

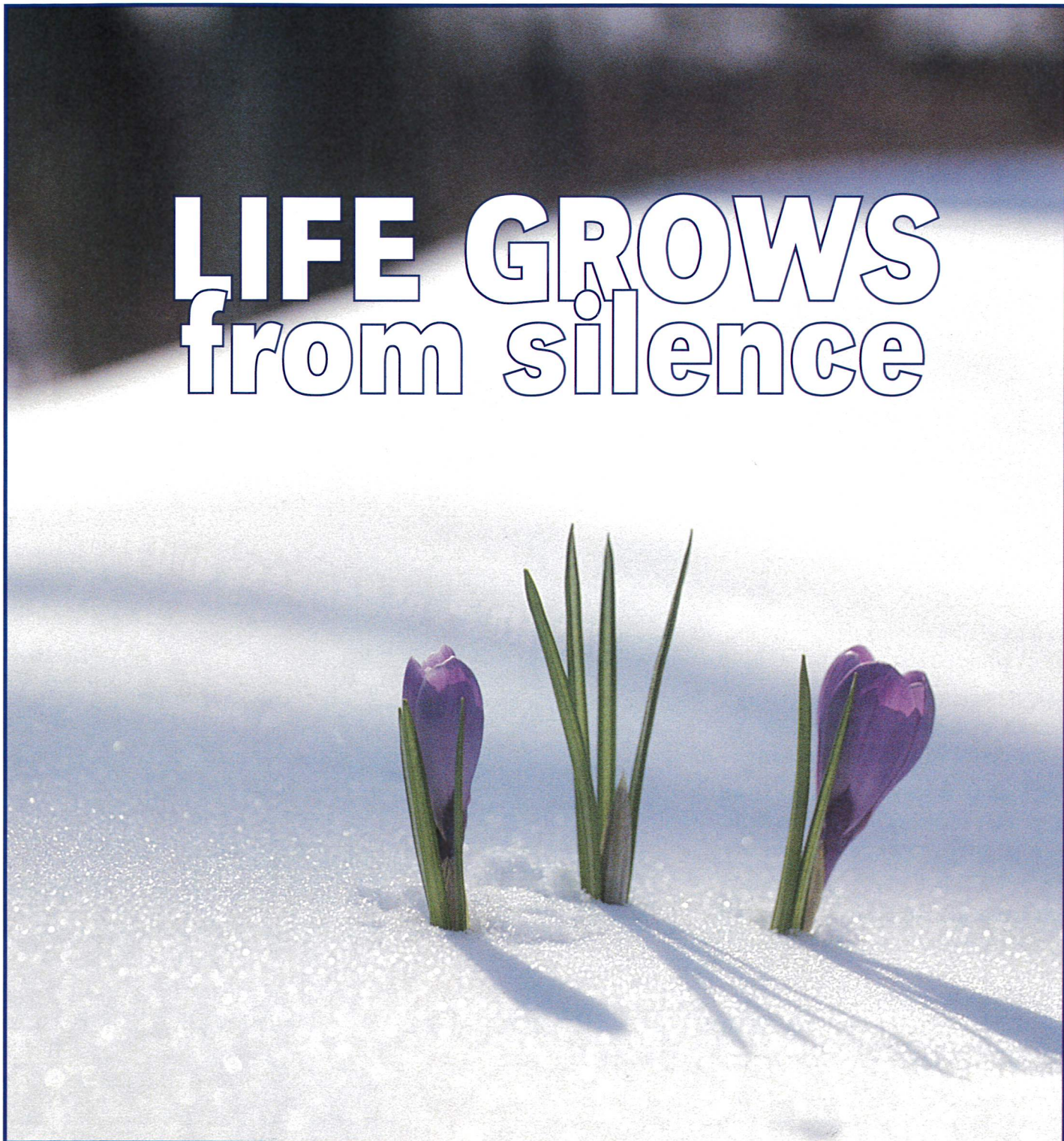
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MARCH 2008

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from silence




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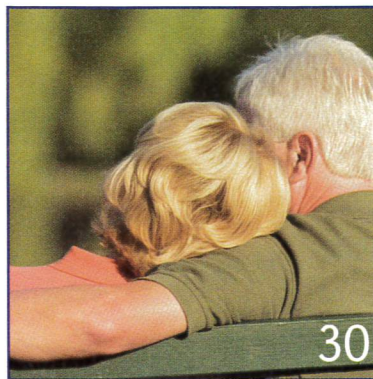
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“Even when it seems that God is silent and disinterested, he most definitely is not!”



PUNCHSTOCK



Forward in Christ

✠ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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North American Outreach

**Recently approved
the establishment
of a mission in:**

- North Valleys neighborhood of Greater Reno, NV
- Battlement Mesa/Parachute, CO
- Billings, MT – second congregation
- Holiday/Land O' Lakes, FL

**Recently approved the
establishment of new
ministry partnerships in:**

- St. Lucia, West Indies – first national pastor
- Des Moines, IA – lay evangelist with Sudanese
- Lakeville, MN – second pastor to support rapid growth
- Clarksville, TN – additional staff
- Mobile, AL – staff minister

**Current cross-cultural
efforts with:**

- Hispanics
- Koreans
- Hmong
- Japanese
- Vietnamese
- Indo-Caribbeans
- Sudanese

**Assistance provided by
mission counselors:**

- Rev. Wayne Schulz
- Rev. Ed Schuppe
- Rev. Mark Birkholz
- Currently calling for the fourth position



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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.forwardinchrist.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

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ON AUDIO

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MARCH

WHAT'S INSIDE by Julie Wietzke

Sickness and death are part of living in this world. But when you or a loved one get sick—really sick—sometimes it's hard to remember that God has reasons for everything he allows into your life.

Oftentimes there are lessons to learn. While caring for his wife who has Alzheimer's disease, Robert Sawall learned much about himself and his relationship with his spouse (p. 30). In "Not alone on this journey" (p. 28), Wayne Schulz reminds us that sickness can bring us closer to God and give us a new appreciation for our life and our blessings.

Sickness may also give us opportunities to witness to the hope that we have. God gave Pastor Sawall an opening to reach out to people in a care center. And according to Pastor Schulz, people notice how you live your life while dealing with sickness or hardship and may ask you where your strength comes from.

God may also be ready to take you or your loved one home. Norman Burger shares a story about Jim, who is dying of cancer but is still joyful because of his risen Savior (back page).

Christ is risen, and one day we too will rise.

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JESUS WAS NOT A SOCIALIST

I strongly object to the article “Jesus was a socialist” [Jan.] . . .

The Word of God indubitably encourages love, which Jesus illustrated convincingly; it also forbids stealing. Socialism is theft— theft of person, property, and dignity. Jesus cannot be a socialist because Jesus cannot be a thief. By saying “Jesus can only be a socialist if you remove sin from the equation,” this author soft-peddles a philosophy responsible for more death and destruction than any other in history. This is a terrible disservice to the Word and to those of us who value God-given liberty far above gratuitous endowments taken by force from our neighbor’s bank account.

*Gary Stevensen
Shakopee, Minnesota*

I read and agreed with “Jesus was a socialist” [Jan.]. Although Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 KJV), he certainly was not referring to any socialistic life.

The “bumper sticker” theme reminded me of a couple of things. One of my most appreciated ones simply read “BUMPER STICKER.”

The other was a story of a guy who was sitting at a red light and read the bumper sticker on the car ahead of him that said, “Honk if you love Jesus!” So he honked! Immediately the driver ahead of him waved his fist and “cussed him out” through his open window for blowing his horn.

Christians are both saints and sinners.

Well, we Christians are allowed to laugh at our own expense, aren’t we?

*Lee Butz
Zionsville, Indiana*

HEED THE SIGNS

The article, “Heed the signs” [Jan.] by Pastor Wayne Mueller was most

uplifting. Pastor Mueller has also written the *Revelation People’s Bible*, which I highly recommend reading. I have ordered three for my grandchildren. Keep up the good work, Pastor Mueller.

*Warren Stuebs
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin*

HOMOSEXUALITY

Once again, our great God has wrought good from evil. Did God make Scott Barefoot a homosexual? No. Adam’s fall into sin did. Did God love Scott Barefoot so much that he allowed him to contract HIV/AIDS so that he would recognize his sin, repent, and spend eternity in heaven? Yes. Is Scott Barefoot’s article [“My cross to bear,” Jan.] going to help countless numbers of people whose lives are somehow touched by the sin of homosexuality? Absolutely. Did *Forward in Christ* run this article at what I consider the ideal time of year? Yes! We have just celebrated the fact that God loved us so much that he sent us a Savior from our sins. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

*Jan Kolva
Haymarket, Virginia*

HOLY COMMUNION

I was raised WELS in the Midwest long ago; however, from 1986 until Easter of this year, I was a member of a non-WELS congregation. As a member of their church council, I cast the sole dissenting vote against allowing seventh- and eighth-graders to partake of communion prior to being confirmed. At the time my argument against making such a change was made up of some of the same points John Braun made in his article, “Connected to Jesus” [Dec. 2007].

Many old-timers in WELS may read his article and not fully appreciate its message, possibly taking the subject somewhat for granted. Coming back into WELS after so

many years has been a “coming home” for me. It is so refreshing to visit various WELS congregations and know that the message and practices will be the same.

*Marty Welch
Vacaville, California*

THE WORD SAVES

“Church architecture: an opportunity for change” [Jan.] applies to four congregations I have visited within the last year. Half were remodeled, while the other half were new. Each one was beautiful.

What were their bricks telling me? These congregations loved music. Each sanctuary was architecturally enhanced to emphasize music. However, I, a person with “normal” hearing, struggled to understand the gospel message preached from the pulpits.

As congregations look to build or remodel, may they always strive to achieve a balance between music and proclaiming the Word. The notes produced by an organ do not save; the Word does. Let’s keep proclaiming the Word first and foremost when we work with architectural firms to enhance our churches. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

*Dawn Allen
Waukesha, 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*.

Spectacle of love

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.” Mark 16:6

James A. Mattek

Throughout the world, Christians remember the “big three” events from Jesus’ life. We call them Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. Very few witnessed the first and third events. Only Mary and Joseph saw the birth of God’s Son. Later a few shepherds would poke their heads into the delivery room. After that, Magi came to see the child Jesus, but they didn’t see the birth.

The resurrection of Jesus didn’t have any witnesses either. A rock-rolling angel terrified Roman guards before they ran from the cemetery. Otherwise nobody saw the actual event.

Watching the execution of the Son

The event that had many eyewitnesses was Good Friday.

To me it seems a little backward. One would think that God would parade joyful Christmas and victorious Easter before the world. Instead it’s the execution of his Son that is held up for all to gawk at. When God appears at his weakest, his creatures are allowed to watch.

On that Good Friday, pilgrims from around the world were spectators of this cruel sport, chanting for their team to crucify him. Then they watched as their team did it. God, like a ragged scarecrow, hangs from a post.

And to rub salt in his holy wounds, they taunted him to come down if he were really God. All that was and is bad with the world seemed to win over all that was good with the world. So pathetic was the scene that the earth rum-

bled in the darkness at midday . . . and there was standing room only.

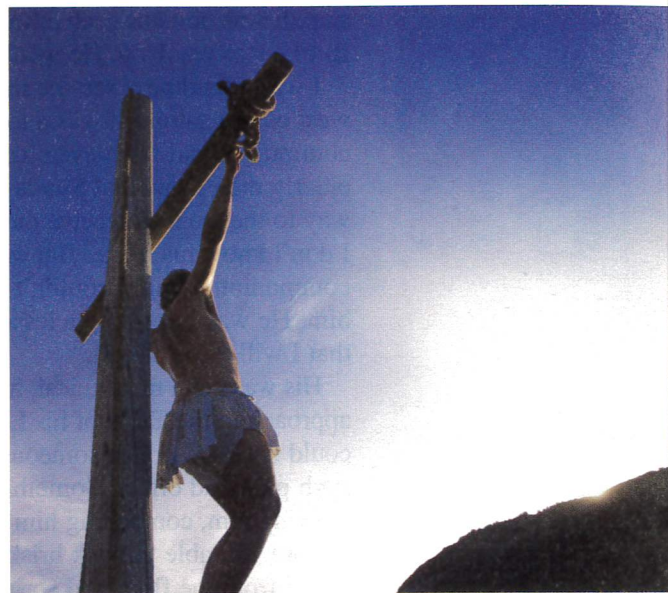
At first glance it’s ironic that the gospel writers highlighted the dark low of our Lord, using so much ink to document the details for the world to read . . . that God died.

