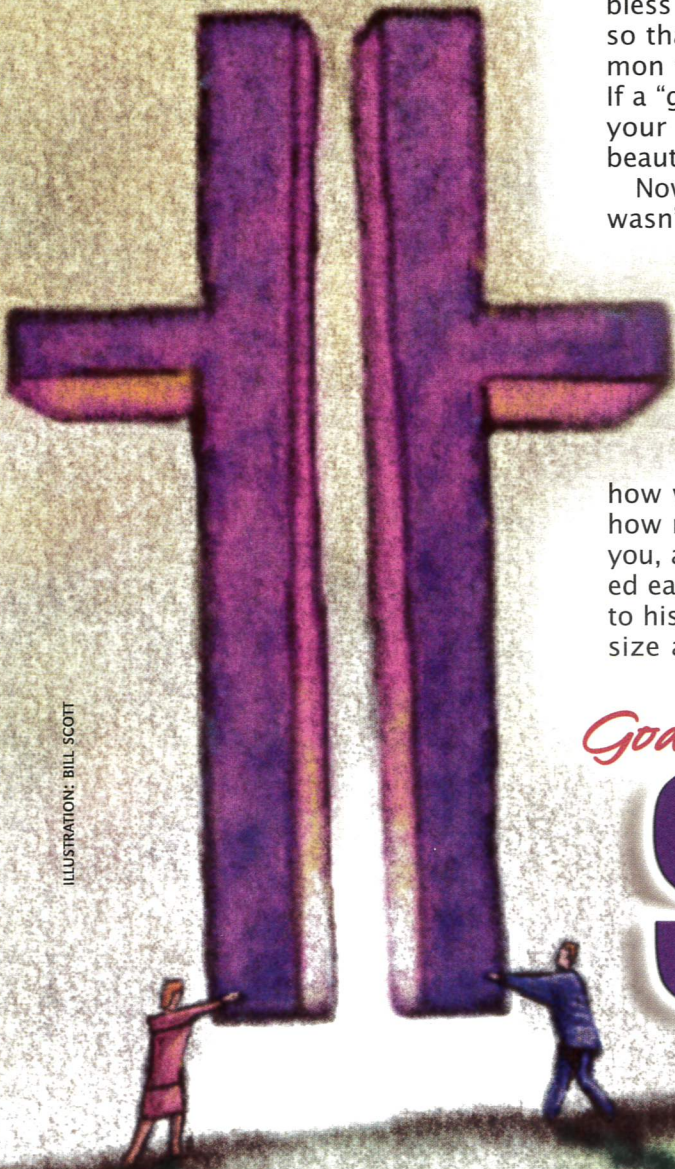
That's why, Emily, we wrote that study. We wanted men and women to cherish both their equal status and their unique callings. Often lost in heated debates was this fact: what we have in common as Christian women and men exceeds what is unique and different about us!

That's why the study began in Eden. I know, in a sinful world it's hard to picture a perfect world. But there's a treasure to be enjoyed in Genesis 2 as God holds both men and women up as the crown jewel of his creation we once were (and are again in Christ!).

Spend time leading those you teach to marvel at Genesis 1:26, 27. There our Triune God reveals what must have been his delight from eternity: to create us, both

*God created us as men and women in his image.*

# SERVING



male and female, in his image!

That image is the first gift we share as men and women. That's more than the absolute perfection all creation possessed. Our first parents were created not only without sin, but also with the ability to live in conscious delight in God! In every thought, word, and action they shouted delight in their Creator. Nothing else in all creation does that! Birds sing beautifully, but that is "automatic"—by decree of him who fashioned them. But Adam and Eve alone were created to sing a joyous song of obedient love for God in conscious obedience!

Oh, I know, that's precisely where sin turned equality ugly. (You'd be surprised how those who championed equality forgot equality cuts two ways!) That's why, as you study, you'll see in Eden the saddest day in human existence. You'll mourn as Adam and Eve conspired to refuse to live in joy under God as his creatures. They arrogantly demanded equality with God. The harmony between God and man was shattered. Human nature now shrieked a discordant tone from the first off-key note of the heart's inclination to the unholy cacophony pouring from those hearts (Genesis 6:5).

That sin shattered harmony not only between us and God but also between male and female. Instead of glorious equality and unique callings lived out as a perfect reflection of God's love, there'd be strife and competition, domination and abuse. Is it sur-

prising God so quickly mentioned the distortion sin caused in particular between husband and wife (Genesis 3:16)?

Every generation of men since has struggled with the temptation to distort leadership either into aggressive dominance or passive abdication. Every generation of women since has struggled with the temptation either to covet the calling God gave to men or to melt before that leadership even to the extreme of abuse. Every generation of Adam's and Eve's descendants also instinctively knows how to point the outstretched finger at the real weaknesses of the opposite gender while turning a blind eye to their own!

All of which, Emily, would make this a hopelessly gloomy segment to study, except that it ends in bloodshed—no, not between man and women—but the blood shed by him who was God and man in one person! After living in our place—a perfectly humble servant leader honoring the gifts of the women around him—he bled and died to pay for all the hostility and venom we openly or quietly pour on one another.

Emily, don't let a single person in your group miss the triple beauty of this!

Every failure of life—including our sins against one another as men and women—are forgiven. Sunk in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19) because of the depths of Jesus' love (Ephesians 3:18)!

At the same time, credited to us is his life's obedience! These

two facets of our gospel joy declare us to be what God created us to be: holy and blameless in his sight. He again calls us the apple of his eye—his bride. God looks at us cross-eyed—seeing in Christ what was ours and seeing in us what was Christ's.

With that comes the third blessing! His gospel brings power and strength to see and to seize our glorious purpose for living as those restored to his image.

Ah . . . but that's another part of your study.

An heir of heaven together  
with you,  
Grandpa

P.S. I just heard from Kathie, the study's co-author. Her goddaughter, Lauren, is teaching this same study! They're one lesson ahead of us, so I'll ask Kathie if we can share her e-mail. That will provide what my words lack: that unique touch of how God created women to communicate.

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

*His perfect creation is marred by sin yet forgiven in Christ.*

# TOGETHER

Richard L. Gurgel



# Persist in Love

Jeff Gunn

With the grace and mercy of Christ on our side, we can learn to anticipate and defend ourselves from Satan's attacks on love.

*W*hat did you accomplish?" Tony Dungy's father asked. The Indianapolis Colts' coach was only a ninth-grader at the time. But he knew his dad's question was a serious one—one of his dad's "teachable moments." Tony's father was not someone to be ignored at times like this. So Tony clearly heard when his dad posed the rest of the question: "Do you think you helped your team in the locker room?"

Tony Dungy, today considered the master of cool, was still learning that cool demeanor as a 14-year-old. In the basketball game that provoked his dad's question, he had lost his temper. He had gotten ejected from the game for fighting.

Tony was simmering internally because he felt he had been repeatedly fouled by his defender—and no calls were being made. He had tried talking to the referees, but to no avail.

Not being mature enough to anticipate the sinful territory into which his emotions were about to take him, Dungy allowed emotion to take over. Sure enough, there was another foul and no call, and, according to reports, Dungy sent his defender sprawling back to the half-court line with a single punch.

Strong and sudden flows of emotion can make it easy for any of us to forget that our loveless actions affect the "teams" in our lives: our families, our workplaces, our friendships, our churches. Even more importantly, our loveless actions affect our relationship to God.

### *A review of some of Satan's tactics*

No one desires to see fractured relationships more than our greatest spiritual enemy, the devil. He knows well the tactics required to encourage the fracturing of our relationships. We need to be able to anticipate those tactics.

If we were to think of Satan's tactics in military terms, spiritual attacks against love might include the following:

- One chief strategy Satan will use to attack the heart of the Christian is through **severing the supply line** of God's grace. The devil loves to plant the thought that activity and busyness are more vital to our

success in life than the quiet study and contemplation of God's words and promises. He also likes to draw us into unrepented sin so that our desire to be in the Word wanes. Then we begin to "avoid" God by avoiding our worship and devotion time. Jesus reminds us how important it is to stay connected to him: "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).

- The classic military tactic—**divide and conquer**—is also used by Satan. Those in the early church were not immune to such an attack. Consider the Corinthians, the Ephesians, or the conflict between Jews and Gentiles. In Ephesians 4:3, Paul encourages us to "make every effort" to keep the unity that God has established among us

in the church, exercising humility, gentleness, and patience, and "bearing with one another in love."

- Satan frequently tries to disrupt love by appealing to our egocentric sinful flesh. This "ego squeeze," or **pincer movement**, occurs when we see everything through the lens of our own history, experiences, and culture. Instead of digging into God's definition of love, our ego limits our approach to love based on what we think love ought to be or how we think love ought to be expressed. In Philippians 2:4, Paul writes, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Newlyweds who practice this wisdom will soon discover that a spouse may have a different "love language" than they do. In successful marriages, spouses ultimately discover that when they deeply listen to one another, often they can detect the other person describing in various ways what "language" of love they may prefer—kind words, acts of service, time, gifts, touch, or something else unique to that particular individual.
- Satan's close ally, our sinful flesh, may cause us to develop an arrogant attitude that says, "I know what you need better than you know what you need." This **rear-guard attack** may come in the form of an ill-advised attempt to be helpful. But God calls on all of us to mature and help others to do the same (Ephesians 4:13). A maternal or paternal instinct "on steroids," though often well-intentioned, is not a love that strengthens and equips for maturity and independence. It's a love that smothers, weakens, and ultimately stunts the growth of the one so loved. It's a doting, controlling, overly-attending attitude that is really built on distrust—not only of the one we are to love but also of God.

*The antidote to love-grown-cold is to feed steadily on Christ's love for us.*

- An effective tactic that Satan uses to attack the church is **strategic targeting**. Satan will attack individuals in our churches. Sometimes he works through the loveless actions of brothers and sisters in the faith, not infrequently in the form of gossip. At other times he will hurl the attacks from outside the believers. He also may attack Christians through character weaknesses. Christ's servants need to humbly remember that often their greatest strengths and talents are also their greatest weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Paul writes, "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Romans 12:3).

- Extended periods of peace and calm may make those in families and churches complacent or inattentive. Thus our spiritual enemies **lull**

**us to sleep**. Keeping relationships strong takes steady work. We can easily take love and the actions of love for granted. We find ourselves losing touch with the people God placed into our lives. Remember that the antidote to love-grown-cold is to feed steadily on Christ's love for us. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

### *God gives love*

When an 18-point comeback in this year's AFC championship game was attributed to his calm demeanor and selfless steadiness, Tony Dungy responded, "I appreciate that people think of me that way, but I know it's been a long process—a learned process. And it's not natural. I thank God for it."

Isn't it the same for us? Satan will attack and do everything in his power to destroy the process of our learning to love. But with the grace and mercy of Christ on our side, we can learn to anticipate and defend ourselves from Satan's attacks on love. It's never natural for us to win against the attacks of Satan. It's always supernatural—because it's always the power of God working for us and in us. When it comes to love, we all thank God for it.

*Jeff Gunn is pastor at CrossWalk, Phoenix, Arizona.*

*This is the third article in a five-part series on love. To read other articles in the series, go to [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net), and search by the author's first and last name.*

# Don't Worry, we have the real Scriptures

The Scriptures are true whether everyone agrees or not.

Brian R. Keller

There are people who make up conspiracy theories, and people who will believe them, even if there is no factual basis for the wild claims being made. If Elvis Presley had his picture taken with President Clinton that must mean that he is still alive, serving as a secret agent, right? Has the American government really managed to hide space aliens at Area 51? Should we believe what we see on magazine covers as we pass through the grocery checkout aisle? Has “the church” been covering up the *Gospel of Judas* because it is really the true gospel?

Certainly not! The *Gospel of Judas* is not a part of God's Word. It never was, and it never will be. Don't worry. We have the real Scriptures.