Seeing the greatest exhibition of love

“You are looking for Jesus . . . who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.” More improbable words could not be spoken. God pulled off the impossible, and it was shared with the first-shift embalming crew coming to the tomb as Jerusalem slept. Why didn’t Jesus reappear on Pilate’s porch and get in his face? Why didn’t he show up in the temple courts to see the look on the face of the high priest? Why didn’t he ascend to the pinnacle of the temple and blast the treetops with a withering shout: “I was dead, but death couldn’t hold on to me!”?

Instead Jesus chooses to woo people with his love. “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). The public execution of Jesus is the greatest exhibition of love that the world will ever witness. And he wants us to see it and believe it.

He even provides his Spirit who creates faith so we can witness this love with our spiritual sight. He empowers us to see the lengths to



which God will go to make us his forgiven friends. Friends who are able to see his love and the personal and eternal benefits it brings. Friends who are also his witnesses, eager to shout from the housetops: “Someday I will die, but death will not be able to hold on to me!” Thank you, Jesus!

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

Do this

Joel V. Petermann

I could feel tears forming in my eyes as I watched him. He shuffled his feet like someone walking on ice, afraid of falling with each step. It was obvious each advance brought agony. But he was resolved. He would not be deterred.

I was attending a service in a larger Midwest congregation. It was a long walk to the communion rail from even halfway back. The elderly man I saw that Sunday was making his way to the front to receive the Lord's Supper. I don't know his name. But even as I sang the communion hymn, I couldn't take my eyes off him. He was inscribing a lesson in my heart that I will never forget.

His was not a mechanical, habitual, thoughtless approach to the Table of his Lord. Mere routine could not have drawn someone forward through such pain and effort. Something stronger was drawing him, compelling him to come forward.

I am still able to walk briskly. My feet lift freely from the floor and spring forward with energy. Yet I wonder how many times my feet carried me when my heart did not always want to go or when I can't remember what I did when I got there. How easily a repeated action like the Lord's Supper can become meaningless and empty because of the sinful callousness of my heart.

This man's resolve reminded me of the unfathomable gift that awaits us at the Table of our Lord. His feet carried him forward—dragging on the carpet as he struggled to keep his balance—because he longed to receive his Lord's forgiveness. In previous years, when he surely walked as I now walk, he had not forgotten that his Lord was inviting him to a precious banquet. Now, after the curse of sin had transformed his strength into weakness and his spring into cruel crawl, he still did not forget the King who beck-

oned him forward. The words "given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins" pulled him like an irresistible magnet. Forward. Forward. One step at a time with a precious friend by his side to make sure he didn't fall. The line of communicants slowed as they waited for him to move down the aisle.

Then, finally, he arrived. In deepest humility, he received the gift of his King. Once the Lord had been wracked with pain for him. Once the Lord's feet had been nailed immobile for him. Once the Lord had taken away his guilt for all time. Again and again the Lord offers his body and blood because he knows that this man—we all—need that assurance. "Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me" (*Christian Worship*, p. 35). So those feet, barely strong, had carried him forward to "do this" again.

He turned to shuffle down the side aisle. His Lord had blessed him with life. His body still bore the curse of sin. His feet still dragged on the floor. It took minutes, not seconds, for him to return to his seat. But a sparkle was in his eye. The spring was there. It was in the joy and peace that lit his face. The tears trickled down my cheeks.

Thank you, dear Christian brother, for teaching me a lesson that day. Thank you for reminding me again what a gift our Lord Jesus gives us in this Holy Supper. I know you didn't intend to do that. Your eyes were focused on your Savior. But that day my eyes saw my Savior through you.

Contributing editor Joel Petermann is pastor at St. Paul, Amherst, New Hampshire.

Read more about Pastor Petermann on p. 22.

This man's resolve reminded me of the unfathomable gift that awaits us at the Table of our Lord.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

Thank you for asking a question that may be heard worldwide. Non-Christians love to suggest that Christians and Christian festivals are somehow steeped in paganism, while well-meaning Christians often fail to make important distinctions while discussing the subject. I am not sure a one-page answer will be enough to satisfy you, but it can perhaps identify important distinctions to be maintained.

Is the name Easter derived from that of a pagan goddess? This is quite possible, although some philologists say that Easter comes from the word “east,” referring to the rising of the sun and linking to Christ’s resurrection. The term is shrouded in enough mystery; it would be speculative to say precisely how the term Easter became the name used for the day we celebrate Christ’s bodily resurrection. Nevertheless, we note that many etymological theories derive the name from some pagan goddess. So let’s not contest that point. Let’s move on to more important issues.

Let’s distinguish between the event and the name given to it

Even if the term Easter was derived from the name of a pagan goddess, using that name need not signal a compromise of the truth or a deficient faith. Generally speaking, Christians use the name Easter because of long-standing custom. If there ever were pagan associations with the term, they have long ago ceased.

Many terms in common usage have strange origins that no one thinks about anymore. Each day of the week was named after a pagan god or goddess, e.g., the Sun’s day, the Moon’s day, Saturn’s day. The pagan associations with these names have long ceased to be meaningful. As we worship on various days, we are not

Q. Why is our most holy observance, Easter, named after a pagan goddess? How can this be pleasing to God? I find it hard to say “Happy Easter!” when I think of this.

giving any tribute to the pagan deities to which those days were once dedicated. Word origins often fade into obscurity. God looks upon the heart and sees the believer’s intention to worship him and does not mistake it for idolatry. Christians who celebrate Easter commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ; they do not honor any imaginary goddess.

Let’s distinguish between sinful and potentially unwise customs

The term we use for the festival day is an *adiaphoron*, that is, something that is neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. We must be careful not to call something sinful which God has not. Similarly, there is no command in the Bible to celebrate Easter on any special day or to worship on Sunday or any other day of the week. In their God-given freedom, Christians choose to worship and to give festivals special names.

At the same time we want to make sure that our language and actions do not cause unnecessary offense. Perhaps it might have been a better witness to the world if earlier Christians had not adopted the name Easter. But Christians can benefit from a word or two about discernment and practical wisdom.

If you find it hard to say the word Easter because of its possible etymology, refrain from doing so. Speak of “Resurrection Sunday” or use the ancient yet always fresh “Christ is risen!” to greet others that day. But do not assume that those who speak of “Easter” are sinning. Instead, if you choose, courteously offer suitable alternatives and above all keep the focus on the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

Contributing editor Forrest Bivens, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.

NO MORE silent Saturdays

*A day of darkness and a day of silent fretting
gave way to a bright, glorious day of victory.*

Stephen M. Luchterhand

Night fell on a different world.” On the night of Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush accurately assessed the impact of the terrorist attacks on that fateful day. As the darkness of night chased away the daylight, the darkness of fear and uncertainty seeped into American homes.

Night also fell on a different world as darkness chased away daylight on Good Friday, 29 AD. Earlier that day, on a skull-shaped hill just outside of Jerusalem, soldiers nailed three criminals to three crosses. Two men were actually guilty. The third man, the one on the middle cross, was innocent. His name? Jesus of Nazareth, a lowly, itinerant rabbi whose teachings about the kingdom of God captured both the attention of the common people and the wrath of spiritual leaders.

Arrested by his enemies the night before, Jesus had been hastily shuttled between various spiritual and political authorities. Finally, a trumped-up charge of blasphemy survived the fragile alliance against him. The death warrant came from a Roman governor afraid of being accused of failing to execute a traitor. Jesus hung on a cross soon after the verdict.

Not so “innocent”

A close examination reveals that Jesus wasn’t so “innocent” after all. He carried the guilt of all others. Isaiah saw this moment seven centuries before it happened: “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5,6).

As Jesus breathed his last, the world wondered, “Is this it? Are we finished, forgotten, condemned?” Or is “it” finished? That is, the payment for sin. Jesus had claimed he would accomplish this. As the darkness of night closed in, his limp and lifeless body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. The answer, even to the most irrepressible optimist, was too terrible to ponder.

Jesus’ disciples were too terrified to ponder much of anything. Even the dawning of a new day, Saturday, could not chase away the darkness of fear that choked their hearts. Scripture is silent on the events of this Saturday, but we can surmise that

they weren’t planning Easter egg hunts and family gatherings flush with food and drink.

The agony of silent Saturday

It was a truly silent Saturday for the Eleven. The memory of their shameful flight from Gethsemane stung. Peter’s despair was even more pronounced. His threefold denial of his Savior had come on the heels of his boastful proclamation, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Mark 14:31). Shame and regret coursed through him. His tears and sobs expressed true repentance. Perhaps only Jesus’ look of merciful forgiveness after Peter’s final denial kept him from drowning in overwhelming despair.

But Peter wasn’t alone. Fear and regret filled all the disciples. They sought seclusion, hiding for fear that they would be next. The quiet Sabbath Saturday dragged on at a painfully slow pace. No word from any officials. No word from or about Jesus’ enemies as they apparently took time to celebrate their triumph before deciding what to do about the disciples.

The one thing the disciples knew for certain was the crucifixion. All they knew was that their Lord was dead. Indisputably, irrefutably, irre-

versibly dead. He was gone. Their hopes, dreams, and designs had disappeared into the tomb with Jesus. Friday was not good and Saturday was silent.

The disciples should have seen this coming. In fact, they should have expected it. Three times Jesus had specifically taken them aside and told them that he would suffer and die and then rise again after three days. No secret codes. No hidden meanings. No parables. When it came to this, Jesus spoke plainly. He did not embellish the unvarnished truth.

Despite all the Old Testament prophecies and despite Jesus' warnings, the disciples just didn't get the message. On this dreadful, silent Saturday, they couldn't even conceive of an Easter. Sorrow, grief, and fear gripped body and soul.

A littered landscape

Silent Saturdays litter the landscape of our lives. They don't always occur on Saturdays, of course, but their emotional impact drains, weakens, and devastates. A life-altering medical diagnosis; the bitter end of a once flourishing relationship; job loss; financial reversal; and, most devastating of all, the loss of a loved one. These are times when life stretches out before us like endless winter, without help or hope in sight. And God seems silent.

Some of our silent Saturdays are of our own making. Like a piano student practicing scales up and down the keyboard, we run up and down the scales of sin. We hit the wrong keys again and again: lies, gossip, impatience, selfishness, bitterness, doubt in God and his Word. The list is endless. Our guilt is great. We produce no music, only discordant sounds. God's silence is stunning.

Things are not always as they seem

God seemed silent on that bleak Saturday between the day of Jesus'

death and whatever would come next. Thirty-six hours passed between his burial on Friday and the arrival of Sunday dawn. From the disciples' unsuspecting perspective, from their posture of silent inactivity, those 36 hours felt like molasses sliding through the cold hourglass of time.

But things are not always as they seem. Silent Saturday was a day of rest—a Sabbath. God was preparing for an event that the disciples could not keep quiet and neither could the enemies of Jesus. God held his hand over the disciples during that one quiet day. They may have gathered in fear, but God protected them and made them ready for a brilliant light that would change their darkness forever.

Before he rose, before he showed himself to the world, Jesus was made alive. He then descended to hell to proclaim his victory to a very captive audience—all the souls in hell together with Satan and all his demons. Call him the Victor and call the descent a victory procession, but don't call Christ inactive! Don't say he was silent!