## God established the canon

The books of the Bible were part of God's inspired Word as soon as they were written. God established the canon, that is, the collected authentic books of the Bible, by inspiring the writers to write. The books of the Bible are God's Word. They always were, are, and will be God's inspired Word even if many people might ignore or reject their message.

Jesus impressed people with the authority of his teaching (Mark 1:22). He demonstrated his authority by

doing miracles. He demonstrated his authority by convicting people of sin and by comforting them with the good news of salvation.

Today, God still impresses his authority on our hearts as we read the Bible. The Holy Spirit convinces us that we are reading God's Word (John 17:17; Romans 10:17). In this way, the books of the Bible proved that they were authentic and genuine to God's people. The Bible books authenticated themselves because God's Word carries God's power (Romans 1:16).

The Son of God testified that the Old Testament Scriptures—the same books of the Old Testament we have today—were the authentic Word of God. He quoted from the Old Testament books, named some of the inspired authors, and even indicated that these books were without error. Jesus said, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Christ never quoted from the Apocrypha, and the New Testament quotes from or alludes to every Old Testament book except Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.

Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to inspire the apostles to write the New Testament Scriptures (John 14:26; 16:12-15).

The apostles testified that the New Testament books are God's Word. For example, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter placed Paul's letters in the same category as the books of the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Peter 3:15,16). The apostles saw to it that the genuine books of the New Testament were preserved and shared (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). God also permitted John to live a long life. He lived long enough to be able to sort out the genuine Word of God from forgeries. When John wrote the last word of the book of Revelation, the canon was closed. God did not want anyone to add to his Word after that (Revelation 22:18,19).

## What about the *Gospel of Judas*?

Hardly any Christian had even heard of the *Gospel of Judas* when it burst onto the scene around Easter of 2006. Since the *Gospel of Judas* contradicted the Bible's account of the betrayal and apparently made the betrayer into a hero, it was something the mainstream media wanted to publicize. There was almost no avoiding it. Members brought newspapers to their pastors, seeking direction. Some wondered what to believe.



There's a good reason why hardly anyone had even heard of the *Gospel of Judas*. No early Christian writer viewed it as even possibly a part of the Bible. It was written too late. The original document was probably written at least 70 to 80 years after the apostle John died. Its claims sharply contradict the clear Word of God. There is only one known copy today, and that copy is missing very large portions in many places. It's almost pure guesswork to know what it says. The National Geographic Society made it available for viewing online, and it is very difficult, confusing, and strange to read. When I read it, what was immediately clear was that it absolutely could not be a part of the Bible.

The *Gospel of Judas* portrays Jesus as appearing often to his disciples as a child. Judas is supposedly the greatest disciple, the one closest to Jesus. In the book, Jesus appears and disappears and often laughs at the disciples and ridicules them. There are many missing portions. Sometimes as many as 15 to 17 lines are missing. Finally, I reached the part where Judas betrays Jesus. After all the publicity, I was ready to read plenty. But it was brief, vague, and disappointing. Here's what it said: "They approached Judas and said to him, 'What are you doing here? You are Jesus' disciple.' Judas answered them as they wished. And he received some money and handed him over to them."

That's it! Hardly earth-shattering. Hardly complete. Hardly satisfying. The so-called "gospel" of Judas doesn't mention anything

after that. It skips the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. So, there is no good news of salvation at all in the book. It never mentions the traitor's suicide either. If anything, in an earlier part, it seems to imply that he would die by stoning at the hands of the other apostles.

Somehow, the *Gospel of Judas* appeared on the antiquities market

## The real Word of God reveals the real gospel of Jesus Christ.

from uncertain origins. Due to poor care, it is now in many pieces. The copy seems to be a fourth century Coptic translation of a late second-century Greek text. No one knows if it was reliably translated or if the message of the original manuscript was completely revised.

Irenaeus, the well-known church father, branded the first version of the *Gospel of Judas* as heresy or false teaching. He mentioned that it was produced by Cainites,

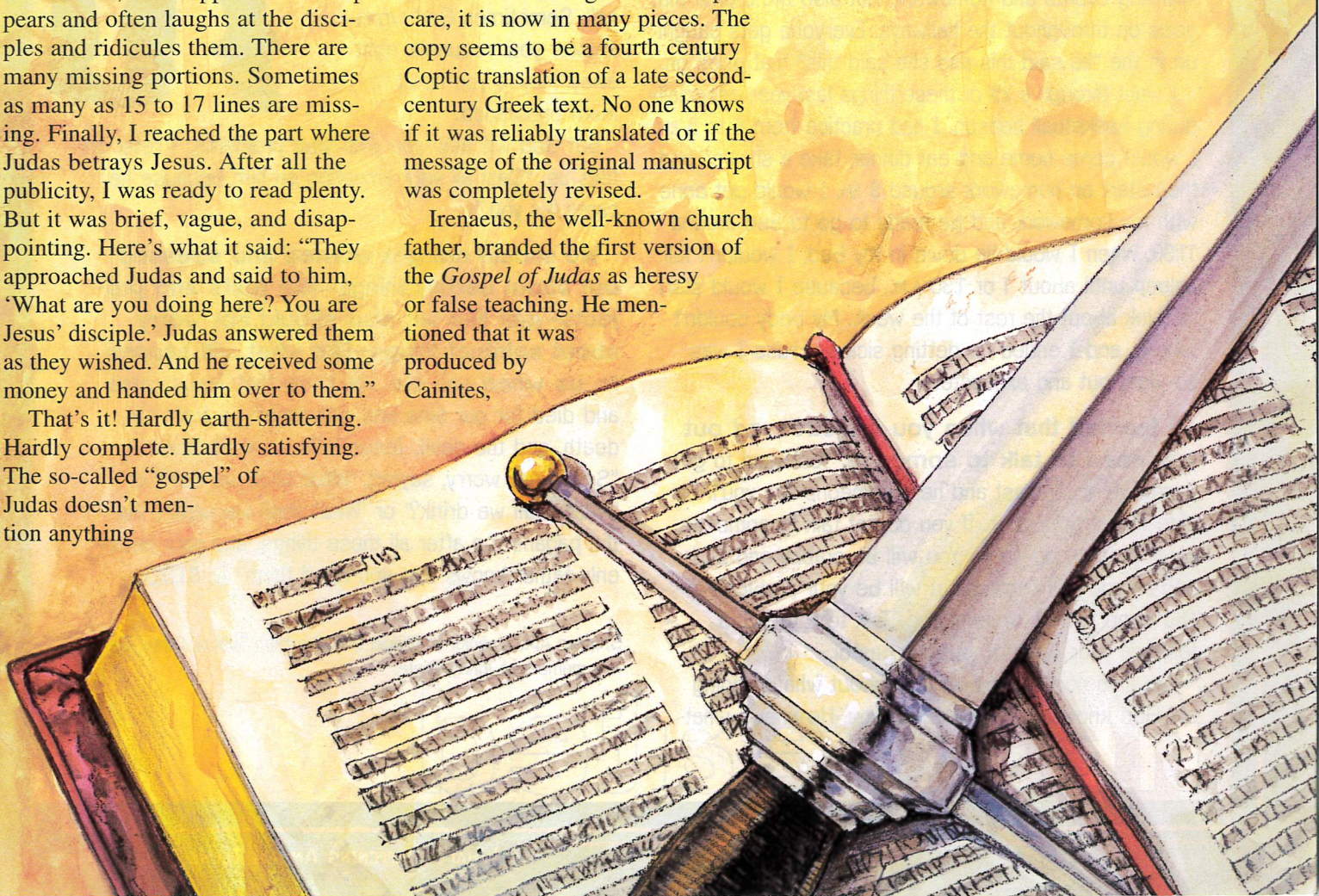
who did not hold to the Christian faith. They regarded the LORD of the Old Testament as evil, so they revered Bible characters who defied the LORD. Their heroes were Cain, Esau, Korah, the people of Sodom, and Judas.

The real Word of God reveals the real gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible is always right, including everything it says about Judas. He was not the hero of Holy Week. Jesus was. Only Jesus redeemed us from sin with his death on the cross. Only faith in Jesus saves. The *Gospel of Judas* doesn't say that, but the Bible does.

The media frenzy over the *Gospel of Judas* did not point to Jesus alone. Let's be sure that we do. Jesus is my Savior, and he's yours too!

Brian Keller is pastor at St. Stephen, Adrian, Michigan.

Find a related Bible study on this topic after April 5 at [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net)



# WHATEVER

## Stressed out?

When you are stressed out, you need to talk to someone. God should be at the top of your list.

Stephen Apt

**I** have four subjects, no study hall, and a basketball game. I won't be home till about 10 o'clock tonight to start on homework and eat dinner. On top of it all, I don't want to go home because my parents are angry at me."

**Have you ever felt this way—stressed out about everything you have to do, worried that you won't get everything done, just worn out?** I know I have. Life in high school can be very stressful.

A lot of things go on during high school. It's not just sporting events and homework, but also the drama that goes on throughout the hallways. Everyone gets caught up in the "he said this and she said this" that goes on.

I went through a lot of these things last year, especially during basketball season. I had practice from 6 to 8 P.M. I would come home and eat dinner, take a shower, and then start on homework around 9 P.M. I would get done with my homework and be ready to go to bed around 11:30. When I would lie down in my bed, I wouldn't fall asleep until about 1 or 1:30 A.M., because I would start to think about the rest of the week. My body couldn't take it, and I ended up getting sick because I was so worn out and exhausted.

**I learned that when you are stressed out you need to talk to someone.** You need to get things off your chest and hear someone say you'll be able to get through it. If you do not talk to someone, you'll start to go crazy. You will be crabby and sad, and all you will think about will be your problems. You need to talk to someone. Talk to a friend, a teacher, your parents, or your pastor.

You also need to talk to God about what is going on. God knows you; he created you. He knows what

you will get stressed out about. Ask him to help you get all your homework done. Ask him to help you and your parents get along. Ask him to help you understand where your parents are coming from and to help them understand where you're coming from. God will hear you. He is there all the time. He is like a 24-hour hotline waiting for your call. Sometimes God won't answer your requests right away. Maybe you need to learn endurance.

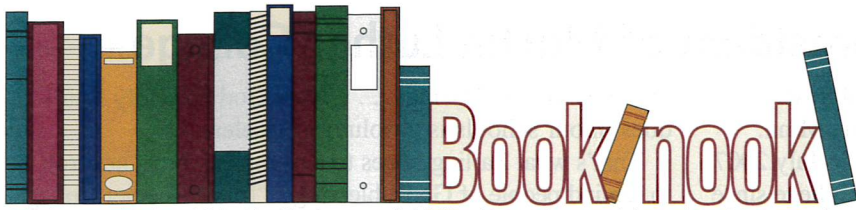
But God will help you with your problems. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us, "Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you."

**We should not get worried and stressed out about earthly things—like tests and projects—just like we also should not worry about spiritual things—like what will happen to us when we die.** We know that Jesus came and died for our sins and redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (v. 31,32).

Stephen Apt, a senior at Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Illinois, is a member at Trinity, Crete.



he created you



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

## Obituary

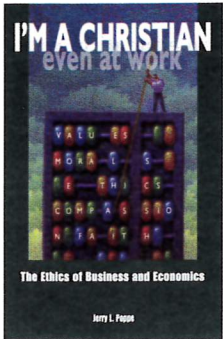
**Jarice Mae Inniger**  
1931-2007

Jarice “Jari” Mae Inniger (nee Manthe) was born March 10, 1931, in Milwaukee, Wis. She died Jan. 25, 2007, in Jenera, Ohio.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Trinity, Jenera, Ohio.

She was preceded in death by her son and her parents. She is survived by her husband, Harold; three sons; two daughters; and 11 grandchildren.

### God-pleasing answers to business issues



\$13.99

Businesspeople face challenges daily—even hourly—when it comes to decisions that affect what gets produced and sold, by whom and how. Many of these decisions are made by unfeeling market forces, but some are made by concerned Christians.

*I'm a Christian, Even at Work* by Jerry Poppe reinforces the belief that the Christian principles of following the Ten Commandments, loving your neighbor, and caring for those less fortunate will work in today's marketplace, even though those decisions are sometimes contrary to common business practice.

On the bookstore shelves are hundreds of books on how to get ahead and how to take advantage of opportunities, whether they are ethical or not. But for those of us who are in the world but not of the world this

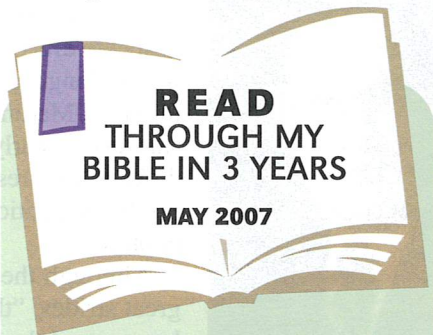
book does a good job of referencing Scripture to reinforce the Christian principles of love, honor, and compassion in relation to our daily business practices.

Chapter 10 is especially helpful in clarifying various dilemmas companies face in relation to scriptural principles. In a topic-by-topic format, Poppe takes us through a discussion of ideas such as stewardship of our natural resources, foreign labor practices, welfare reform, and benefits for same-sex partners.

Poppe leaves us not with concrete answers but with the emphasis to honor our Lord by studying the Scriptures and praying constantly for guidance and wisdom in our business decisions. In the business of a free market economy, this is the only way to find God-pleasing answers to sticky business issues.

I would recommend this book to people in business that could use a reaffirmation of their faith as they go about their workday.

*Mark J. R. Mattes*  
*Good Shepherd's, West Allis, Wisconsin*



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

## Untangling the Web



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

Sometimes pictures are worth a thousand words. A new photo gallery of WELS world mission fields can help you better understand and visualize the many faces and different places where WELS is sharing the good news of the Savior. A year and a half in the making, this searchable gallery includes archived and current pictures from many WELS world missions. These photos can be downloaded to use in presentations, promotions, and

mission festivals, or you can just explore the gallery on your own to learn more about the countries and the people to whom WELS is reaching out. Access the gallery at [www.wels.net/jump/wmphotos](http://www.wels.net/jump/wmphotos). (Note: For the security of missionaries and their families, not all mission fields will be listed online.)

Children under a tree in Malawi. This is just one example of the pictures that you can access in the World Mission Photo Gallery



## Call accepted for next president of Martin Luther College

On Jan. 15, 2007, Mark Zarling accepted the call to serve as president of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Current president Theodore Olsen will retire in July 2007. Olsen has served as president of Martin Luther College since its formation in 1995. "Even though things have changed over the years, our mission of proclaiming the gospel has not," says Olsen. "There are so many blessings at Martin Luther College."

For example, Martin Luther College is preparing students to serve wherever they are called, whether it's in an urban setting or across the world. "Diversity is not only a buzzword—it's a reality," says Olsen. "We need to proclaim the gospel to every nation and tribe, people and language. [To help fulfill this mission], Martin Luther College helps students get early field experience in different cultures, and has a very successful international teaching program in place."

Although the school is making great strides, "there are still challenges, and there always will be," says Olsen. Zarling agrees. "Certainly we know there are plenty of financial challenges, but not more than

the resources a good and generous God has given to his people. And let's never forget his amazing grace or close



Incoming president Mark Zarling

our eyes to the blessings. . . . What God the Holy Spirit does in our schools is absolutely priceless."

That's what Zarling hopes to accomplish in his new role—to remind people of God's blessings. "Martin Luther College has a single focus, a single purpose. God has graciously blessed the ministry of this school for many years, and I want people to understand that blessing does not come without cost, but it is priceless."

In his current role as professor of Christian education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Zarling sees the valuable training students receive at Martin Luther College. "I see the amazing blessing of God that year after year men come to the seminary with a solid liberal arts education and a knowledge of the biblical languages. But most importantly, I also see their willingness to submit to the Word and how the Spirit has captured their heart."

In the face of a changing world, Zarling also sees amazing opportunities for Martin Luther College to serve Jesus and the church. "We don't always have the answers, but we know the One who does. We need that confidence as we look at the opportunities God has placed before us, both as a church body and at our worker training schools. . . . Whether we're talking about preparing young men to enter the seminary, or preparing men or women to serve as teachers or staff ministers, finally it's always about Jesus. It's about souls. We need to clearly keep that focus—that connection of why we're training and how we're training—to best glorify the Savior and bring the Savior to others."

## Walking Together Sunday celebrates partnership

"In all of my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel" (Philippians 1:4,5), wrote the apostle Paul to the church in Philippi. This church modeled Christian fellowship as it strongly supported Paul in his ministry, even sending one of their members to serve him while he was imprisoned in Rome.

WELS has celebrated the blessing of partnership in the gospel since 2005 with an annual Walking Together Sunday.

"WELS is blessed with unity of doctrine and an enthusiasm to share the gospel because we dwell on what God tells us in the Bible and the Holy Spirit moves us through his Word," says Pastor Dave Liggett, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving. "The work we do as a synod is some of the

'fruit of the Spirit.'"

Walking Together Sunday spotlights these gospel ministry efforts, which include training Bible-wise pastors and teachers, carrying out mission work at home and in foreign countries, and supporting our churches and schools with a variety of resources and services. "God moves the hearts of his people to participate in this work and to give their offerings. By this support the gospel is proclaimed," says Liggett.

Members gave nearly a half million dollars in Walking Together offerings in 2006. In 2005 they offered just over one million dollars to the synod.

In January, the Ministry of Christian Giving shipped materials for the third Walking Together service to every congregation. The materials highlight Trinity, Crete, Ill., a congregation that both

supports and is supported by the synod. Each package contains a brief video, brochures, promotional posters, and worship resources based on the above theme from Philippians. The Walking Together materials can be used anytime, either as the primary focus of a service or to complement the specified church-year theme.

"I hope everyone is able to take part in this special service," says Liggett. "May the celebration of God's grace among us help us all better understand the blessings we have in WELS and encourage us to express our thanks with strong and steady support for our synod!"

For more information, go to [www.wels.net/jump/walkingtogether](http://www.wels.net/jump/walkingtogether) or call the Ministry of Christian Giving at 1-800-827-5482.

## WELS Blue Star Families offer support

The mailman, neighbors, and others that pass by can't help but notice the flag with a blue star in the window of Phil and Kim Hackbarth's home. The Hackbarths, members at St. John, Lannon, Wis., are following a tradition that goes back to World War I, when mothers who had sons serving on the front line would display the blue star flag. Today, the flag is still often displayed at homes where a loved one is serving in the U.S. military during times of war.

On June 6, 2005, the day after the Hackbarth's son Mike graduated from Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., he went off to boot camp in San Diego to begin his training for the Marines. His first tour of duty in Iraq recently ended. Realizing that other WELS families with loved ones in the military shared their concerns and fears as well as their faith and parental pride, the Hackbarths sought to connect with these families. With the assistance of WELS Special Ministries, the WELS Blue Star Families organization was formed.

WELS Blue Star Families offers support, Christian counsel, and encouragement to all who attend its gatherings, as well as to other WELS members and families with loved ones in military service. Several families in the Milwaukee area meet on a monthly

basis at members' homes. "We discuss the immediate needs of the troops—how we can help them get their taxes done if they are overseas, how we can assist and encourage the families here at home," explains Kim Hackbarth. "We discuss how we can help the troops spiritually. We look for ways to help in the community—such as volunteering at the Veterans Day parade. We're also concerned with how we are doing as families to these troops. We have a devotion and say a few prayers for our troops and their families."

Members of WELS Blue Star Families support each other by phone, e-mail, and in person. While the group is based in Wisconsin, families with loved ones in the military from coast to coast have contacted it for assistance and guidance. Special Ministries also provides the group with names and addresses of military families that may need support.

"While WELS Military Services continues to offer spiritual support via its civilian chaplains and printed materials, groups like WELS Blue Star Families supply a personal touch to this ministry," says Special Ministries Administrator Carl Ziemer. "Not only do these fine Christian men and women support their loved ones in the military, but they also comfort and encourage each other with God's Word and offer help and advice to others outside of their group."

*To donate items for care packages for troops or to learn more about WELS Blue Star Families, go to [www.wels.net/jump/military](http://www.wels.net/jump/military) or contact Special Ministries at [csm@sab.wels.net](mailto:csm@sab.wels.net); 414-256-3241. To refer friends or family members in the military to a WELS ministry, visit [www.wels.net/jump/refer](http://www.wels.net/jump/refer).*



The Hackbarth family when Mike graduated from boot camp on Sept. 16, 2005: (left to right) Joy, Kim, Mike, Phil, and Dave. The Hackbarths helped start WELS Blue Star Families to support WELS members and families with loved ones in military service.

## In the news



Students from **West Lutheran School, Plymouth, Minn.**, were featured on KARE 11, a TV news station serving Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans donated \$1,600

for students to purchase toys for the Toys for Tots program, part of West's "Care in Community" project. After doing some holiday shopping, the students delivered the toys to children during the 5 P.M. news on Dec. 11, 2006.

*The Redwood Gazette*, Redwood Falls, Minn., featured pastors and musicians from 10 WELS churches in its Jan. 22 issue. All attended a **School of Worship Enrichment seminar** (available through WELS Commission on Worship) at St. John, Redwood Falls. The seminar, designed "to strengthen, encourage, and equip God's people," gave participants a chance to hear new worship settings and discuss results of surveys done in their congregations.

**Pastor Glenn H. Unke**, serving Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis., was featured in Manitowoc's *Herald Times Reporter*. Unke presented an overview of the basic doctrines of WELS at First Presbyterian Church on Feb. 4. He was quoted as saying, "We believe that Scripture is unified, whole, true, and without error in everything it says, for the Savior said, 'The Scripture cannot be broken.' Therefore, it is the infallible authority and guide for everything we believe and do." The article also talked about Unke's role and responsibilities as visitation pastor for Immanuel.

The Feb. 12 issue of the *Citizen-Times* featured the building project of **Living Savior, Asheville, N.C.** The congregation, which has been worshipping in a funeral home for the past four years, is in the process of completing its new facility. "We'd love for the construction to be finished so we can get into it," said member Sue Barton. The congregation hopes to be worshipping in the new 250-seat sanctuary in June.

## LWMS conference to include voting on a name change

Since 1958, women of WELS congregations in the Midwest began gathering together for regional mission rallies. In 1964, these women formally organized as the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS). The 256 attendees adopted a constitution and mission statement that read "to increase interest in and to support mission endeavors which are a part of or in the interest of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod."

Nearly 44 years after that inaugural convention, the women of the Lutheran

Women's Missionary Society will again gather together around God's Word in worship, in fellowship, and in support of missions. From June 21-24, more than 1,500 women are expected to attend the annual three-day LWMS convention in Detroit, Mich., that will include presentations by home and world missionaries from Malawi, the Dominican Republic, Canada, and the West Indies, as well as a visit by a national pastor from our sister synod in India. Seven workshops are also offered that cover topics such as the work of our military chaplaincy, the Latin American Traveling Theological Educators, mentoring, and Bible study.

In addition to these activities, convention delegates will conduct LWMS business and vote on several proposed bylaw changes that include a change to the name of the organization. The proposed name "Women of WELS," and a tagline, "a heart for

missions," will go hand in hand with a new logo to be decided by a simple up or down vote.

"Delegates must consider how communications and the electronic media have changed our daily lives, and how this new name and logo may address these changes," says Sarah Malchow, LWMS president. "Consideration must also be given to the far-reaching effects and potential benefits a change may bring."

Though society and technology have changed since those pioneering women organized in 1964, the laser-like focus on missions has not. Delegates will be asked to consider what is best for an organization that looks ahead in anticipation to the next 44 years of supporting missions while at the same time looks back with appreciation to the women who have gone before them.

For more information on the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society and its upcoming convention, visit [www.lwms.org](http://www.lwms.org).