The truth proclaimed by Good Friday's cross is clear: forgiveness for all by the blood of Christ, God's only Son. The truth proclaimed by Easter morning's empty tomb also rings clear: he lives, and so will we.


But what of silent Saturday? What lesson can be found from this in-between day of Holy Weekend? Even when it doesn't seem that God is active in our lives, he is. Even when it seems that God is not working in our lives, he is. Even when it seems that God is silent and disinterested, he most definitely is not! He always works on our behalf—powerfully, mercifully, sometimes quietly, always for our good.

Good-bye, anxiety. Good-bye, fear and uncertainty. Hello, empty tomb. Welcome, relief, joy, and confidence.

Silent Saturday still speaks volumes.

Stephen Luchterhand is pastor at Deer Valley, Phoenix, Arizona.





YOU SHALL BEAR MUCH FRUIT

We live in the water of Baptism as we spend each day serving the Savior.

Earle D. Treptow

Jesus rose from the dead. That's fact, not fiction. Yet some churches that call themselves Christian refuse to proclaim Christ's resurrection as a historical fact. They choose to label the resurrection accounts as "stories meant to teach spiritual truths." If that's what Easter is—just an instructive fable—then there's no reason to continue reading. Take away Jesus' resurrection, and you gut Christianity. Paul writes, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Eyewitness testimony confirms Jesus' resurrection. The gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection dare not be called "fanciful interpretations" or "wishful thinking." No matter how many shout "fable," Jesus' resurrection stands as the ultimate historical fact.

The Christian's personal history

Although we may live in different places, answer to different names, hold different occupations, and enjoy different hobbies, we share a common history. Our personal history reads much like Jesus' personal history. We, too, have been crucified. We died. We were buried. And we, too, have risen from the dead.


It's no coincidence that we share Jesus' history. As drops of water splashed on our heads in the name of the Triune God, Christ's history intersected with

our personal history. Holy Baptism is no mere membership rite. It's not a symbolic ceremony in which humans present themselves to God. It's much more. God himself takes action. That's the way it has to be. Try as they might, humans can offer nothing to God; they can't even approach him. Therefore, God takes center stage and mercifully meets the sinner at the baptismal font. Unlike sinful human beings, who can only come with empty hands, God approaches with hands quite full. He pours his blessings on our heads!

There at a simple font—with simple words connected to simple water—the Lord accomplished something extraordinary. He graciously applied to us individually what Jesus had done for all. He made Jesus' history our history, his facts our facts. There the Triune God put our sinful nature to death, removing the guilt and punishment that our sinfulness deserved. The apostle Paul wrote, "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). On the day of our baptism, we died with Christ. His death became our death.

Baptism as "tomb and womb"

The Lord also buried us with Christ on the day of our baptism. God placed the sin that earned eternal punishment in the tomb with Christ. Paul wrote, "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" (Romans 6:4). Early Christians, on the basis of Romans 6, referred to Holy Baptism as the Christian's personal "tomb and womb." It is our tomb, for there the Lord buried our sin. He removed it from our record and sealed the punishment our sin merited in that tomb. Instead of counting our sins against us, he counts Jesus' righteousness "against" us. The Lamb of God left the world's sin in the tomb. The fact is that we, with our sin, have been buried with Christ.

The Lord didn't stop with burial. In that gracious water of life, he exalted us. He called us out of the tomb. By the power of his gracious Word, the Lord miraculously raised us from the tomb where he buried our sin. Through the same Word-empowered water he used to drown us, he also gave us new life. He created within us a new nature that is both willing and able to live to God's glory. Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Covered with the righteousness of Christ, forgiven of every sin, and adopted into God's family, the new creature rises from the water. He just can't get over the Lord's incredible commitment to his redemption. Marveling at the Lord's faithful love, he says in joyful response, "Lord, I love you and I will live for you." As new creatures, we rise to life markedly different than before. We rise to a life that focuses no longer on self, but rather aims at the glory of God and the benefit of others. That's why God's people called Baptism the "womb." In the water of Baptism God gave us birth to a whole new life.

Living in the water of Baptism

That's not a fanciful interpretation of a church ceremony. Nor is it wishful thinking. That's a fact. We died with Christ, and we have risen with Christ to a new life. The apostle Paul wrote, "Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). The Lord does not want us to think of our baptism as ancient history or a relic of the past. This is our present reality. Through faith created by the Spirit, we are dead to sin. Sin has no

authority over us whatsoever. We insist, like the three-year-old, "You're not the boss of me." When sin arrogantly decrees self-centered and selfish living, we show him our death notice and declare our freedom from his reign. At one time we had to submit to his rules. Not anymore.

Now we are free. This new life brings with it the greatest freedom—the freedom to live for the Savior. The Lord has granted us the ability to say "yes" to godliness and to live in joyful obedience to his commands. Amazed by God's grace and mercy in redeeming us, we place ourselves at his feet and willingly submit to his direction. What God commands, we now desire and eagerly pursue in our new life.

Many use a fish as a symbol of their Christian faith. The Greek word for fish serves as an acronym for this confession about the Messiah: "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior." That symbol serves as a good reminder for us in another way. Fish don't occasionally visit water to remind themselves of the "good old days" of their youth. They live in water. So do God's people. We live in the water of Baptism each day. We live in that water of Baptism as we reflect on our need for the assurance of forgiveness and righteousness. More importantly, we live in that water when we trust that our sins have all been washed away and that we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). And we live in the water of Baptism as we spend each day serving the Savior.

We died and were buried with Christ in Baptism. God raised us with Christ to a new life, set apart from sin, set apart from the world, and set apart to the Lord. That's fact, not fiction.

Earle Treptow is pastor at Zion, Denver, Colorado.

This is the third article in a five-part series on sanctification. Find a related Bible study on this topic after March 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net

In the water of Baptism God gave us birth to a whole new life.

Unity among believers is like “the dew of Hermon . . . falling on Mount Zion” (Psalm 133:3). What a refreshing picture! The cool dew floating down on the dry heights of Mount Zion. We recognize Mount Zion as a picture of God’s church in this world. Unity in the church!

Our experience with other people is often not as refreshing. We grumble at the faults of others, and we become impatient with the way they do things. Instead of finding joy in others, we often have to count to 10 before speaking. Smiles sometimes hide gritted teeth and injured feelings.

Such things also happen in the church of Christ when brothers and sisters in the faith need conflict management instead of embracing each other in mutual love and respect. Yet when believers can express their love and respect, it is like the dew of Hermon descending. That is the joy of fellowship.

Confessional Lutheran unity

Such a fellowship does exist. The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) is an organization of 20 church bodies throughout the world. It was founded in 1993 with 13 confessional Lutheran churches and since has grown to 20 members.

The driving force in the early days was the late Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. His contacts with the confessional churches in Germany and Norway helped bring together the 13 original members of the conference for the first time in 1993. He then served as the first president of the CELC.

He saw the CELC as an important way to provide support and encouragement to small independent church bodies around the world who are confessional Lutherans and agree in doctrine and practice. The CELC is a practical way to practice real church fellowship with those who believe the same truths of God’s Word.

The CELC meets every three years and will hold its next meeting in Kiev, Ukraine, on June 3-5. Already travel arrangements



Together in **UNITY**

The CELC celebrates 15 years of confessional unity.

John A. Braun

are being made for delegates from all over the world. Previous meetings have been held in Germany, Puerto Rico, the United States, Sweden, and Japan.

The core of each conference has been theological papers presented by representatives of the member church bodies. This year's theme is "Make Known the Manifold Wisdom of God." The essayists are from the Ukraine, Norway, Russia, Japan, and Peru. (Previous essays are available online at the CELC Web site, www.celc.info.) Besides the essays, this year the conference will celebrate its 15th anniversary and receive a history of the CELC prepared by Gaylin Schmeling, president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minn.

Wayne Mueller, WELS Vice President of Mission and Ministry, comments, "In the two conferences I've attended I felt the courage and comfort from the simple witness these men make from their rather extensive theological knowledge of the gospel and how they are applying it in their culture. I was uplifted."

Dan Koelpin, administrator for WELS World Missions, agrees. "Not all of these men have the same college education or background we do. They are all different. Some serve in very humble ways in their own countries, but they do understand the gospel clearly."

The refreshing dew of fellowship

Natural barriers of culture and geography create challenges to their joyful fellowship. Some representatives are prevented from coming because of the political and diplomatic climate in the host country. Others come from cultures that do not use knives and forks or have not seen a straw. The beds and pillows of European culture are dramatically different from the mats on the hard ground of Africa. Heat and snow as well as different cuisine reveal the cultural and geographic diversity. Yet there is a unity that transcends it all.

John Moldstad, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, remembers that unity: "The present geographical, cultural, and linguistic separation of the churches, though great, is surpassed by an even greater unity—the unity of confession we enjoy that transcends all national barriers." That is the dew of Hermon descending on the church of Christ, his Mount Zion.

One incident captures the spirit of these gatherings. The third conference occurred near the time Professor and Mrs. Gawrisch marked 50 years of marriage. The two Gawrisch children planned a celebration for their parents at the conference. They succeeded in surprising both their parents. The assembly erupted into applause and a standing ovation. Prof. Gawrisch commented, "What a happy moment this is for Marylyn and me. We celebrate our wedding anniversary with friends and colleagues from around the world."

The joy of that fellowship is, of course, captured in the final service. Eugene Schultz, treasurer of the CELC, says, "I have especially felt



The 20 churches of the CELC:

Bulgarian Lutheran Church
Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria
Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Mexico)
Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Russia)
Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia
Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (Finland)
Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (Puerto Rico)
Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Germany)
Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia
Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Peru)
Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)
Gereja Lutheran (Indonesia)
Lutheran Church of Cameroon
Lutheran Church of Central Africa—Malawi
Lutheran Church of Central Africa—Zambia
Lutheran Confessional Church (Sweden and Norway)
Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (Japan)
Ukrainian Lutheran Church
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)

To learn more about these church bodies or the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, go to www.celc.info.

this joy during the closing worship service of each convention, when the delegates and guests from all countries and cultures present assemble at the Lord's Table for Holy Communion. . . . My soul leaps for joy because the great multitude from all nations standing before the throne in Revelation is already happening to me here on earth."

Although all the sessions are in English, those from other cultures bring cultural artifacts from their own countries. Delegates are honored to be at the conference and to be embraced by other Lutherans as brothers in Christ. Some who have never been out of their own country are astounded that they are a part of a worldwide church that treasures God's truth.

While the focus of the conference is to strengthen and encourage each other, there is a strong desire to share the gospel with others. Moldstad says, "An endearing mark of the CELC is the fervent desire to share the Savior's atoning grace with the world for which it was intended." So the CELC seeks to help member church bodies reach out in their own cultures.

"It's simply a thrill to see how God is gathering brothers in Christ all over the world into a fellowship marked by unity in doctrine," Koelpin reflects. Such is the dew of Hermon descending on the church.

John Braun is the executive editor of Forward in Christ.



GOD'S LAW: A WARNING TRUMPET

If the trumpet gives an unclear sound, who can prepare for battle? We need to be clear with our use of the law so people know the dangers of sin and hell.

Wayne A. Laitinen

The ancient watchmen stood atop the walls of his city with one hand shielding his eyes from the sun as he scanned the horizon for enemy invaders. In the other hand he held a ram's horn trumpet. If he saw an ominous force in the distance, he would blow a warning signal on the trumpet. The people of the city would pay attention for the next signal. As the details became clearer, the watchman would either signal that the delegation was friendly or, if not, call the city to arms.

It was imperative that the watchman gave a clear, unambiguous

signal. Similarly, Christians are to sound the alarm as they see spiritual and eternal dangers approach. The law is God's warning blast, announcing the dangers of sin and hell.

The warning needs to be heard

Does hell's roster include only the likes of Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Kahn? Is our neighbor's sin "his business, not mine"? Or to bring it closer to home: do we carry out our ministries in such a way that those who listen to us and observe us might think only notably evil people will be in hell?

I ask these questions because an

ancient heresy still is going around. Its technical name is "antinomianism." It means to be against the law: God's law. In its most obvious form, you can hear it in the comments of evangelist Joel Osteen. He proclaims a message of "redemption, empowerment, and inspiration" without mentioning the anger of a just God against sin. "People don't like to be beat down and told, 'You've done wrong,' . . ." says Osteen in a *60 Minutes* interview on Oct. 14, 2007. "Most people already know what they've done wrong."

But antinomianism in its subtle, almost imperceptible, form may be

found in sermons that are always affirming God's forgiveness, yet never speaking in any serious way of God's justice against our sin. God's law also disappears in witnessing that begins and ends with "God loves you!" Antinomianism is seen in a congregation's inability to put out of its communion the plainly impenitent sinner. It is present when people assume that the gospel is a product that the unbelieving world will buy, if only it is packaged attractively enough.

What's the harm of leaving out the law?

First of all, everyone knows better. Even the lost. When we tell the unbeliever that there is a God who punishes idolatry, hatred, jealousy, sexual immorality, gluttony, or drunkenness, expect an opening volley of anger. But know that deep inside, the godless know that you speak the truth.

That is what St. Paul means when he says that the Gentiles "show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them" (Romans 2:15). The unbeliever's anger at you is because you have reawakened a horrible truth. His or her conscience has tried to excuse and rationalize such sin.

But we must remind ourselves that the ultimate goal of the law is the same as that of the gospel: to save the sinner. The difference is that the role of the law is preparatory. It plows the hard ground of a heart that has made an occupation of excusing its sin. Once a person is terrified and despairing of his own righteousness, then the good news of Jesus' salvation may be sown.

When we witness to individuals, some will still turn on their heel and not allow us to proclaim the gospel. A quick read of the New Testament will

reveal that it happened to our Savior and his apostles more often than we would expect. Nevertheless, they rejoiced that the Holy Spirit gave them courage to faithfully proclaim God's Word—both law and gospel.

More often than not, Christ and his Church will have to wait until the Last Day to receive thanks for warning the world with a clear trumpet call.

Proclaiming law to the baptized

We must always keep in mind what Dr. Luther discovered for us in Holy Scripture: the believer in Christ is, at the same time, completely sinner and completely saint. In Romans, the apostle Paul gives us that startling revelation when he says, "For in my inner being [that is, the one created by the Holy Spirit] I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:22-24). He who was the foremost of the apostles admitted that he was a walking contradiction: a sinner and a saint. At the end of the passage, the law that reveals this to him brings him to the brink of despair.

But the law does not have the last word! In the very next verse, Paul finds the resolution at the foot of Jesus' cross: "But thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

When the law is proclaimed in all of its damning power to the believer in Christ, he will greet it with a hearty, "Amen!" He does this precisely because he is a believer in Christ. The Christian understands sin and death. His selfish sin has been killed. At the beginning, the Christian entered God's grace through a drowning—the drowning of Baptism. Since then he has died

ten thousand deaths to self through contrition and repentance. His happy experience is that a resurrection to new life has always been the result.

Two questions

A question comes naturally from a Christian who knows both sin and God's gracious forgiveness: "What can we do to get people into our church?" The question presupposes that, once inside, our guests will hear of the soul's desperate situation before a just God—followed by the full and free salvation that only Jesus gives. If that is the case, the answer will embrace a call to lead godly lives and to encourage a "come and see" invitation to the house of God. It may also embrace some common-sense concerns about church appearance, advertising, and visitor opportunities.

The second question needs closer examination: "What can we do to keep people from being turned off by our church?" This treads on precarious ground. Are we looking for the answer in God's Word, or are we envisioning what might be said by the unconverted in an exit poll? The answer of God's Word is that sinners will return to hear the message of the gospel of forgiveness in Jesus. But if an exit poll suggests that the confession/absolution portion of the service is offensive, will we omit it? If the unconverted tell us they will return only if our sermons are scrubbed of those elements that prepare hearts for the gospel, will we oblige them? Can those who are spiritually dead really dictate the conditions of their resuscitation?

To assure that the trumpet gives a clear signal, perhaps we need to ask better questions.

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

Find a related Bible study on this topic after March 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net

WHATEVER

Adoption into Christ

I am not only adopted here on earth, but I am also God's adopted daughter in heaven.

Jillian Dunigan

Have you ever been treated differently because you only have a mother? Do you only have a father? Do you have neither? Or were you put into a different family like me?

I was born on March 21, 1992. I was adopted on April 9, 1992.

When I was in second grade, I was told that I was adopted. At the time, my aunt and uncle decided to adopt because they had just gotten married and they wanted a little girl. When my mother told me their plans, she asked me, "Do you know who else is adopted in our family?"

I said my sister because I felt like we didn't look anything at all like each other. She said, "Yes, but there is someone else too." I thought for a little while, and I couldn't figure it out. Finally, I asked her who it was. She told me it was me!

I was so shocked. It took me a while to gather it in my mind. It actually took me a few days to get over the news. My parents were going to tell me at some point, but they thought that now was the best time since my aunt and uncle had decided to adopt my new baby cousin, Natalia. My birth mother was only 18 and not married when she had me. I think that she knew she would not have been able to take care of me. My birth mother's only wish was that I would be adopted into a loving family with another adopted child so that we could share our feelings. It was important to her because she and her brother also were adopted.

But in grade school, I was treated differently. Some of the other students were mean to me and teased me because I was adopted. I decided to talk to my principal, and he gave me a few Bible passages that helped me feel better. He also told me to go talk

to the fourth-grade teacher. She helped me understand adoption better, and then she told me that she too was adopted. She helped me a whole lot.

I don't celebrate the day I was adopted like some people do. I understand what adoption actually means and am grateful for the blessing of life. Now that I am in high school, I have decided not to tell anyone I'm adopted because I am afraid I will be treated the same way I was treated in grade school.

But I should not be worried about how people treat me. We are all adopted into Jesus Christ our Lord. In Ephesians 1:5 it says, "He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will." I am not only adopted here on earth, but I am also God's adopted daughter in heaven. It says in Romans 8:23: "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

We should not have to give special treatment to those who don't have or don't know their parents. The truth is we all should know our true Parent, and that is our Lord. Here on earth, I look forward to the day when I either can see a picture of my birth mother or actually meet her. I also look forward to seeing my true Father in heaven.

Jillian Dunigan is a member at Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wisconsin.



God

Obituaries

H. W. Winkel 1924-2007

H. W. Winkel was born Jan. 17, 1924, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Dec. 31, 2007, in Phoenix, Ariz.

A 1948 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served at Our Savior, South Shore, S.D.; St. John, Sparta, Wis.; and Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.

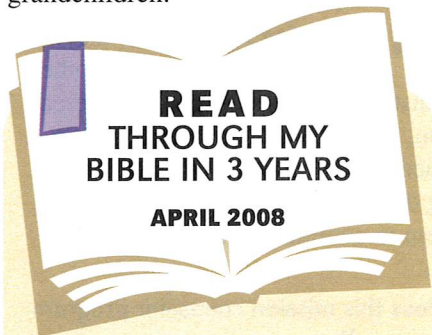
He was preceded in death by his wife, Marjorie. He is survived by two sons, one daughter, seven grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

Theophil A. Baganz 1914-2008

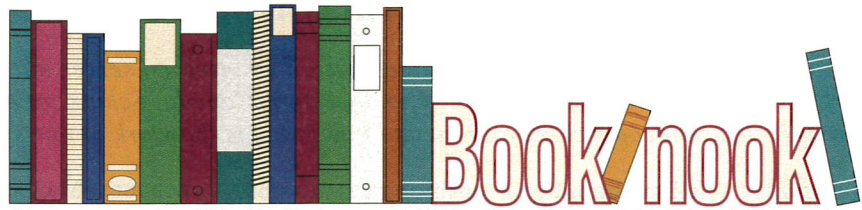
Theophil Baganz was born July 31, 1914, in Dale, Wis. He died Jan. 2, 2008, in Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

He served at Salem, Chanderville, Ill., and St. Peters, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Vivian; one son; two grandchildren; and two brothers. He is survived by three sons, two daughters, 10 grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

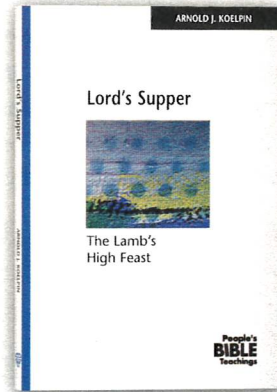


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| 1. Luke 17:1-19 | 17. Gen. 37 |
| 2. Lk. 17:20-37 | 18. Gen. 38, 39 |
| 3. Lk. 18:1-17 | 19. Gen. 40:1-41:13 |
| 4. Lk. 18:18-34 | 20. Gen. 41:14-57 |
| 5. Lk. 18:35-19:10 | 21. Gen. 42 |
| 6. Lk. 19:11-28 | 22. Gen. 43 |
| 7. Genesis 27:1-45 | 23. Gen. 44 |
| 8. Gen. 27:46-28:22 | 24. Gen. 45 |
| 9. Gen. 29:1-30 | 25. Gen. 46:1-47:12 |
| 10. Gen. 29:31-30:43 | 26. Gen. 47:13-48:22 |
| 11. Gen. 31:1-32:2 | 27. Gen. 49 |
| 12. Gen. 32:3-32 | 28. Gen. 50 |
| 13. Gen. 33 | 29. Luke 19:29-46 |
| 14. Gen. 34 | 30. Lk. 19:47-20:47 |
| 15. Gen. 35 | |
| 16. Gen. 36 | |



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

A greater appreciation for the Lord's Supper



\$12.99

“Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. . . . Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me” (*Christian Worship*, p. 35).

What do you think about when these words are spoken before the Lord's Supper distribution in church? Do you know what they really mean? Are you wondering how you are going to explain this to your non-Christian relatives who are visiting that day? Have you heard these words so often that you're not really paying attention?

Your appreciation of these words spoken during the first Lord's Supper and what it meant for Jesus to say them should grow significantly as you read *The Lord's Supper—The Lamb's High Feast* by Arnold J. Koelpin. This 144-page book is another good resource from the People's Bible Teachings series, written for Christian laypeople with the purpose of strengthening biblical understanding on various topics.

Koelpin begins with the accounts of the Lord's Supper from the four gospels, describing in detail how the Passover was celebrated back in Jesus' time. This vivid description of the Passover really sets the stage for showing the contrasts and similarities between the two feasts and helps the reader further understand the significance of the first Lord's Supper.

Koelpin covers all aspects of the Lord's Supper, from why and how we celebrate it to who should partake in the Lamb's High Feast. In addition, Koelpin also separates the requirements for the Lord's Supper from the traditions that are practiced. Also included are discussions on some false teachings about the Lord's Supper. Biblical references are given throughout the book, so it helps to have your Bible ready to look up the passages.

After reading *The Lord's Supper—The Lamb's High Feast*, you should have a broader understanding of the background and significance of the Lord's Supper and how this sacrament plays an important role in strengthening your faith.

Nathan Torgerson
Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minnesota

Note: The popular People's Bible series is now available on CD-ROM. Each volume includes NIV Scripture texts followed by Christ-centered commentaries, historical background, maps, and more. Choose from getting all 41 volumes on one CD or buying the Old Testament set (26 volumes) and the New Testament set (15 volumes) separately. Find out more about this collection and other NPH electronic offerings at www.nph.net/libronix.

Q&A with Wayne Schulz, mission counselor

Pastor Wayne Schulz, one of WELS' three mission counselors, serves missionaries and mission groups in the north-central part of the United States and western Canada. Schulz sat down with Forward in Christ to talk about the mission counselor program and how it helps the work of our synod.

Question – Tell me about your position as a mission counselor. What does that entail?

Answer – I look at us as field representatives. We're out there to provide on-site assistance for missionaries, mission groups, and sometimes self-supporting congregations. A mission counselor really acts as a teammate with the missionary. We're there to counsel, encourage, and listen to the missionaries: what their frustrations are and what their dreams are. And we try to help them keep their focus on what God is asking them to do through his call.