The current logo (left) and the proposed new logo (right) for the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. One of the things that will be decided at the LWMS convention this June will be if the organization should change its name and logo.

## Schools inspire students through seminars

Spreading the gospel—that's what it is all about.

To keep that thought in front of their students, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., and Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., incorporate into their curricula annual seminars that feature WELS pastors, teachers, and missionaries discussing evangelism and the ministry.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has been having mission seminars like this for decades. The seminars, now called Mission and Ministry, feature speakers discussing three areas of ministry within WELS: Home Missions, World Missions, and Parish Services.

"Mission and Ministry has that

inspirational component where you're really seeking to fire up the guys for mission work," says Daniel Leyrer, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. "But it's also meant to be educational in that they get to hear from different people from different areas of synod and learn how the synod really works together to carry out its mission of making disciples."

Seniors at the seminary work with area of ministry administrators to determine speakers and workshops. This year's Mission and Ministry, held Feb. 6-8, featured 33 workshops on topics such as spiritual growth planning, the ethnic ministry in Thailand, and cultivating a mission mindset in a congregation. Speakers

included Prof. John Lawrenz from Asia Lutheran Seminary, Hong Kong, who relayed his message to the students via Skype, an Internet telephone network.

On its Evangelism Day, Martin Luther College presents personal evangelism workshops and presentations delivered by called workers from all over the country. This event was held for the second time on Jan. 17 and included topics such as the joy of urban ministry, outreach through the Christian school, classroom evangelism, starting a spiritual conversation, and biblical leadership.

What perhaps makes the biggest impression on the students are the personal stories and the honesty and

## A milestone for *Meditations*



Fifty years ago, a need for devotional material was recognized within our church body—a need that was fulfilled through the publication of a small booklet titled *Meditations*.

First published by Northwestern Publishing House in 1957, *Meditations* quickly became a widely-used resource for daily devotions. Editors included Pastors Lyle Albrecht, Roland Cap Ehlke, Siegfried Fenske, and Werner Franzmann. The current editor, Pastor Curtis Jahn, continues their efforts, as *Meditations* marks its 50th year in print.

To commemorate the anniversary, Northwestern Publishing House is publishing a book this summer that brings together an assortment of *Meditations* devotions. With selections from some of the first volumes, the compilation represents a small fraction of the thousands of devotions printed over the last half century.

Printed quarterly in correlation with the church year, *Meditations* has remained relatively unchanged—besides the shift from King James to NIV—since its early beginnings. Scripture passages often correspond to current church readings, providing “a reinforcement of what the pastor may have preached on,” says Jahn. The booklets also provide supplemental studies that focus upon other passages, complementing personal Bible study or enhancing family devotions. Extending beyond Sunday’s sermon, they are also an accessible outreach tool for witnessing and evangelizing.

Pastors, missionaries, and professors around the world contribute to *Meditations*, allowing them to preach to an audience of nearly 150,000. Says Jahn, “*Meditations* is second only to *Christian Worship* in the number of people it puts into direct contact with God’s Word on a weekly basis as a published material.” More than 75,000 copies reach Christian households through church, school, and individual subscriptions.

While readership is primarily made up of WELS members, the use of *Meditations* is not limited to a specific demographic or denomination. Copies often find readers in hospital waiting rooms or nursing homes. They are also used in outreach programs like prison ministry. Even a Wisconsin-based trucking carrier receives a bulk subscription for the company’s use.

While much has changed since 1957, *Meditations* continues to edify with a purpose unchanged. Families have passed on the tradition to following generations. As Jahn has come to experience in his own life, “Children who grew up with the booklets in their homes as kids are now parents.” With God’s blessings, the publication will continue to flourish, readership will continue to reach new audiences, and devotions will continue to uplift and inspire.

To subscribe to *Meditations*, go to [www.nph.net/periodicals](http://www.nph.net/periodicals) or call Northwestern Publishing House at 1-800-662-6022.

Marissa Abernathy Draeger

humility that marks those stories.

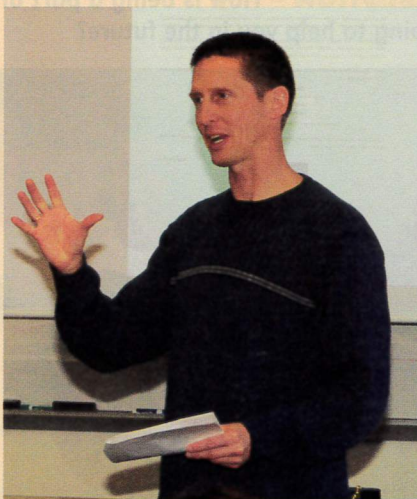
For example, one of this year’s speakers, Pastor Ross Stelljes from Living Savior, Littleton, Colo., told the story of the shootings at Columbine High School in April of 1999, the aftermath, and his congregation’s response. “I’m not going to tell you that we’re the Church Triumphant at Living Savior, Littleton,” Stelljes said, “because we’re not. In hindsight, I would have done some things differently.”

That’s the kind of insight that can only come from experience, and it’s exactly the kind of insight that students appreciate. “I wish we had Evangelism Day twice a year,” says senior Carrie Ewings, “because it’s

so refreshing. It makes you remember why you’re here at Martin Luther College.”

At Mission and Ministry, students from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary heard similar stories of gospel outreach and God’s grace.

“It’s always a good idea to keep these very real examples of what the Lord Jesus does through the gospel in front of our students,” says Leyrer. “Sometimes it’s a long haul before you become a pastor. . . . When the speakers tell their stories, the guys are really listening. They’re on the edge of their seat because they understand that that’s where they’re headed.”



Pastor Ross Stelljes told the story of the shootings at Columbine High School, the aftermath, and his congregation’s response at the second annual Evangelism Day in January at Martin Luther College.

## Q&A with Bethany Wehrenberg, teen member of the 2007 International Youth Rally Planning Committee

*Bethany Wehrenberg, a senior at St. Croix Lutheran High School, St. Paul, Minn., is involved in many high school activities and has taken on many leadership roles, including serving as a teen member of the 2007 International Youth Rally Planning Committee. With the help of two other teen members, Wehrenberg represents WELS teens and helps the committee determine what teens want. This is the second year teens have been involved in the planning process. With the rally fast approaching, Wehrenberg, a member of Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn., talked with Forward in Christ about this new role.*

**QUESTION** – What is the primary reason teens are serving on the planning committee?

**ANSWER** – I think a big part is to get more of a teen perspective—to help determine what teens today are thinking or what’s “cool” at the moment. We want teens at the rally to have a great experience and have as much fun as possible while still growing spiritually and strengthening their faith.

**QUESTION** – What in particular do you enjoy about the planning process so far?

**ANSWER** – I think one of the most fun parts for me was when we were in Dallas for a site visit. The Hyatt Regency Hotel has a staff to help with entertainment, and a huge list of entertainment possibilities was put in front of us. It was so much fun to give my input on what I think would be fun for teens to do at the rally. It was cool to see how my opinion and voice were actually heard—I wasn’t just “some teenager” talking.

**QUESTION** – How is being a part of this committee going to help you in the future?

**ANSWER** – This whole experience has really shown me my capabilities and leadership skills. I am given something to do and I’m responsible enough to get it done. I know [the other teen rally planners] and I feel that our God-given abilities are really showcased throughout this. It’s a learning experience.

**QUESTION** – What was really memorable about your first youth rally experience, and what made you want to come back?

**ANSWER** – The thing that makes youth rallies amazing is the speakers. The pastors that are chosen to speak are fantastic at what they do. They are funny and they connect with teens. It’s so uplifting spiritually. You just went away feeling great, and you couldn’t wait until the next sermon.

**QUESTION** – How do you think this rally helps teens?

**ANSWER** – I think one of the best things is when a topic comes up that we spoke about at the youth rally and people say, “That one speaker at the youth rally talked about this in his sermon.” People talk about the rallies all the time and how much fun they had and how they want to go back to hear the amazing speakers. You know [the rally] made an impact if people are still talking about it two or four years later.

**QUESTION** – Any other thoughts?

**ANSWER** – I’m so excited for the rally; I think it’s going to be amazing. . . . In Florida, we wore matching T-shirts to Disney World and people would [ask about our group.] And we told them about our youth rally and got into little conversations about the gospel. So when we walk around Dallas [this year] wearing our T-shirts, we’ll have opportunities to talk to people living in the area. That’s another cool thing about the rally—being able to spread the gospel wherever we are.



Bethany Wehrenberg and members of her church visit Epcot Center during the 2005 International Youth Rally in Orlando, Fla. Pictured are (back row, l to r): Breana Zierden, Edie Stellick (youth leader), Bethany Wehrenberg, Laura Streckert, and Elisabeth Backer. Front row: Jaci Hoppe (chaperone).



## District news

### Nebraska

**Beautiful Savior, Topeka, Kan.**, is offering a ministry program to the blind community in Topeka. Currently a small group attends, enjoying meals, devotions, hymn singing, and fellowship at the meetings. WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired has provided the church with Braille flyers and *Meditations* on audiocassette. Says Joel Pankow, pastor at Beautiful Savior, "Life is about service, answering the call from the Lord to serve people in our lives. So we are trying to serve the blind in the hopes of also giving them the gospel and letting our lights shine."

### Pacific Northwest

After searching for more than a decade, **Hope, Redmond, Wash.**, was able to purchase a piece of land and an existing worship facility. The congregation dedicated its new facility in November 2006.

In December 2006, **Beautiful Savior, Everett, Wash.**, dedicated its new multi-purpose facility. The building is already being used to expand the congregation's ministry and increase its presence in the community.

### South Atlantic

Students from **Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.**, took their 2006 Christmas Eve service on the road. Students, faculty, and volunteers made the one and a half hour trip to Emmanuel, Zephyrhills, Fla., where many members are retired and have not seen a children's Christmas service in years.

After years of worshipping in rental facilities, members of **Risen Savior, Pooler, Ga.**, are worshipping in their new church. The sanctuary was dedicated in September 2006.

### South Central

**Divine Peace, Garland, Tex.**, recently acquired an organ. The organ was donated by a funeral home in Geneva, Ill., and restored by an organ company in Dallas, Tex.

**Holy Word, Austin, Tex.**, has a Hispanic outreach event each Friday at

### South Atlantic



Students, faculty, and volunteers from King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., participated in a walk-a-thon to help those with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The group walked for four hours on Jan. 24, raising more than \$3,000 for the ALS Association, Florida Chapter.

a local community center. More than 23 children currently attend, learning Bible stories and doing crafts. Holy Word will soon be hiring a bilingual college student to help reach more families with the saving message of Christ.

### Northern Wisconsin

The varsity cheer and stunt competition team of **Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA), Fond du Lac, Wis.**, earned the state championship in the Division III Large Squad competition on Feb. 10. Darcy Rahjes, WLA cheer-leading coach, was also named 2006-07 Coach of the Year by the Wisconsin Association of Cheer/Pom Coaches.

### Western Wisconsin

**Trinity-St. Luke and St. Mark's, both in Watertown, Wis., and St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.**, are participating in a life-saving defibrillation program. These schools recently acquired automated external defibrillator (AED) devices, which administer a shock to the heart during emergencies and are used in conjunction with CPR. Staff at the churches and schools learned CPR techniques and how to use their AED equipment.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: NE—Tim Kemnitz; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Chris Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; NW—Joel Lillo; WW—Brett Brauer.

## ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

After Randy Westphal, principal at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., read the listing of the top 10 most performed holiday songs [Potluck, Dec. 2006], he decided to pose the question, "What is the name of your favorite Christmas song?" to the 400 students at Winnebago. Unlike the top 10 most performed holiday songs, religious songs were the favorites of these students (although Westphal shared that five picked "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"). Here are their top 10 selections:

- Joy to the World
- O Holy Night
- Away in a Manger
- Jingle Bells
- Hallelujah Chorus
- Silent Night
- What Child is This?
- O Come O Come Emmanuel
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- Hark the Herald Angels Sing

See what other readers chose as their favorite hymns in the Potluck poll results (p. 27).