Question – Now when you say "missionary," do you mean someone serving missions overseas?

Answer – Mission counselors deal only with home missions. But in many ways, there are world mission fields right now in the home mission fields where we live. We're involved with ministry to Hispanics, Hmong, Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese.

Question – How long have you been a mission counselor? Have things changed over the years?

Answer – I became a mission counselor back in 1989. A lot of things have changed. Every several years we're reexamining how we do things. As mission counselors, we constantly have our ears to the ground. We're always trying to find the best ways that we can work to bring the good news of Jesus to as many people as possible.

At first I would go in with a plan [for a group] and say, "Well there's really one way that we're going to be doing this." Today we might have the general plan, but then we really try to get to know that core group and find out what their gifts and interests are. And we try to help them develop a ministry plan based around the gifts that God has given them and the characteristics of the community they serve, so they are wearing a plan that really fits them.

Question – Do you have any stories to share from the mission field?

Answer – I might have to think a little about that one, there are just so many. . . . Sometimes you think, "Well this place won't make it," and all of a sudden something

happens. Maybe God sends the right person at the right time, or maybe the lay leadership team develops, or suddenly everything just gels. And sometimes you think, "This place is a sure shot; everything's going to be coming up roses." And then maybe God humbles us, and things don't work out the way we thought.

Question – What's your favorite part about being a mission counselor?

Answer – For me, a highlight of being a mission counselor is the very interesting people I meet, people

who have been gathered by the gospel. They don't look alike, and they have so many different gifts and outlooks, yet they are gathered by the truth of Jesus and their hearts are turned on to get the work of the Lord done.

Question – How do congregations benefit from utilizing a mission counselor?

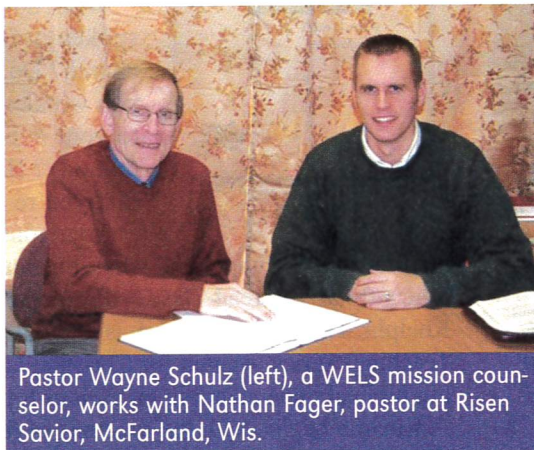
Answer – Sometimes mission groups are living and working in isolation; they are kind of separated from other

WELS churches by distance and geography. So we can come in and tell them, "What you are trying is what a lot of people have tried and are doing." Or maybe they are trying something different but it sounds interesting. So we encourage them to continue, and sometimes we can learn from them.

Question – How does this mission counselor program help the work of our synod?

Answer – I feel it's important because it gets to the grassroots level of mission expansion. We're here to help bring out the mission mindset that our Lord asks of us. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his church to go—and I ask myself, "What has changed since then?" Really nothing has changed. So it is our privilege to work in that frontier.

Read more questions and answers with Pastor Schulz online at www.forwardinchrist.net. For more information about the mission counselor program, contact WELS Board for Home Missions at 414-256-3286.



Pastor Wayne Schulz (left), a WELS mission counselor, works with Nathan Fager, pastor at Risen Savior, McFarland, Wis.

Super Saturday

Saturdays are often spent cleaning and catching up at home. But one Saturday a month in Glendale, Ariz., people are learning their Bible basics.

About 10 years ago, David Clark, pastor at Grace, Glendale, Ariz., began offering his Bible information class as a Saturday seminar. The class meets from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. for one Saturday a month for four months.

"It's daunting for people to commit to one hour a week for 14 to 20 weeks," says Clark. "I wanted to find a way to make it easier without cutting down on the material."

He continues, "What I found is that people are willing to rearrange their work schedules and get babysitters for that one Saturday of the month because they feel it's 'one and done.'"

Clark wrote his own course that covers the information that prospects—and members looking for a refresher—need to know to become a WELS member, which includes all the parts of Luther's Small Catechism.

WELS news briefs

Commission on Evangelism 414-256-3287; coe@sab.wels.net

The Commission on Evangelism has developed materials to assist congregations with holding an **Evangelism Sunday** in 2008. The theme—Declare His Praises: Everyday, Everywhere, to Everyone—stems from the theme of the 2007 synod convention. Materials include several sermons, worship helps, a children's message, and two Bible studies. You can download the materials on the Evangelism Web site, www.wels.net/evangelism.

Commission on Parish Schools 414-256-3222; cps@sab.wels.net

The Commission on Parish Schools is sponsoring a **National School Leadership Conference** on June 16-19, at the Country Springs Hotel, Waukesha, Wis. This conference exists to give WELS educators a large-scale opportunity to come together to learn from



Seventeen adults were confirmed at Grace, Glendale, Ariz., on two Sundays in December 2007. Fifteen of these confirmands are pictured.

When he started the seminars, the congregation continued to offer the normal weekly Bible information class as well. But within a year, everyone was signing up for the seminar-style classes.

His last class had 47 people, 16 of which were already members. The majority of the rest of the class was people invited by church members. He confirmed 17 new members from the class in December 2007.

"This may not work for every congregation," says Clark. "I just know that it works for us."

Clark calls his classes "Super Saturday." Why? "It's an opportunity for me to do what Luther calls in the Large Catechism, 'teaching the devil to death,'" he says.

To learn more, contact Pastor Clark at pastorclark@graceglendale.org.

God's Word, from experts in the field of educational leadership, and from each other, so that their ministry competence and commitment to Christ grows. This year's theme is "Abide in the Vine." Keynote speakers include Mark Paustian, professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; Jeff Gunn, pastor at CrossWalk Lutheran Ministries, Phoenix, Ariz.; and Dr. Harry Wong, author of *The First Days of School*. For more information or to register, go to www.wels.net/jump/leaderconf.

Board for Home Missions 414-256-3286; bhmadmins@sab.wels.net

At its December meeting, the WELS Board for Home Missions decided to work with district mission boards and neighboring congregations to **establish new congregations** near Reno, Nev., and Battlement Mesa-Parachute,

Colo. The board also authorized pastoral positions at Trinity, St. Lucia, West Indies; Bethlehem, Lakeville, Minn.; and Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn.; staff minister positions at Abiding Love, Loveland, Colo., and Saving Grace, Mobile, Ala., and preschool director positions at Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla., and Grace, Spring Hill, Fla. The board is also providing funds that will allow a Sudanese immigrant assisting with a Sudanese outreach program at Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa, to work full time.

The new positions bring the total number of ministry positions authorized for 2007 to 19. All of the positions are funded within the board's current budget.

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

Meet the editorial staff—uncut

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

Ever heard the phrase, "If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it"? That's true for Joel Petermann, our newest editorialist. Besides writing for *Forward in Christ*, he serves as the only WELS pastor in New Hampshire and the newest member of the Conference of Presidents. He also has to try to keep up with his seven-year-old son.

"I've had to learn, especially in the last few years, that I just have to say, 'Lord, this is what you allowed me to do today,' and go to sleep at night," says Petermann.

The fourth of nine children, Petermann grew up in Appleton, Wis. He shared a special relationship with his dad, the principal at St. Paul, Appleton, though times weren't always smooth. "A rough year in his and my life was the year I was in eighth grade," says Petermann. "My mom always said she could tell when one of us was in his class." Now Petermann looks back and appreciates that discipline.

A 1986 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Petermann served three years at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., before taking a call to start a mission in Rochester, Minn. There he met his wife, Jane, a member at another WELS church in Rochester. "She helped me make telephone calls to the area, purportedly under the guise that she was serving her Lord," jokes Petermann.

The Petermanns moved to New Hampshire in 1996 to serve St. Paul Lutheran Church. The closest WELS church is an

hour and a half away. "You learn to do a lot of driving," says Petermann. "We think nothing of hopping in a car and driving three hours to a study club meeting, meeting for four hours, and then driving back."

His traveling increased when he began visiting congregations throughout the North Atlantic District after being elected district president in 2004. "I didn't fly in an airplane until I was in the seminary. I thought, 'This will be a once-in-a-lifetime thing,'" he says. "Now I pretty much walk into airports like they're my second home."

Petermann's favorite part of being a pastor is "teaching adult information classes and being able to lead people . . . to a better understanding of not only their salvation but all the teachings of God's Word." His biggest challenge: balancing family life with the ministry. "My kids and my wife do feel the times that I'm gone from home," he says.

Despite all the busyness, he describes himself as content: "I'm thankful that [the Lord] has allowed me to be where I am."



Joel Petermann and his family: (l to r) Sophia, Magdalena, Ethan, Jane, Joel.

Lending a helping hand in Peru

Ten members of Living Word, a mission congregation in Waukesha, Wis., teamed up with volunteers from Evangelical

Lutheran Synod congregations in the Amazon to build a church in Tarapoto, Peru, in October 2007.



Members of Living Word, Waukesha, Wis., help build a church in Tarapoto, Peru. "One of the best things was going halfway across the world and finding brothers and sisters in Christ," says John Borgwardt, pastor at Living Word.

"It was amazing to work with these men who traveled days through the Amazon jungle to help their brothers and sisters in the faith," says John Borgwardt, pastor at Living Word. "It was a great way to share in that fellowship, knowing that we stand together on the Scriptures."

After three days of labor, the church was nearly complete. "We actually didn't have

time to put the roof on before the dedication service," says Borgwardt. "Over 100 people came to the service, and we had just finished working probably 20 minutes before. People were coming in and we still had our hammers and were pounding nails." Local members put the finishing touches on the building after the volunteers left.

This is the second trip to Peru for members of Living Word. Another group went in December 2005 on a vacation Bible school tour. "[These trips] have showed me the zeal that a number of people in our congregation have," says Borgwardt. "They just said, 'This is what we're going to do,' and they did it. It was really neat to be able to see them put their faith in action."

MLC students working while it is day

Meaningful service begins well before graduation at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. Through the *Daylight USA* program, the school places about 200 students into congregations for short-term ministry assistance every year, generally with funds from WELS Kingdom Workers.

Since 2000, almost 1,400 students have served from New York to California. They teach vacation Bible school, canvass neighborhoods, build houses, coach at camps, work with people with disabilities, assist at worship, and more. Here are just a few examples:

Alaska: Emily Mayer, Jeremiah Drews, Elisabeth Zuehlke, and Sam Kleinke

put their teacher training to good use at Camp Luther in Wasilla, Alaska, for 10 weeks last summer. "The best part of my work," says Mayer, "was reading the Bible both on my own to prepare for sharing God's Word with others, and also with fellow Christians as we together studied God's will for us as ministers of the gospel."

Colorado: "I spent two of the best weeks of my life in Colorado this summer," writes Julianna Meyer, who helped run an outreach soccer camp. "Some children came not knowing anything about soccer, and some not knowing about their Savior, and they all changed so much during the course of one week."

Georgia: Dan Albrecht, Luke Beilke, Brent Miller, and Ryan Kolander traveled to Hope, Henry County, Ga. "We got to tell people of the hope we have in Jesus," says Albrecht. "Each night we thanked God for the amazing work he had allowed us to do."

Blessings abound through the program; for example, congregations are served by young people with a heart for gospel ministry. Pastor Brian Kom and Lyle Luehmann of Ascension, Rochester, Minn., write, "What impressed us the most was the attitude they consistently displayed . . . Their enthusiasm for the Lord's work rubbed off on the people they worked with."

Young people also receive valuable experience and encouragement: "I truly never realized the joy of sharing the great news of the gospel," Zuehlke says.

Drews, who has done numerous projects, adds, "Every time I come back to the college of ministry, I get excited to see all of us here who are motivated by the gospel to serve as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers."