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY****Pastors**

**Brug, Paul D.**, to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.  
**Brutlag, Brent S.**, to Resurrection, Maumee, Ohio.  
**Kurth, John H.**, to Apache Christian Training School, Whitewater, Ariz.  
**Pautz, Daniel D.**, to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.  
**Stern, Steven G.**, to retirement  
**Thiel, Jason J.**, to Peace, Otsego, Mich.  
**Westendorf, Rolfe F.**, to retirement  
**Worckentine, Paul M.**, to St. John, St. John's, Antigua.  
**Zarling, Mark G.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

**Teachers**

**Carpenter, Brenda S.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.  
**Kolander, Anna M.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Michel, Jamie**, to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Nass, Julie A.**, to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Peasall, Pamela K.**, to St. John, Baraboo, Wis.  
**Radue, Lisa K.**, to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**College Station, Tex.**—Beautiful Savior (25). April 15, 5:30 P.M. Fellowship and refreshments to follow. Caleb Schoeneck, 979-693-4514; Web site, [www.beautiful-savior.net](http://www.beautiful-savior.net).  
**Flower Mound, Tex.**—Prince of Peace (25). May 6, 4:30 P.M. Dinner to follow service. RSVP requested. Lee Niethammer, 972-317-6016; LeeFN@aol.com.  
**St. Paul Park, Minn.**—St. Andrew's school (50). May 6, 10:30 A.M. Lunch to follow. Eric Oakland, 651-459-3021; standrews50th@yahoo.com.  
**Muskego, Wis.**—St. Paul (150). May 12, 6 P.M.; May 13, 8, 9:30, and 11 A.M.; May 14, 7 P.M. June 2, 6 P.M.; June 3, 8, 9:30, and 11 A.M.; June 4, 7 P.M. June 30, 6 P.M.; July 1, 8, 9:30, and 11 A.M.; July 2, 7 P.M. Vince Kirchoff, 414-327-1619; Web site, [www.stpaulmuskego.org](http://www.stpaulmuskego.org).  
**Milwaukee, Wis.**—Divine Peace (50). May 20, 10 A.M. William Bernhardt, 414-545-4345 or Amanda Kohlmetz, 262-662-9638; amanda.kohlmetz@wlc.edu.  
**Tampa, Fla.**—Northdale (50). June 10. Morning worship, 10 A.M.; Anniversary service, 3 P.M. Dinner to follow. 813-961-9195.  
**Lincoln, Neb.**—St. Mark (50). June 10, 10 A.M. Meal to follow. Elfi Lee, 402-483-0508; Web site, [www.stmarkwels.org](http://www.stmarkwels.org).  
**Beloit, Wis.**—Good Shepherd (50). June 17, 10 A.M. Luncheon to follow. Dawn Martin, 608-362-8720.

**COMING EVENTS**

**Concerts**—Reach the World WELS Choir, Tucson, Ariz. Web site, [www.reachthe-worldchoir.com](http://www.reachthe-worldchoir.com). Please note updates from last month.

- April 15—Peace, Cottonwood, Ariz., 9 A.M.
  - April 22—St. Paul's, Douglas, Ariz., 11 A.M.
  - April 28—Immanuel, Lakeside (high school), Ariz., 7 P.M.
  - April 29—Immanuel, Lakeside (church), Ariz., 10 A.M.
  - May 20—Resurrection, Phoenix, Ariz., 10 A.M.
- Tour**—Concert Choir, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
- April 1—Our Savior's, Port Orange, Fla., 9 and 11 A.M.; Risen Savior, Orlando, Fla., 4 P.M.; King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., 7 P.M.
  - April 2—New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla., 7 P.M.
  - April 3—Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla., 7 P.M.
  - April 4—Abiding Love, Cape Coral, Fla., 6:45 P.M.
  - April 5—Ascension, Sarasota, Fla., 7 P.M.
  - April 6—Abiding Grace, Covington, Ga., 7 P.M.
  - April 8—Living Word, Gray, Tenn., 8:15 and 10:45 A.M.; Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, 6:15 P.M.

**Concert**—Michael Schroeder. April 3, 8 P.M. Weasler Auditorium, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis. Hosted by Marquette WELS Campus Ministry. [muwels@muwels.org](mailto:muwels@muwels.org).

**WELS Regional Handbell Festivals**—A concert will be held at 2 P.M., on each of the respective Sundays. Kim Pilz, [kim@tomah.com](mailto:kim@tomah.com); Web site, [www.wellsbells.com](http://www.wellsbells.com).

- April 14-15. Host, Salem, Loretto, Minn.; site, West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.
- April 21-22. Host, St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.; site, D.C. Everst Junior High School, Schofield, Wis.
- April 21-22. Host, Peace, Hartford, Wis.; site, Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.

**Alcohol and Drug Abuse Awareness Retreat**—April 20-22. Byron Center, Brownsville, Wis. Sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service. Elsa Manthey, 920-731-9798; emanthey@wlcfs.org.

**Women's Enrichment Weekend**—April 20-22. Salem, Stillwater, Minn. Karen Diethert, 715-549-6519; diethert@sbcglobal.net.

**Women of the WELS (WOW) 3 Retreat**—April 20-22. Site, Willow Valley Resort, Lancaster, PA. Eileen Bartels Hadden 703-430-8873; wow3@stjohnsde.org.

**WELS Church Librarians' Organization spring conference**—April 21. Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis. \$10. Betty, 608-837-7468. Web site, [www.wels.net/jump/clo](http://www.wels.net/jump/clo).

**Concert**—Cascade Lutheran Chorale, April 22, 4 P.M. Grace, Portland, Ore.

**WELS Staff Ministers Conference**—April 27-28, Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis. \$50 for called/certified staff ministers; \$20 for full-time staff ministry students. Kristen Koepsell, [kristen.koepsell@st-andrew-online.org](mailto:kristen.koepsell@st-andrew-online.org).

**Singles Seminar**—April 28. Milwaukee, Wis. Sponsored by S.H.A.R.E. 262-534-7852; [share@wels.net](mailto:share@wels.net).

**Lutheran Radio Church Service annual meeting**—May 1, 7 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran College. 262-251-7159.

**Church dedication**—May 20, 2 P.M. Reception to follow. Mount Olive, Delano, Minn. Karen Becker, 763-972-2442.

**Graduation week events at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary**—Vicar assignment service, May 22, 7 P.M. Call day service and assignment of graduates, May 24, 10 A.M. Commencement concert, May 24, 7:30 P.M. Graduation service, May 25, 10 A.M.

**2007 Grand Alaska Escorted Land Tour**—June 15-24. Sponsored by Camp Phillip. Marcus Buch, 920-478-2937, [mbuch@hurleycomputers.com](mailto:mbuch@hurleycomputers.com).

**44th Annual Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Convention**—June 21-24 in Detroit, Mich. Hosted by the Alpha Circuit. [centraloffice@lwms.org](mailto:centraloffice@lwms.org); Web site, [www.lwms.org](http://www.lwms.org).

**Actor/Video day camps**—held in Fort Atkinson, Wis. Steve Zambo, 414-256-3281; [steve.zambo@sab.wels.net](mailto:steve.zambo@sab.wels.net).

- Video Production Day Camp Session 1—for grades 7-9. June 11-15.
- Actors Day Camp Session 1—for grades 7-9. June 11-15.
- Video Production Day Camp Session 2—for grades 7-9. June 18-22.
- Actors Day Camp Session 2—for grades 7-9. June 18-22.
- Advanced Actor Television Workshop—for all ages. June 23-24.

**POSITIONS AVAILABLE**

**Director of Bachelor of Science Nursing Program**—for Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. The individual must be a WELS member in good standing, have earned a Ph.D. in the field, have a minimum three years experience in nursing education, and hold a current RN license. Submit names to John D. Kolander, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Wisconsin Lutheran College, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226; [John.Kolander@wlc.edu](mailto:John.Kolander@wlc.edu).

**NAMES WANTED**

**Silver City and Lordsburg, N.M.**—Steven Spencer, 520-458-5897; [tlcsvaz@cox.net](mailto:tlcsvaz@cox.net).

**Texas A & M former students and Aggie Alumni in College Station, Tex.**—Ben Rupp, 512-799-0458; [benrupp04@gmail.com](mailto:benrupp04@gmail.com).

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

# Reflections ON OUR favorite hymns

In January, we asked our readers what their favorite hymns are and why. We received many replies, more than we can print. Here is a list of the favorites as well as some stories behind the selections.

## Favorite hymns

Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See (3)  
What a Friend We Have in Jesus (3)  
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (2)  
Go, My Children, with My Blessing (2)  
How Great Thou Art (2)  
Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus (2)  
Oh, that the Lord Would Guide  
My Ways (2)

Where Shepherds Lately Knelt (2)  
Abide with Me  
Beautiful Savior  
Children of the Heavenly Father  
Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying  
I am Jesus' Little Lamb  
I Know that My Redeemer Lives  
In Christ Alone

Just as I Am, without One Plea  
Lift High the Cross  
Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart  
Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink  
On Eagles' Wings  
Salvation unto Us Has Come  
Shine, Jesus, Shine

## Reader comments

My favorite hymn is "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" because my mother used to sing this to me when I was growing up in the 1940s. It was her favorite hymn. When she died, I had it for her funeral. When I hear it now, I think of her. —*Helen Marrier, Cottage Grove, Minnesota*

My favorite hymn is "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." It reminds me that Jesus is indeed my best friend and that I can talk to him anytime through prayer. It is a hymn that has always given me comfort. —*Nancy Whitcomb, Burlington, Wisconsin*

My favorite is "Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus." My confirmation class chose this hymn as its class motto, and I often use the first verse as a prayer in my morning devotions. It continually reminds me of the oath I took before God at my confirmation—to "follow his example pure." —*Duane Timm, Pompano Beach, Florida*

My favorite hymn is "Salvation unto Us Has Come" because of its unparalleled presentation of sin and grace, of law and gospel. I can't think of another hymn that confronts the sin in us and then points us to our Savior as effectively as this one. —*Dana Rabenberg, Castle Rock, Colorado*

"Go, My Children, with My Blessing" is a perfect trifecta of confidence, tingles, and boost. —*Holli Zwiig*

"Abide with Me" is a song that is a prayer, memorized as a small child and never forgotten; these words have guided me all my life. As a child they taught me not to be afraid of the dark or what will happen next. God was always with me, holding me by the hand, and I had nothing to fear.

During the trials and tribulations of growing up, I knew he would always be there for me. The simple words and melody were easy to recall, and they were my plea for help and guidance. . . .