This spring break, 80 MLC students will lend ministry assistance through the Daylight USA program. Another MLC program, Daylight International, facilitates the placement of students and graduates as teachers in 11 foreign countries.

Laurie Gauger

(Adapted from MLC InFocus)



MLC students Jeremiah Drews, Emily Mayer, Sam Kleinke, and Elisabeth Zuehlke with some Camp Luther children in Alaska.

District news

Arizona-California

The children at **King of Kings Lutheran School, Garden Grove, Calif.**, presented their Christmas service at a busy Orange County mall on Dec. 20, 2007. As the children sang, about 50 church and school supporters passed out treats and information. "The Lord blessed our outreach efforts with hundreds of locals taking a break from their frantic shopping to hear God's Word highlight the focus to the reason we celebrate Christmas," says Stephanie Lamas, teacher at King of Kings.

Southeastern Wisconsin

One hundred thirty-five **students from five area Lutheran high schools** participated in the Jan. 12 Jazz Festival hosted by Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. The event, which included performance clinics and master classes, culminated in a joint performance.

Mr. Dale Walz, assistant principal and head basketball coach at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, earned his 500th career win on Dec. 7, 2007. Walz was then elected

to the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame and will be inducted in October.

Happy Anniversary!

SEW—**Rev. James Huebner** celebrated 25 years in the ministry on Oct. 14, 2007.

AZ-CA—**Rev. Lowell Smith** celebrated 44 years in the ministry on Nov. 30, 2007.

District reporters for this month are:
CA—Hermann John; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

Coffee lounge helps church build relationships

Walking along his usual route to class, a college student in downtown Milwaukee spots a sign that wasn't there before—Grace Place Coffee Lounge. Through the large windows he can see a group playing cards at a table and a couple others behind laptops on the comfy loveseats. This new coffee lounge is off the lobby of the Grace Center, a building that Grace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee dedicated in March 2007.

If the church doors are the front entrance to the gospel, the Grace Center is a side door. The Grace Center forms connections between church and community as individuals and organizations use its Great Hall for events.

During the planning stage of the Grace Center, congregation members also expressed that they wanted “a way to evangelize in a ‘soft’ non-threatening way and a place to welcome un-churched visitors that would not be intimidating,” Jeanne Carbon, Grace’s church administrator, says. “Members also wanted a place for fellowship on a daily basis.”

And so, Grace Place Coffee Lounge was incorporated into the Grace Center . . . but not without some challenges. Codes, occupancy rules, and Health Department regulations had to be met. Then a broken plumbing valve leading to a flood and a new floor delayed the opening. Grace Place finally welcomed the public in November 2007.

As a non-profit organization, Grace Place relies on volunteer baristi and



Margaret Kastner, Hillary Gruszka, and Sarah Gruszka (l to r behind counter) are the Monday evening volunteer crew at Grace Place Coffee Lounge.

coffee sales to cover its expenses. Manager Bob Zastrow oversees the day-to-day operation of the coffee lounge and also trains and coordinates schedules of more than 50 volunteer staff. The current goal is to be open on Sundays from 7 A.M. to 1 P.M. and Mondays from 5:30 P.M. to 9 P.M.

Grace Place’s mission is “to help build Christian relationships with the people in our community and congregation by means of outreach, programs and events, and congregational fellowship.” The college ministry at Grace has already used the lounge for game nights and study nights. (Free wireless Internet and great coffee drinks have been big draws.) The lounge is also open for wedding receptions and other

events held in the upstairs Great Hall.

“We are looking to attract college students and young adults who live in the area, the increasing number of residents (young and old alike) in the numerous condominium complexes going up around downtown, as well as the downtown workers who walk past on their way to work each day,” Carbon shares.

The church’s vision for Grace Place in 2010 is that it will be open daily, well-publicized, and self-sufficient. Daron Lindemann, pastor at Grace, sums it all up when he says, “It will offer Christian truth daily through subtle expressions and friendly conversations, as well as through scheduled Bible studies.”

In the news



Carl Toepel, member of the WELS Latin America Administrative Committee, was featured in the Jan. 22 issue of the *Manitowoc Herald*. The article focused on Toepel’s trip to the 2008 New Hampshire presidential primaries, where he collected political memorabilia and tried to meet all of the presidential candidates. “[Sen. Barack Obama] was at a huge rally in Manchester, but instead I went to the only WELS church in New Hampshire and I missed him,” says Toepel.

The Dec. 31, 2007, issue of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* talked about **Steve Boettcher**, member at Calvary, Thiens-

ville, Wis., and his production, “Pioneers of Television.” The month-long TV series, focusing on icons such as Dick Van Dyke, Andy Griffith, and Ed Sullivan, was broadcast on PBS through January.

Mitch Keller, senior at Kettle Moraine High School, Jackson, Wis., appeared in the *West Bend Daily News* on Dec. 4, 2007. The article talked about his ongoing role as co-host for *Kids Connection*, the monthly video produced by WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship. Keller was quoted as saying, “Naturally, God inspires me the most. He led me here. I follow my faith.”

Lutheran elementary schools reach out to Korean students

Spreading the gospel to all nations in your own backyard recently took on a different meaning for Immanuel Lutheran School in Salem, Ore. While the school continues to reach out in Salem, some of the students are coming a lot further than the immediate neighborhood—they are coming across the ocean from Korea.

Started in 2001, Immanuel School already had a multicultural mix of students—from English to Russian to Hispanic. In an effort to reach out even more, the school, in 2006, decided to tap into another market and go through the government approval process to be able to accept foreign exchange students. By January 2007, the school had its first student from Korea.

Things snowballed from there. A man from Seoul, Korea, was looking in the Pacific Northwest for an area that had few Korean students. He settled on Salem, Ore., and started calling schools

in the area—including Immanuel. “We were the nicest [school] to him on the phone,” says Craig Wasser, pastor at Immanuel. “And we were willing to work with him.” Soon Korean children—fifth- and sixth-graders—were arriving at Immanuel.

According to Wasser, Korean parents send their children to school in the United States to give them an advantage in the competitive Korean school system. Students will come at different times of the year and stay for three to six months.

While in Salem, the children stay with congregation host families. Immanuel developed a special program for the kids who come during the summer, but during the school year the Korean children attend the same classes as the other children at Immanuel. Immanuel provides after-school tutoring to help with English vocabulary.



(L to R) Grace Song, Kelly Yoon, Kate Kim, and Minah Kim were baptized in December 2007 at Immanuel, Salem, Ore. Korean foreign exchange students have been attending Immanuel Lutheran School, where they learn about their Savior as well as improve their English.

But besides practicing their English at Immanuel, the students are also learning about their Savior. In December 2007, four of the Korean students were baptized. Others are confessing their faith. “A Buddhist boy [and three other Koreans] were sitting in my living room talking about Jesus,” says Wasser. “They’re talking about him dying, and they’re talking about salvation. Harry (the Buddhist boy) says, ‘I believe Jesus is the Savior of the world.’ Wow! We were loving that day.”

Immanuel is not the only WELS Lutheran elementary school in the Pacific Northwest that has foreign exchange students. Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash., has had Korean students since 2000, and Faith, Tacoma, Wash., also has gone through the government approval process. Three more schools—Grace, Portland, Ore.; Grace, Yakima, Wash.; and Parkland (ELS), Tacoma, Wash.—are working to be able to accept exchange students as well.

As the students return to Korea, Wasser says that the congregation and the school will try to keep in contact with them. “We don’t have any control over where the parents take them to church,” he says. “But the power of the gospel works. We trust that as God has called them to be his children, the gospel will keep their faith strong.”

DISCOVER WHAT'S NEW ON Streams

Want to know more about how WELS is using technology? The new WELSTech podcast explores the intersection of ministry and technology. Each week, Martin Spriggs, WELS chief technology officer, and Sallie Draper, WELS technology trainer, discuss current technology trends

and their usefulness in furthering the gospel ministry. Also look for interviews with others to expand the discussion as well as tidbits on Web sites or programs that can help you in your ministry. Find out more or join the discussion at <http://welstech.wels.net>.

WELSTech podcast

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Your WELSTech hosts:

Martin Spriggs, WELS Chief Technology Officer
email: mspriggs@wels.net
phone: 414-254-1230

Sallie Draper, WELS Technology Trainer
email: sdraper@wels.net
phone: 414-453-1324

Recent Episodes

- Episode 004 - Jan 30, 2008
- Episode 003 - Jan 23, 2008
- Episode 002 - Jan 16, 2008
- Episode 001 - Jan 9, 2008

Articles

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CHANGES IN MINISTRY**Pastors**

Borgwardt, Wayne M., to retirement
Clemons, Samuel M., to Grace, Tucson, Ariz.
Lillegard, David T., to retirement
Mohlke, Howard O., to Messiah, Nampa, Idaho
Moll, John M., to St. Paul, Algoma, Wis.
Sullivan, Michael P., to Apostles, Regina, Saskatchewan
Zehms, Roger R., to Nathanael, Milwaukee, Wis.

Teachers

Bauer, Matthew T., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.
Diels, Joyce A., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Henderson, John A., to St. John, Saginaw, Mich.
Indahl, Scott D., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Jenkins Jr., Clarence W., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kitzberger, Rachel L., to St. John, Lake City, Minn.
Lauber, Nathan, to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Leifer, Pamela A., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Leinberger, Angela, to Christ-St. Peters, Milwaukee, Wis.
Melso, John M., to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.
Roux, Jonathan A., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Schmugge, Lisa A., to St. John, Saginaw, Mich.
Schroeder, David W., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Schuelein, Judy E., to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.
Seelou, Sarah A., to St. John, Saginaw, Mich.
Wiechman, Jeffery P., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Staff minister

Bischoff, Philip S., to CrossWalk Ministries, Phoenix, Ariz.

ANNIVERSARIES

Green Bay, Wis.—St. Paul (125). April 13. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; potluck lunch to follow. RSVP by April 6. Carla Hoffmann, 920-435-8468, ext. 22; lcfrank@new.rr.com.
Omaha, Neb.—Gethsemane School (60). May 31. School alumni activities. June 1. School anniversary worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; dinner and program to follow. RSVP requested. Corey Pederson, 402-493-2550; geth@cox.net.
Red Wing, Minn.—St. John (150). Aug. 15. Concert with Koine, 7 P.M. Aug. 16. Cemetery walk, music recital, pig roast. Aug. 17. Worship, 9:30 A.M., at Red Wing High School; dinner and program to follow. RSVP requested. Janet Gehlhar, 715-792-5397; jgehlar@redwing.net.

Allegan, Mich.—St. John (140). Sept 21. Worship, 3 P.M.; open house and light luncheon to follow. Ron Kruse, 269-673-2079; lutheron@charter.net.

COMING EVENTS

CEO Men's Rally—March 7-8. Brian Lampe, Brianandtracey@tds.net. Web site, www.ceo-ministries.com.

Lutheran Pioneer and Lutheran Girl Pioneer International Conventions—March 7-8. Site, Cranberry Inn Lodge, Tomah, Wis. Lutheran Girl Pioneers, 608-781-5232, lgp@charterinternet.net. Lutheran Pioneers, 888-214-8225, lppoffice@tds.net.

Spring Teen Retreat—March 7-9. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. 920-787-3202; office@campphillip.com. Web site, www.campphillip.com.

Reach the World Choir tour—

- March 2—9 A.M., Peace, Sahuarita, Ariz.
- March 9—10 A.M., Immanuel, Lakeside, Ariz.
- April 5—7 P.M., Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M.
- April 6—10:15 A.M., Trinity, El Paso, Tex.
- April 24—7 P.M., Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
- April 26—6 P.M., Deer Valley, Phoenix, Ariz.
- April 27—9 A.M., Peace, Cottonwood, Ariz.; 12:30 P.M., Hope, Chino Valley, Ariz.
- May 17—afternoon, Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz.
- May 18—10 A.M., Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, Ariz.
- June 27—7:30 P.M., LWMS annual convention, Tucson, Ariz.