The years are adding up and, yes, the eyesight is fading, but my eyes are on the cross where the light is bright and the path clear. Someday, I will see heaven's morning break, the earth's

shadows will be gone, and I will be with the Lord. Then, he will say, "Abide with me." —*Carol J. Fisher, West Bend, Wisconsin*

My favorite hymn is "I am Jesus' Little Lamb," because my son was comforted by that hymn before he was taken to heaven on the day before Mother's Day in 2001. —*Ervin E. Bratsch, Danube, Minnesota*

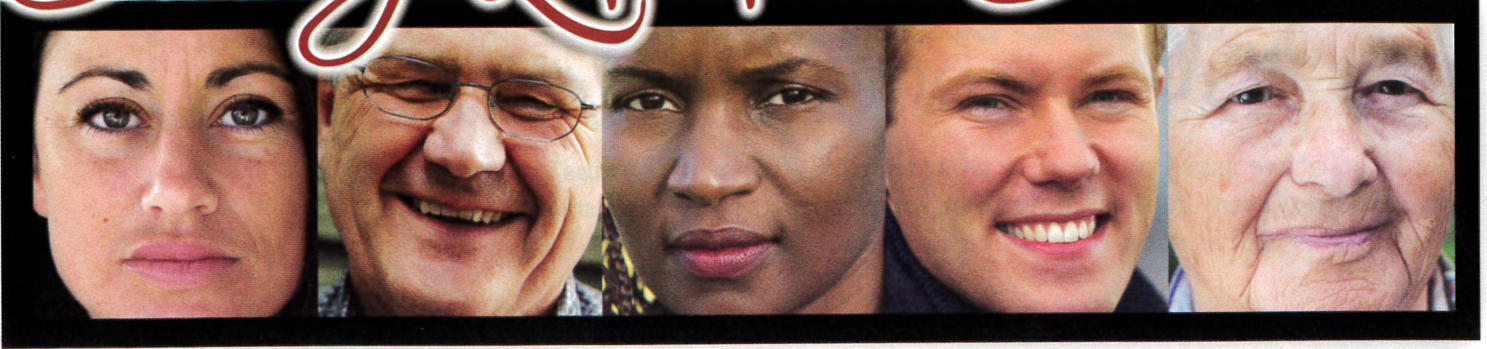
I have many favorite hymns but within the last two years after my husband's death, when it was difficult for me to get to sleep at night, after I'd say my prayers I would recite in my mind "Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways," "How Great Thou Art," and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." —*Jean Steinmetz Hansen, South Shore, South Dakota*

For the last two years my favorite hymn has been "Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See." The first time I heard it two young ministers were singing it for their father-in-law's funeral. This hymn reminds me that no matter how bad things may get in the life, there is life and hope at the end which Jesus' blood and righteousness procured for me. I can join him in heaven when this life is over. —*Ruth Moldenhauer, Kiel, Wisconsin*

There are many hymns that I like, especially the good old German chorales in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. But, when I was a teacher, I usually taught each class in turn the hymn, "Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways." It is a simple melody, easy to learn, and expresses Christian living in a nutshell. —*Jane Ross, Winona, Minnesota*

On Palm Sunday, March 25, 1945, my confirmation class had chosen "Abide with Me" as our class hymn. During the service the hymn "Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink" was used and became my favorite hymn. Now, 61 years later, it continues to be a prayer hymn for me. My husband is moved by "Lift High the Cross." His love for this hymn dates back to when we were choir members. —*Ed & Laura Kleinke, Bay City, Michigan*

# Every Life for Christ:



John A. Braun

## SALT IN THE WORLD

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses an idea to describe us and all believers: “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13).

**W**e are believers in Jesus—Lutherans because we are Christian. God has made us so. He has called us by the gospel and made us his own people here in this world. But God doesn’t take us out of the world once we believe. He has a plan for us.

Every Christian considers himself or herself salt in this world. Each of us has an influence that God uses in this world. That influence isn’t limited to called pastors, teachers, or staff ministers. God provides opportunities for us all to be salt in the world.

God has given each of us specific

and talents in connection with the work of the visible church. That’s like looking at Christians—at ourselves—living a God-pleasing life inside a salt shaker.

We gather together to worship our Savior. We attend meetings. We teach Sunday school or vacation Bible school. Perhaps we even lead a Bible class. We sing in the choir. We bake cookies or cook for activities in church. That’s life in the salt shaker when other Christians, who are also salt, gather together.

We need each other. One Christian encourages another. A word of sym-

world. We are to have an influence outside the salt shaker.

Our daily work outside the church becomes the mission field. When we do our job well, we are doing as Jesus asked. Our conversations—even about sports or current events—demonstrate self-control, respect for others, patience, and Christian virtues. In these situations, we find opportunities to witness. Then we are living outside the salt shaker in the real world.

We are also salt when our families note our love for each other, our consideration, and our sincere joy in the smile or efforts of our children or the accomplishments of our spouse. When a child can call a father “Dad” with admiration or can boast about Mom’s kindness and love, we understand the influence we have as believers in Jesus.

Of course, we will always have opportunities to show our concern for those who suffer in this world—the poor, those afflicted with diseases, or those suffering from disaster. Opportunities are out there. Gain strength inside the salt shaker but remember that God sprinkles us all into this world to live outside the shaker too.

*John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ*

*This is the third article in an eight-part series on vocation. To read other articles in the series, go to [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net), and search by the author’s first and last name.*

### [JESUS] SHAKES US OUT OF OUR CHURCH ACTIVITIES AND SPRINKLES US INTO THE WORLD.

talents and gifts and calls us to use those gifts. To some, God has given the ability to understand physics or mathematics. To others he gives the skill and precision to be accountants. Still others have the ability to work on machines of all kinds.

These talents are not separated from your faith. Because the Holy Spirit has made you a believer he has tied these other gifts and talents to your faith. You can use them to be salt in this world.

#### Life inside the salt shaker

Sometimes we consider ourselves as salt but only think of our abilities

pathy or compassion finds a ready place in the heart of those who suffer. We also gather together to hear the gospel, and through it God strengthens our faith. Jesus encouraged us to come together also to receive his body and blood.

#### Life outside the salt shaker

But life in the salt shaker is only part of our Christian life. As believers we are not to simply look out at the world through the glass of the salt shaker. Jesus does not want us to stay inside. He shakes us out of our church activities and sprinkles us into the

# ELIZABETH OF THURINGIA:

## Giving for others

Love and compassion should not be just words. Actions follow. God uses his believers to dispense food, help, and kindness to others.

Theodore J. Hartwig

**S**tanding on the high, castle-crowned hill overlooking Marburg, one's eyes are attracted to the most imposing structure in the charming old city below, one of the first Gothic churches built in Germany. Taking almost 50 years to build, it was dedicated in 1283 and named for a noblewoman whose mortal remains are buried in a shrine near the altar. Her name was Elizabeth. Born a Hungarian princess in 1207, she was betrothed at the age of four and, shortly after, was taken to the Thuringian lands of her future husband Ludwig. She lived with him as a sister at the Wartburg Castle. At 14, she and 21-year-old Ludwig were married.

### Wife, mother, and helper of the needy

Their marriage was a happy one. Besides caring for her newborn children, Elizabeth devoted herself to works of charity. She provided food and clothing for the poor, cared for the sick, furnished bed and board for destitute wayfarers, and paid for a 28-bed hospital below the Wartburg hill.

In the famine- and disease-ravaged months of 1226 while her husband was absent on government duty in Italy, she dipped into the state treasury to support her relief work. When, at Ludwig's homecoming, the state officials complained to him about

her extravagant charities, he responded: "In God's name, let her alone. From Scripture I know of three virtues pleasing to God and mankind. They are that people live together in peace and harmony, that Christians show love and trust to one another, and that husband and wife are of one mind and heart."

After Ludwig's death of a fever in 1227, Elizabeth committed her three children to the care of others and moved from Wartburg Castle to the nearby city of Marburg. She used her dowry for cash handouts to the poor and for the construction of a hospital in Marburg. Here she ministered to the sick, giving special attention to those afflicted with the most loathsome diseases. Physically exhausted, she died on Nov. 17, 1231, at the tender age of 24. On her deathbed, she directed her attendants away from herself to Jesus. She added her life's motto: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

### A lovely Christian example

Shortly after Elizabeth's death, miracles began to be reported at her grave and hospital in Marburg. Four years later, the cornerstone was laid for St. Elizabeth's Church, and after 14 years her bones were transferred to its yet unfinished sanctuary. In 1529, Philip of Hesse, a leader of the Lutheran Reformation, removed the



bones and thus put an end to the misdirected superstition.

With her faith, fortitude, and charities, Elizabeth remains one of the loveliest women in the history of the church. Along one of the corridors at the Wartburg, a series of paintings depicts popular events in the castle's history. Among these is one of Elizabeth, bread-laden basket in hand, on her way to help the hungry. But when checked by her accusers, the loaves in her basket had turned into roses, frustrating their accusations. Pious fiction though it is, the picture and story accentuate Elizabeth's compelling love for the down-and-out. In this spirit, we can hear the legend, grant its fictional character, yet be edified by the larger truth behind it.

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

*Next month: John Brenz*



# I shot a man, but GOD

Lucille Keppen is the oldest inmate in the United States. Guards and inmates call her "Grandma," but she calls Jesus, Savior.

As told by Lucille Keppen to William J. Schaefer II

I don't know why I did it. I shot a man in the back—twice.

I didn't want to kill him. I just wanted to hurt him as much as he hurt me. Even when you are 88 years old, you still have those kinds of feelings. Too bad this sinner can't blame it on senility or dementia.

The court-appointed psychologist said that it was because the man had deserted me. She said I had some syndrome about men because they were always leaving me. My father died when I was a teenager. I left my first husband because he left me and our sons for his first choice: alcohol. I eventually did marry again, but Harold has been gone now for more than 20 years. Even before he died, I buried both of my sons.

Then along came "the man." He was about 25 years my junior, and he moved into the senior housing where I lived. He called me "Mom," and I treated him like a son. He also called himself a Christian, and he kept referring to himself as an apos-

tle of Jesus Christ. I should have been suspicious when he kept telling me that God would send me to hell if I didn't do what he said. But I was happy for the companionship and enjoyed our frequent outings. I drove my car because he didn't have one, and I bought everything he needed. I did a lot of things for this man. I even left my congregation as I followed him from one church to another Sunday after Sunday.

After five years, he didn't need me anymore. He started to receive disability income, and he could do without my money. But he was angry when I didn't give him my car when I stopped driving. He wouldn't speak with me, and he started ridiculing me in front my friends and the other residents.

I returned to my congregation and was welcomed back with open arms. I cried when I sat in church that first Sunday back. Yes, Jesus and his love, this is what I needed. I can remember wondering, "Why did I ever leave?"

Then came that Sunday evening when it happened. I was so angry with "the man" that I went to the dresser and got my gun, loaded it with two bullets, and headed down to the lounge in our building. I knew he would be there. That's when and where I shot him.

The man was taken to the hospital and, in time, recovered. The police came and arrested me. I spent the night in jail and never did return to my apartment. I left jail for a room in a nursing home as I awaited trial.

I still don't know what got into me one Thursday night. I walked out of my room, out the front doors of the care center and across the lawn to one of the busiest highways in town. Even at 7:30 P.M., traffic was steady. I walked out into the first lane, hoping an oncoming car would end my life. But the car stopped. So I walked out into the second lane, only to find traffic coming to a standstill there. I started to climb over the cement barrier. If I couldn't get hit by east-

bound traffic, I'll try westbound! But my legs were too short for the climb, and the driver of the first car was too fast. He grabbed me and held on to me and told me about the angels that the Lord had sent to protect me.

I was moved to a new room, but this time in a locked ward in a different nursing home. Thank God my pastor was there bringing me God's Word. I still didn't understand a lot of things, but the Holy Spirit was working repentance and faith in my heart. I discovered that I had been thinking more about the man who hurt me than the God-man who died for me.

Now there was the matter of paying my debt to society. The court-appointed attorney advised me to plead guilty. I would celebrate my 89th birthday the day before my final court appearance. When the judge gave me the maximum sentence of seven and a half years, I fainted and left the courtroom on a stretcher.

Now I understand that I am the oldest inmate, male or female, in the United States. I am called "Grandma" by guards and inmates alike. But that's okay. I am where I'm supposed to be. I've come to call it home for a while. Forgiveness with Jesus makes any life worth living anywhere.

What's life like now? Would you be surprised if I told you it's better than ever? God saved my life and put

me here among people in a prison. When I say "prison," I'm not talking just about locked doors, controlled movement 23 hours a day, and guards and cameras everywhere. I'm talking about the prison of the heart and the darkness of the soul. I am talking about spiritual ignorance and guilt and fear. I see this every day in so many of the women in this place. I know they need Jesus.

I cherish the time with my large-print *Meditations*. It's like having Jesus right there with me.

For four months the women at my table watched me pray before I eat. Now we are praying together.

I've forgiven "the man" and am thankful that he has recovered, even if I don't want to see him this side of heaven.

I take an art class where I make cards that I send to friends.

I even got my high school diploma while living here.

At 93 years old I still don't understand a lot of things. But I have learned that "where sin increased, grace increased all the more . . . to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20). Yes, I know better now what sin is and what it does. But I know Jesus better, too. The Lord has been so good to me.

I don't know exactly how long I'll be here. There may be an early release—if I can find a job and a

place to live. Or I might leave earth for heaven from this place. I'm okay with that.

If I am released before I die, the first place I want to go is to my church and say, "Thank you, Jesus," one more time. But if I die before I'm released, I know I'll be saying it to him in person in heaven, even while my friends gather with my ashes for a memorial service at church.

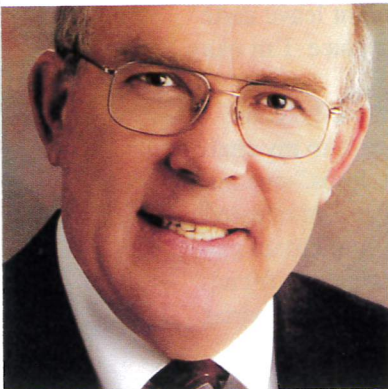
So let it be said that I shot a man, but God saved my life!

*William J. Schaefer II was Lucille's pastor at St. John, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He now serves at St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minnesota.*

Lucille Keppen's high school graduation in June 2006. She writes, "Never too old. Me at 92. Only in America!"



saved  
my life!



*Karl R. Gungl*

## We shall be changed

**W**e don't deal well with change. Christ's first disciples didn't either.

Remember Jesus' first miracle of changing water into wine? We're told that when they saw it, his disciples trusted in him. However their trust in him was not uninterrupted. When they were with him on the storm-tossed sea, they worried about his ability to rescue them. "Lord, save us. We're going to drown!" they shouted (Matthew 8:25). And when he rescued them, they wonderingly exclaimed. "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:27).

Just when their trust in him had been magnified by his consistent words and miraculous works, suddenly, seemingly, it all stopped. At least he stopped using his miraculous power to defend himself. He let men arrest, accuse, and actually crucify him. This change was hard for the disciples. As the Emmaus disciples disappointedly put it on Easter eve, "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21).

Others had those same fears. It wasn't confidence in the resurrection that brought the women to the tomb early on Easter morning. They had come to anoint the Savior's dead body. When one of them, Mary Magdalene, discovered the change that had taken place—he was alive—she reached for him and wanted to hold on to him. She wanted this change to continue uninterrupted. It wouldn't, Jesus told her. He would return to his God and Father and, one day, would take Mary and all of us to be with him forever.

But while we wait for that final change, changes have already taken place in us. Indeed they must if the final change is ever to happen for us. The Savior used a little child to teach his proud disciples this important lesson. Jesus said to his disci-

ples: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

It wasn't childishness Jesus was promoting. Rather he was speaking of child-like faith, the change that the new birth by the Spirit works within us. Like a child trusts his father, faith clings to the merits of Christ Jesus, making no claims of self-worth or self-works.

This change, from unbelief to faith, will bring about the ultimate change from death to life. It's what Paul is speaking about in 1 Corinthians: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (15:51).

That change hasn't happened yet. With each passing year, despite a healthy diet, exercise, medicine, and cosmetics, we notice our bodies wearing out. But the ultimate change God promised us was the transition from perishable to imperishable, from mortal to immortal.

That permanent change is still coming. Each time we're made aware of what Easter means, we're filled with appreciation for this future gift of God. That gift of immortality and glorious, resurrected bodies fills us with a desire to live our lives for Christ.

Unfortunately our lives of gratitude are never perfect; our sinful flesh holds us back. Still every life for Christ remains our goal since his perfection has changed our status before God from sinner to saint. It is because of this God-produced change that we trust we shall be changed finally and forever. Sooner or later, the ultimate change will be ours. Death will be swallowed up in victory!



# LESSONS FROM THE CREED

Charles F. Degner

*"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord . . . born . . ."*

In a poem called "Christus Paradox," Sylvia Dunstan calls Jesus "the everlasting instant." A paradox is a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true. Because Jesus is true God and true man in one person, because he is fully human and fully divine at the same time, he is the ultimate paradox.

## The ultimate paradox

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). This statement is true only because Jesus is God. He is fully divine. God does not change with the seasons or with the centuries. He existed before there was time, and he will endure when there is no time. He cannot be confined to a time and a place. Yet when Jesus was 12 years old, his parents took him up to the feast (Luke 2:42). When he was 30 years old, he began his ministry. How can this be? How can the eternal be counted in years? This is true because Jesus is true God and true man in one person and in the same instant.

At a particular moment in time, Jesus was teaching in the temple. The Jews claimed to be children of Abraham, but refused to believe in him. Jesus told them that Abraham rejoiced in seeing his day. "'You are not yet fifty years old,' the Jews said to him, 'and you have seen Abraham!' 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'" At this, they picked up

## JESUS IS TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN IN ONE PERSON AND IN THE SAME INSTANT.

stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds" (John 8:57-59).

The Jews saw the paradox, and they refused to believe that it could be true. How could a man who was less than 50 years old have seen Abraham? When Jesus said, "I am," they immediately picked up stones to kill him because Jesus identified himself with the great I AM who called Moses from the bush. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

## True God and true man

This paradox is true in every aspect of his being. One moment, Jesus was sleeping in the boat while a storm raged

(Matthew 8:23-27). He was so tired that not even the wind and the waves could wake him. In the next moment, he stood up and rebuked the winds and waves, and the sea became completely calm. You see a man with limited strength and a God with unlimited power. And they are one in Christ.

God is immeasurable. When the psalmist attempts to describe God's immeasurable mercy, he tells us that as far as the heavens are above the earth, as far as the east is from the west, so great is God's love for us (Psalm 103:11,12). Scientists measure the distance to the stars in light years—the distance light can travel in a year at a speed of 186,000 miles per second. Even if these measurements are accurate, we still cannot measure God.

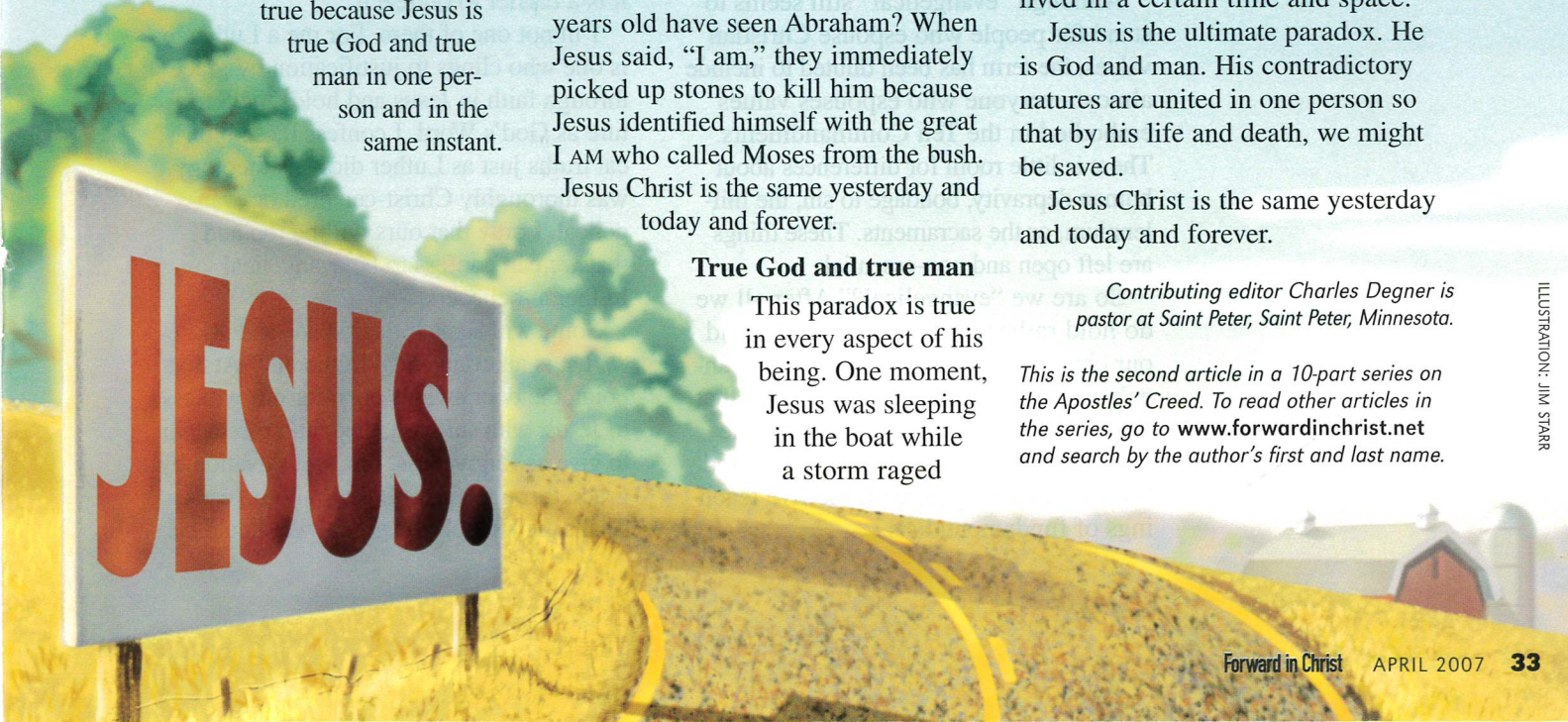
Yet, in Christ we find a person who is measurable. He grew in stature (Luke 2:52). Joseph could put his carpenter's ruler on the wall and measure Jesus' height. He was a man who lived in a certain time and space.

Jesus is the ultimate paradox. He is God and man. His contradictory natures are united in one person so that by his life and death, we might be saved.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

*Contributing editor Charles Degner is pastor at Saint Peter, Saint Peter, Minnesota.*

*This is the second article in a 10-part series on the Apostles' Creed. To read other articles in the series, go to [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net) and search by the author's first and last name.*



JESUS.



## Evangelical?

Some of our congregations retain the name “Evangelical.” They put Ev. as part of their name. Perhaps many people have no knowledge that Ev. is short for evangelical. Because it’s a long word, sign makers find it hard to put all that on the sign out in front. So the sign reads “St. Mark’s Ev. Lutheran Church” or “Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church.”

Evangelical has come to mean a group of Protestant Christians. In the media they are usually considered conservative Christians. They often are politically active and, at least in some views, were responsible for electing George W. Bush. Some don’t like being associated with such political clout. For that reason and perhaps because the word has lost some of its meaning lately, they mean “biblical Christians” when they apply the word “evangelical” to themselves.

Evangelicals are different from fundamentalists. Fundamentalists assert five fundamentals: inerrancy of the Scripture, the virgin birth, the vicarious atonement, the physical resurrection of Jesus, and the authenticity of Christ’s miracles. Evangelicals agree that the inerrancy of Scripture is important and that God is triune. The difference seems to be in their activism—a desire to make society more godly.

Although “evangelical” still seems to stand for people who espouse Christian values, the term has been diluted to include almost everyone who espouses values embodied in the Ten Commandments. There is little room for differences about human depravity, bondage to sin, the millennium, or the sacraments. These things are left open and non-essential.

So are we “evangelical?” After all we do hold rather conservative views, and our churches are labeled “Ev.” or “evangelical.” We are members of a synod that even has evangelical in its name, the Wisconsin *Evangelical* Lutheran Synod. We could even agree with the five teachings of fundamentalists.

But we are different! Our congregations used the word “evangelical” long before the popular religious movement of the past few decades. Many were established a century or more ago. Our synod was founded in 1850 and used the word “evangelical” as part of its name.

So what do we mean? Evangelical describes an approach and attitude that is centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ. That definition of the word has almost disappeared today. One does not hear an emphasis on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus very often in the media’s description of evangelicals. One might wonder if evangelicals have forgotten it too. We could ask if they have turned more toward conservative activism than proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through Jesus and victory over death by his resurrection.