Pathways to Christ Women's Retreat—April 4-6. LaSure's Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. Web site, www.martinlutheroshkosh.com.

Christian Woman Today Retreat—April 4-6. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.

Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale contemporary praise concert—April 6, 7 P.M. Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis. Alan Ross, 920-684-5833; rossoa4@tm.net.

Today's Christian Woman Retreat—April 11-13. Radisson Hotel, Kalamazoo, Mich. Web site, www.tcwr.org.

WELS National Handbell Festival—April 12-13, 2008. Host, Emanuel, New London, Wis. Site, New London High School, New London, Wis. Concert, 2 P.M., April 13. Web site, www.welsbells.com.

Jar of Clay (Women's) Ministries Conference—April 18-20. Hilton Gardens Inn Millennium Center, Atlanta, Ga. Keynote speaker, Mark Jeske. Sharon Buck, sbuck1@compurium.net; Karen Harmon, jkyharmon@cox.net.

Women's Enrichment Weekend—April 18-20. Salem, Stillwater Minn. Karen Diethert, 715-549-6519; diethert@sbcglobal.net.

Lutheran Pioneer and Lutheran Girl Pioneer International Pinocar Derbies—April 19. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Lutheran Girl Pioneers, 608-781-5232; lgp@charterinternet.net. Lutheran Pioneers, 888-214-8225; lppoffice@tds.net.

WELS Staff Ministers Conference—April

25-26. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Kevin Walker, 905-817-0026; kevin.walker@crossoflife.net.

WELS-Church Librarians' Organization Spring Conference—April 26, 9:30 A.M. St. Paul's, Muskego, Wis. Joanne Weber, jaweber@wi.rr.com, 414-425-4225 or Howard Wilsmann, 920-682-5351; hbwilsman511@sbcglobal.net.

The Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee 50th anniversary concert—April 27, 1:30 and 4 P.M. Grace (downtown), Milwaukee, Wis. Banquet to follow. RSVP requested. Cal Kozlowski, 414-258-7064; clkozlowski@sbcglobal.net.

WELS National School Leadership Conference—June 16-19. Country Springs Hotel, Waukesha, Wis. Early bird registration deadline, April 1. Single day registration available. 414-256-3222. Web site, www.wels.net/jump/leaderconf.

National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts—July 28-31. Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. Web site, www.wels.net/jump/worship-conf.

NAMES WANTED

Adult choir members—to sing in the July 28 opening festival concert of the National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts. Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. 414-256-3226; worship@sab.wels.net. Web site, www.wels.net/jump/worship-conf.

WELS musicians—conductors, composers, vocalists, and instrumentalists with advanced training. Commission on Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; worship@sab.wels.net; 414-256-3226. Online submission at www.wels.net/jump/worship-conf. The online submission page also allows interested people to request being added to the conference mailing list.

Students living in or near Mankato, Minn.—Gary Wong, 507-345-7049; welsmsum@hickorytech.net.

Fredericksburg, Va.—Heath Butler, 703-361-4866; pastor@bethlehem-lutheran.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

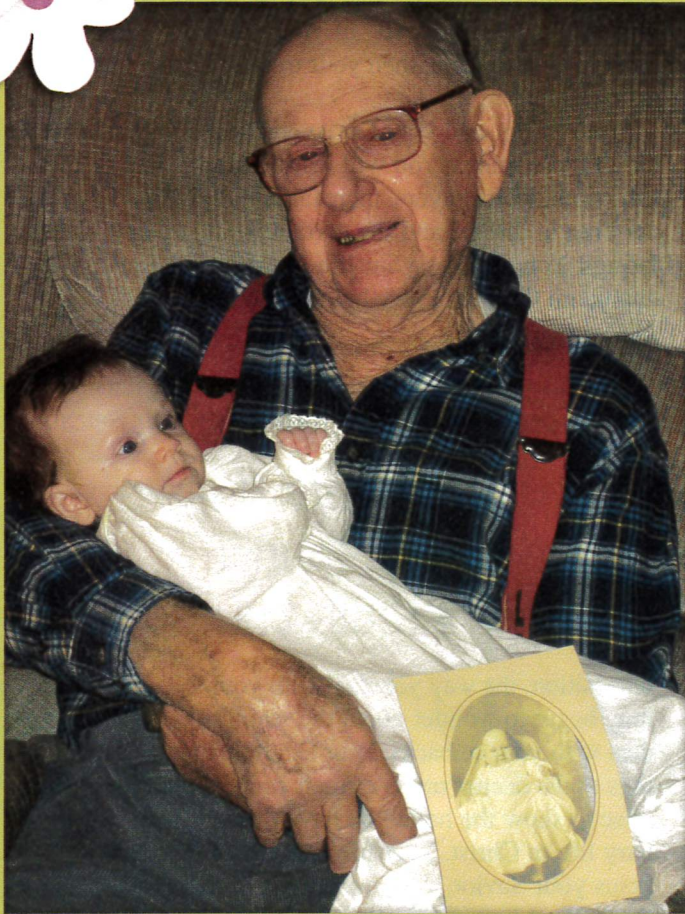
Preschool teachers and assistants—Bethany Christian Preschool, North Fort Myers, Fla. Janis Visaggio, 239-995-5437; janisruth@embarqmail.com.

English professors—Wisconsin Lutheran College, a Bible-based liberal arts college affiliated with WELS, is seeking candidates to teach English. Membership in either WELS or the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is necessary for employment. Doctorate preferred. Send letter of interest, three letters of recommendation, and current Curriculum Vitae to Dr. Martin Moldenhauer in care of WLC, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@sab.wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. View an updated bulletin board at www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard and a calendar at www.wels.net/jump/calendar.



PICTURE THIS



On Oct. 8, 2006, Greta Buege was baptized at King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif. On Oct. 8, 1916, Greta's great-grandfather, John von Stein, was baptized at Trinity, Jenera, Ohio. Greta wore the baptismal gown that her great-grandfather had worn 90 years earlier. Pictured are Greta Buege, John von Stein, and a photo of John in the same gown 90 years ago.

Submitted by Kristen Buege

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



DID YOU KNOW?

Facts about the timing of Easter

- Although Christmas is always celebrated on the same day—Dec. 25—the date that the Christian church celebrates Easter moves every year.
- Western churches (Catholic and Protestant) determine the date of Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox. This date is based off the Gregorian calendar.
- Easter for Eastern churches (Greek, Russian, etc.) is usually one to several weeks later because these churches base the date off the older Julian calendar.
- The earliest date Easter can be is March 22. The latest is April 25.
- Easter has not fallen on the earliest of the 35 possible dates, March 22, since 1818, and will not do so again until 2285.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

My husband was running late and I already had supper on the table, so my kids and I sat down, prayed, and began to eat. When my husband came in the door, he sat down and prayed quietly to himself.

Kendra, my three-year-old, asked, "What are you doing, Dad?"

"I'm praying to myself," he replied.

"You're not supposed to pray to yourself!" she scolded, "You're only supposed to pray to Jesus!"

*Rebecca Valleau
Maplewood, Minnesota*



POTLUCK POLL

Hebrews 11 lists heroes of faith in the Bible. Besides Jesus, what person in the Bible or in your life today would you consider your personal hero of faith? Why?

Send your answer by April 15 to **Potluck Poll**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Select answers will be printed in the June issue of *Forward in Christ*.

“Hello. This is Doctor Davis. We just analyzed the blood tests we took when you were here for your physical exam. We need to have a consultation in my office. It will be necessary for your spouse to be with you. Can you come tomorrow morning?” So begins the onslaught of bad news. “I am 99 percent sure that you have a form of leukemia,” the doctor tells you bluntly. Suddenly, introspective thinking begins. Your life just has taken a turn that will change everything for which you had hoped or planned.

Your help comes from God

It is like this with the unwanted news of an unexpected and major illness, an impending or sudden death, an accident, a divorce, a job loss, or one of a hundred other events. Your world can seem to fall apart in a hurry. No matter how strong you have always thought your faith was, you may feel unprepared for this moment. Frustrations, anger, and tears can erupt and crowd out your Christ-mindedness. You’ve heard about major setbacks in the lives of others, but you never expected this would happen to you or a loved one in your family or a close friend.

It may not be until the sleepless hours of nighttime that you begin to turn your thoughts and life back to God. In your aloneness you think of looking up to the hills as you ask, “From where does my help come?” You know that you have a Savior who renews his promises to you, who says he never leaves or forsakes you. You know that nothing, not even this shocking turn of events, can separate you from his love. You remember that you have a Good Shepherd who leads you through the valley of the shadow of death. You remember your baptism through which God made you a member of his family, a new creation in Christ. You know that all things, even the shocking analysis of your blood test, work together for your good. In humility you beg God to forgive your weakness of faith. You

count your blessings, especially the one that has placed you among the “blessed” of your heavenly Father. You pray to God to strengthen your trust in Christ, to say “yes” to all his promises.

Your pastor and your Christian friends will remind you of all these things. You will learn to appreciate them, their concerns, their prayers, their faith, their Christian way of looking at things, and the certainties that life in Christ brings. You will see your life in a new light and give thanks to God for every breath you take.

Your hope can be a witness

You also will be observed by friends, acquaintances, and medical personnel. Some of them may watch you, your

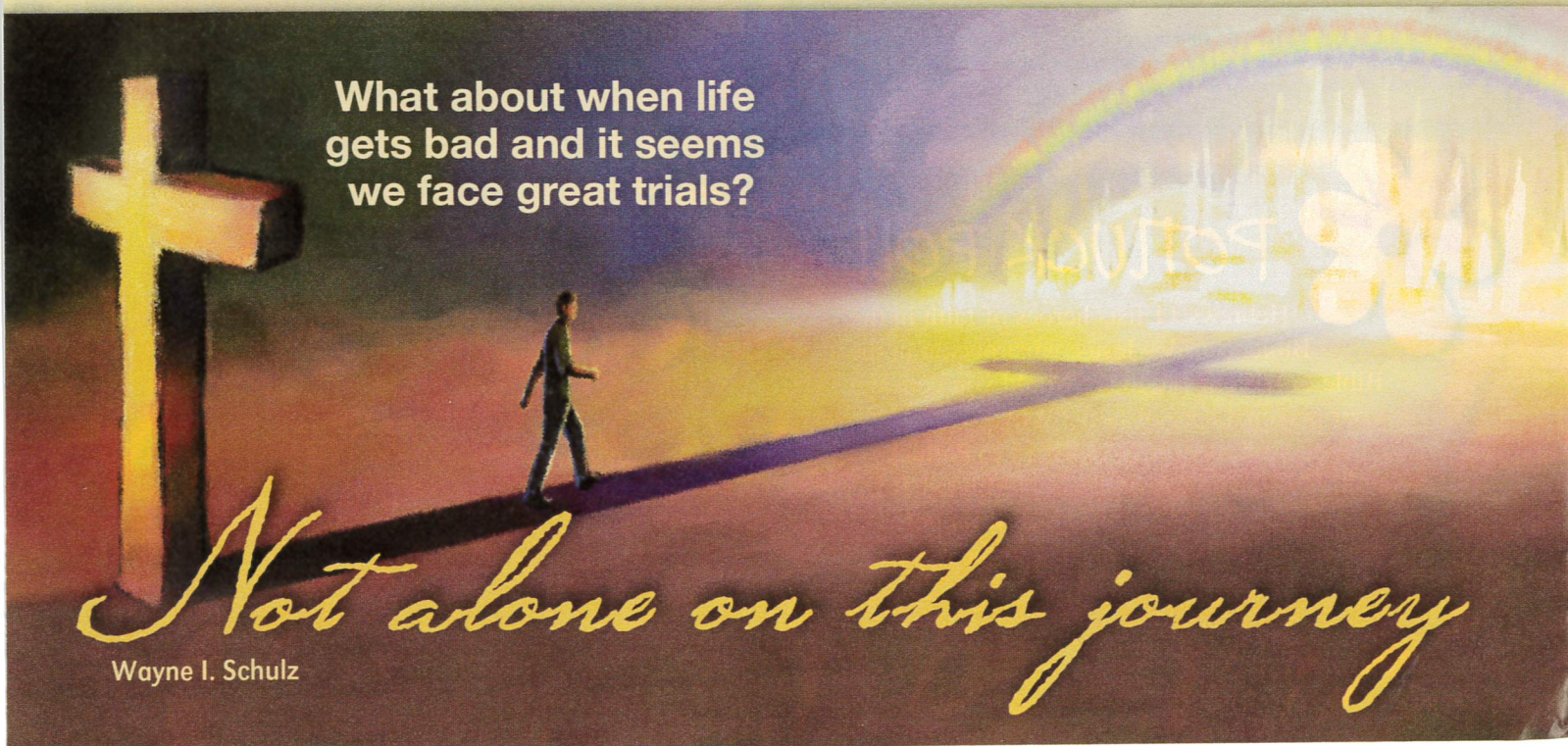
You will see your life in a new light and give thanks to God for every breath you take.

disposition, the way you deal with your life situation. They may begin to wonder about the strength with which you deal with your setbacks. Your example may give you openings to the deeper needs of their souls. Opportunities may arise to show the hope you have through your extraordinary life in Christ. Your life is a gift of light and life in Jesus your Savior, your everything. Others may begin to think about how deeply they need that same life in Jesus.

If your world turns bad, use it as a time to shine in a way you never anticipated, to love and listen, and to bring your Savior into the life of others.

Wayne Schulz, a mission counselor, is a member at Eastside, Madison, Wisconsin.

ILLUSTRATION: GOODSALT



What about when life gets bad and it seems we face great trials?

Not alone on this journey

Wayne I. Schulz

Margie Habben:

In God I trust

In life's trials we rediscover what is important and renew our desire to share Jesus.

Rachel Hartman

"It's what one fears most when living in a foreign country: what if I get sick?" says Margie Habben.

This fear became a reality for Margie in December 2004. After a tumor was discovered in her leg, Margie faced a trip from Japan, where she and her husband have lived since 1967, to the United States for treatment.

Margie, like the rest of us, did not have getting sick on her to-do list. When pain developed in her leg, she waited for the discomfort to subside on its own. When it grew worse, she sought help at a doctor's office in Japan. After tests, she was advised to seek help in the United States.

Facing cancer

Margie headed to Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minn. Shortly after her arrival, she was diagnosed with a high-grade pleomorphic sarcoma of the left thigh. This is a rare type of cancer. "The strange name was so overwhelming," recalls Margie, "that the tears didn't come at first."

The doctors set up a plan. It included radiation treatments and then surgery. The cancer was in stage 4, which meant heavy doses of drugs had to be used. Some of the side effects were quite severe. Yet she was never alone. "I knew Jesus was there with me, holding my hand through each stage of the treatments and pain," Margie says.

During the therapy, Margie stayed with family and friends. The chance to

see them was a bonus. Margie and her husband, Missionary Kermit Habben, have lived in Japan for almost 40 years, far from loved ones. The best therapy, Margie notes, was being able to "see the grandchildren."

When it was time for surgery, the doctor described the results as "amazing." The cancer cells in the tumor were completely destroyed! Normally, patients only see 40 to 50 percent of the cancer cells gone. Margie adds, "The doctor commented that without the support of my family and friends and the many prayers, I would not have made such an incredible recovery."

God granted Margie her health back. On Aug. 24, 2005, she and her husband, Kermit, boarded the plane to go back to Japan. Margie comments, "What a joyous reunion it was with the Japanese Christians!"

God is with us

Throughout the treatment, Margie was encouraged by prayers, cards, letters, and e-mails. Brothers and sisters in Christ prayed for her and with her. "Most of all," she says, "God's promises are what kept me going." She clung to her Bible and its passages. "Surely I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20) was a favorite of hers.

Reminders of the experience are still with Margie. "Each day, when I walk into our laundry room, I see all the supports I needed to recover: crutches, a walker, a wheelchair, and a leg brace." Now she walks unaided



in her home and uses a cane when she goes out.

Margie has been an inspiration for many. Andrea Wordell, a missionary wife in Japan, comments, "Even as Margie has been recovering from cancer, without the full use of one leg and tiring easily, she's continued to teach cooking classes to women and English and Bible classes to neighborhood children." And she is never hesitant to share her faith. "I've seen her encourage a drunk man on a train to learn about the Bible," Andrea adds.

As a result of her experience, Margie is able to relate to others going through difficult times. To those who are battling a serious disease, she says, "Remember that [God] is there for you. If you have family member who is suffering, be there for them. Pray for them and with them."

Rachel Hartman and her husband, Missionary Michael Hartman, are serving in Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico.

IN SICKNESS & HEALTH

THE LORD DIRECTS OUR STEPS, EVEN THROUGH THE
UPS AND DOWNS OF CARING FOR A LOVED
ONE WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE.

Robert L. Sawall

Only those who care for someone afflicted with Alzheimer's disease can fully appreciate the emotional agony that both the caretaker and the patient endure. Nevertheless, when you depend on your Savior, you can see how your gracious God directs your steps. I learned that lesson when my wife, Charlene, got Alzheimer's disease.

Emotional agony

It started with her sudden inability to follow a recipe as well as her confusion as to time and space. Charlene became frustrated, and so did I. Without her expertise in preparing the muffins and egg dishes for breakfast, we had to close our Wisconsin bed and breakfast that we had bought after I retired from serving as a pastor.

Then I received a retirement call to serve a congregation in West Texas. The warm weather appealed to Charlene so I accepted the call and served there for four and a half years.

During that time Alzheimer's disease was taking its toll. Paranoia was setting in. Charlene's sister visited us and when she left, Charlene believed that she had taken our sheets and towels.

About a year later, hallucinations began. She saw young girls, nonexistent, playing in our house. As time advanced, the hallucinations became more detailed. The



nonexistent girls became nonexistent mature women. Charlene would ask why I would have these women coming to the house.

Doctors gave Charlene medication to control the hallucinations. Unfortunately, the medication was not always taken. It would be hidden in flowerpots and under doilies. It became obvious that we needed to be closer to family. I retired again and we returned back to Wisconsin.

With family now able to visit us, Charlene seemed to adjust quite well. But then, little by little, aggressive outbursts took place. She wanted to get out of the house, to be anywhere but home. I had to have someone stay with her while I was gone.

As time went on the disease progressed. Seldom did I sleep soundly. She would get up and try to leave the house. I introduced flip locks on the doors. This helped for a while—until she discovered how to undo them. At 2 A.M. on Palm Sunday, Charlene unlatched the door, escaping into the bitter cold without a coat and not knowing where to go. I had no choice but to call 911 for help.

A time of adjustment

After three days at a local hospital, I was able to bring Charlene back home. But life was becoming more difficult. Charlene was determined to escape. I stood on the steps to prevent her from leaving. In an effort to push me off, she fell backward, just missing hitting her head on our cement fountain.

I watched her as she lay on the deck and thought, "This is no way to live." Something had to be done. But the words at our wedding came to me repeatedly: "Wilt thou love her . . . and keep her in sickness and in health?" I vowed before God's altar that I would.

I searched for an available bed in a healthcare center. After visiting various homes, the Lord led me to a home that had room. It was on a Thursday—May 25, 2006, Ascension Day—that

Charlene entered the Alzheimer's unit of the healthcare center. She wanted to know why she was there. I told her that her medications were not working well and that they had to bring them into balance. The staff requested that I not return to the unit for a week so she could get adjusted.

The days that followed didn't go well. For me it was a time of profound sorrow. Tears would not stop flowing. If Charlene had died, it would have been much easier. I felt like I had abandoned her to a horrible world.

It also wasn't easy for Charlene. She opened a window, threw her few belongings out, and tried to escape. The staff alerted me to the possibility that they could not keep her.

But the Lord was so good. Unbeknownst to me, Charlene was suffering severe back pain. A medication patch relieved her of that pain, and she was able to adjust. They would be able to keep her at the home. This was somewhat of a disappointment to me, because it was my hope that somehow she would be able to come back home.

The following week I was able to visit her. Would she respond to me or would she show anger? Her response to me was good although mixed with confusion. She let me hug her. When I left the unit, the staff had to distract her. After getting in the car, the tears simply gushed freely. What kind of a husband was I?

As time went on, it became better. Charlene and I would sit in the courtyard. She was so delightful, so very pleasant. I thank my dear Lord for these very special moments. I would visit her every day. And now at the age of 79, she's the most beautiful woman ever. Our time together has become some of the sweetest of moments we have ever enjoyed. She is the love of my life.

A blessing from the Lord

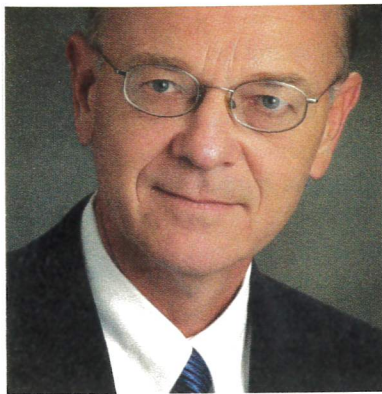
I understand now that placing her in the home was the best thing I could have done for her. And, to the amazement of doctors and staff, she is not deteriorating as they thought, but actually improving in vocabulary and thought process. Once again the Lord showed me that he knows best and is able to turn an emotional trauma into a marvelous blessing for both of us.

This was a learning experience for me and also a time for soul searching. When Charlene was difficult at home with me, I was not always as gentle or loving as the attendants at the healthcare center are. I'm Christian. I'm a pastor. I know that the Lord wants me to love my wife as he loved me. How come I failed so badly? I came to the conclusion that Charlene was God's gift to me and therefore I should treat her as God wants me to treat her—with loving respect during good times and bad. As it is written, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Through Charlene the Lord has opened another mission opportunity. I now serve the residents at the center with his holy and precious Word through worship services. My son and I also are working on a way to communicate with those who do not speak or just stare off into space.

The future is offering promise that medications will be available to do away with Alzheimer's disease. It can't come soon enough for me. With God all things are possible, and I pray that the Lord will see it in his wisdom to restore Charlene to a point that we can be together again. But whatever happens, we must be ready to share the hope we have in Christ with those who live without him.

Robert Sawall, a retired pastor, serves St. Paul, Clintonville, Wisconsin.



Mark Schweden

A synod centered on the gospel

Every cell of your body is influenced from the time it forms until the time it dies by something called DNA. The DNA in your cells determines nearly everything about your physical body. It governs the color of your hair and eyes, your general health and fitness, and your susceptibility to certain diseases. Your DNA is an inseparable part of what you are.

There is something very special at the heart and center of who and what we are as a synod. It's the very foundation of what we believe. It permeates the life and work of our synod and all of its members. It's the source of our joy now and our confidence for the future. It's the reason and motivation for all we do. And it's the treasure that we strive to share with the world. At the heart and center of all we are and do as a synod is nothing less than the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news that God, in Christ, has made us his people solely by his grace and mercy.

The gospel of Jesus Christ first touches us individually. It's the life-giving message that the Holy Spirit has used to work faith in our hearts. The gospel has brought us into God's family and changed our lives—and our eternity. It assures us daily of God's full and free forgiveness. This good news gives sinners genuine peace of mind and heart: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Such a message gives hope to people who had no reason to hope and joy in a sad and sinful world.

The gospel of Christ not only brings us into God's family. It also is the reason for all we do as God's people. In a world where people have many different moti-

vements to "do good and be good," the gospel gives the only God-pleasing motivation: "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We don't do good in order to get something from God, to look good when compared with others, or to avoid divine punishment. Rather, we strive to live for God because of the thanks we have for what he has done for us. As individual Christians, it's the gospel that moves us to worship, to be faithful spouses and parents, and to serve others with our words and actions.

As a synod, it's the gospel