We are evangelical in that sense—centered on Jesus Christ and his message of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

We are evangelical Lutherans. That word—Lutheran—too has lost some of its meaning in our current world. In some places, Lutheran has come to mean very little except to identify one as unconcerned about biblical truth. Some suggest we should drop the name Lutheran because it is a barrier to outreach.

I’m not one of them. For me a Lutheran is one who clings to justification by grace through faith in Jesus and holds the Scripture as God’s Word. I confess these biblical truths just as Luther did. His theology was thoroughly Christ-centered or evangelical. I pray that ours will be too and that we can confess to be evangelical Lutheran believers.

Some will scratch their heads and ask, “What is an evangelical Lutheran?” At that point, the door swings open for our witness to Jesus, who suffered, died, and rose again to give us forgiveness, life, and salvation by grace through faith. It’s all about Jesus. That’s the kind of evangelical we should be.

Does God ever “get even” with us for the sins we commit? If he forgives and forgets, then why does it seem at times like we pay for our mistakes?

Jacob came from a family familiar with sin and grace. Rebekah deceived her husband and Jacob his father. Esau despised his birthright; Isaac despised a prophecy of God. Look at the effects of sin in their lives and marvel at the grace of God that overcame it all.

#### Remember the story . . .

1. What was Isaac’s sin regarding the blessing (Genesis 25:23; 27:1-4)?
2. What was Esau’s sin regarding the blessing (Genesis 25:29)?
3. What was Rebekah’s sin regarding the blessing (Genesis 27:5)?
4. What was Jacob’s sin regarding the blessing (Genesis 25:29; Genesis 27:19)?

#### Read Genesis 27:30–28:5

1. Why did Isaac tremble violently (v. 33)? Was it rage, or could it be something else? How does Genesis 28:1-5 help you understand it?
2. What was the consequence of Isaac’s sin?
3. Evaluate Esau’s reaction to the consequence of his sin (v. 34). Look up Hebrews 12:16,17 for more information.
4. Rebekah’s deception ended with Esau planning the murder of his brother Jacob. Once again, Rebekah shows herself to be a woman of action, but not honesty. In what way does she sin against her husband again (Genesis 27:43-46)?

5. What are the consequences of her sin?
6. Jacob lied to his father; Jacob deceived his father; Jacob used sinful means to try and reach a godly end. What were the consequences of his sin?

#### Bringing it home

1. Agree or disagree: God was getting even with Jacob for his deception.
2. What is the difference between punishment and chastisement (Romans 4:8; Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:10,11)?
3. How does God use Isaac to assure Jacob that he is not being punished by God (28:1-5)? How does God do the same for you? What difference will that make in how you bear the burdens of this life and the consequences of sin?

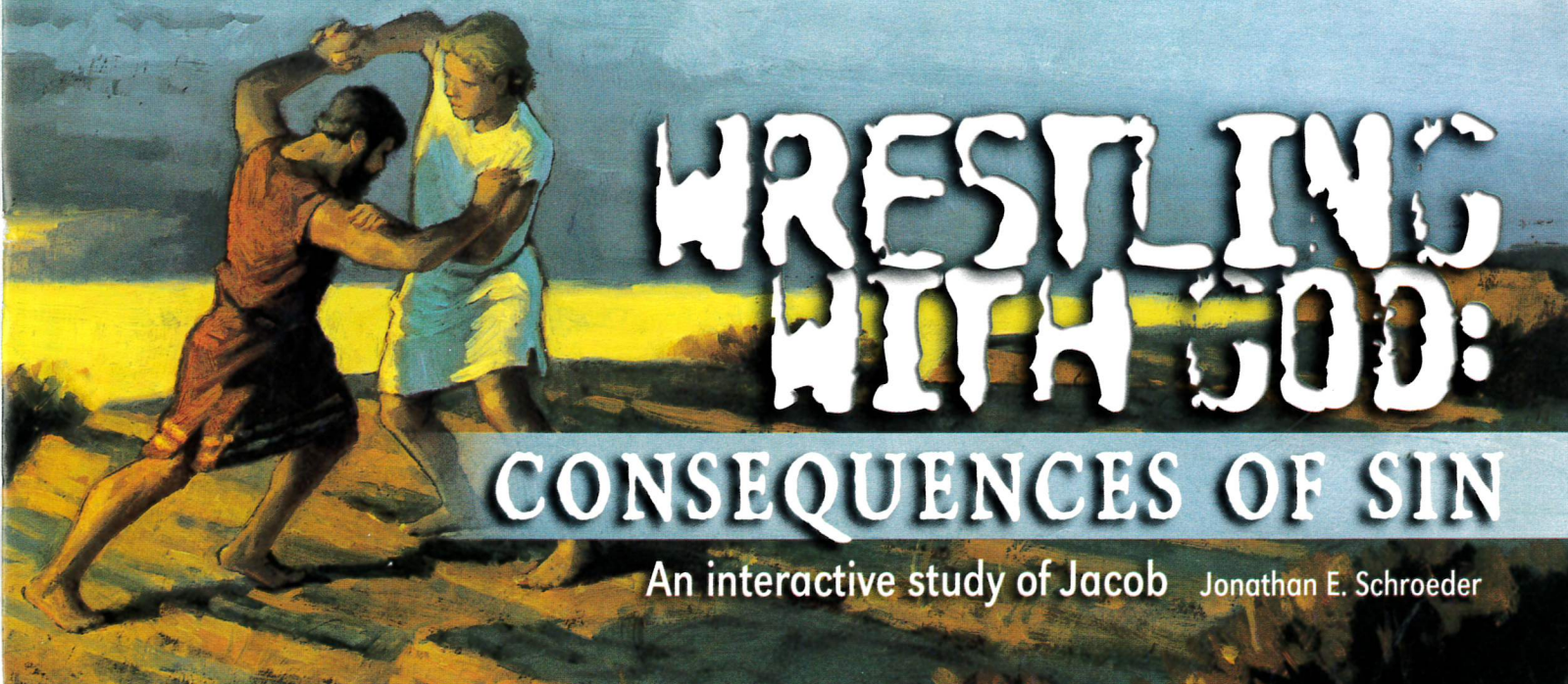
#### Conclusion

God didn’t get even with Jacob—Christ paid for every one of those sins. But God used the consequences of sin in this family for his good purpose. He wanted to take Jacob, the schemer, and turn him into Israel, the man of faith. No doubt, it took many years before Jacob could see the good that God worked out of these evil times. But when he returned with wealth, honor, and 12 sons, he began to understand. God had turned the schemer into a man who trusted in the grace of God.

*Contributing editor Jonathan Schroeder is pastor at Faith, Sharpsburg, Georgia.*

*This is the fourth article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online after April 5 at [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net)*

ILLUSTRATION: JOHNSON AND FANCHER



# WRESTLING WITH GOD:

## CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

An interactive study of Jacob Jonathan E. Schroeder

**Y**ou're lying on your back in the pitch-black darkness. The air is stifling. You grope around in the dark to measure the limits of your surroundings.

Two inches above your face there's a padded ceiling. You look to the right and to the left, and you find that the walls are padded there as well. You seem to be lying on some sort of bed. There's a pillow behind your head. You have no room to turn. You seem to be surrounded by cushions and padding.

And then you realize where you are. You're inside a casket.

### THE PRISON OF DEATH

You push against the lid, but it will not yield. The space closes in around you as you realize you are locked in, tightly secured in this chamber of death, and there is no way you can set yourself free.

That horrifying, stifling, claustrophobic picture is an image of death and the grave that will claim us all. The

prison of death claims every sinner, for the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and death came to all humans, because all have sinned (Romans 5:12).

We can do nothing to release ourselves from that bondage. The casket closes around each of us, sealing us in its dreary prison. The vault is secured, and yards of earth are piled on top. Only a headstone and memorial flowers testify to the prisoner locked inside the earthen tomb.

Our God knows this prison well, for he himself has been locked inside. Joseph and Nicodemus took the lifeless body of Jesus of Nazareth from Calvary's hill. They wrapped it in the shroud of death. With gentle devotion they laid it in the chamber of death.

Everything was arranged to ensure that the dead Jesus would stay dead. The grave was closed tightly, a mighty stone shutting off the entrance. The governor Pilate affixed his seal to prevent the tomb from being opened. He posted a guard to keep visitors out and to keep Jesus in.

### THE PRISON OF DEATH IS OPENED

But in this case, all efforts to secure the dead were useless. The prison that held Jesus locked in death had to be broken.

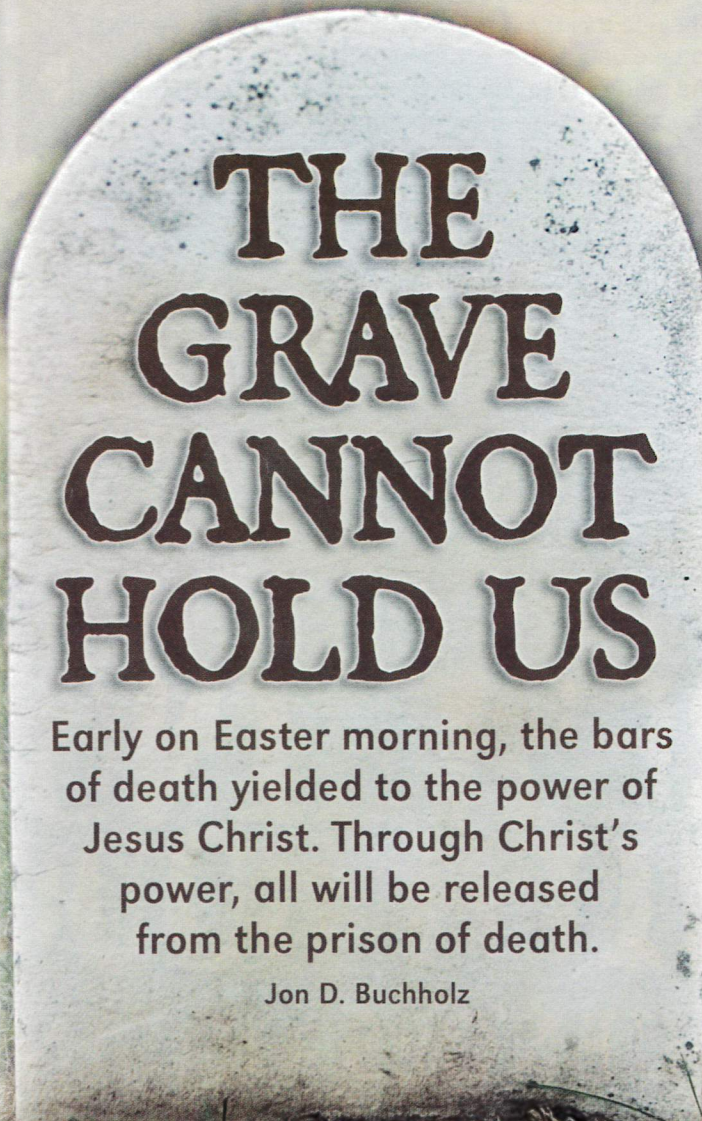
Early on the morning of the first day of the week, the bars of death yielded to the power of Jesus Christ. The shroud was pierced, the grave was thrown open, and everyone could see with their own eyes what the Scriptures had already foretold: Jesus lives!

Imagine the untold billions of corpses imprisoned in the house of death. Through the power of Christ, all will be released. "A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28,29).

For the unbeliever, that's an awful prospect. For those who love Jesus, it means unrestrained joy.

The narrow chamber of death will not remain sealed forever. The grave cannot shut us in. There is one who holds the key to unlock the prison and release the prisoners. At the voice of the archangel, at the trumpet call of God, the dead in Christ will rise. We will live to see our Savior, to gaze upon him with our eyes, and to join our fellow Christians of every age in eternal celebration.

"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17,18).



**THE  
GRAVE  
CANNOT  
HOLD US**

Early on Easter morning, the bars of death yielded to the power of Jesus Christ. Through Christ's power, all will be released from the prison of death.

Jon D. Buchholz

Jon Buchholz is pastor at Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona.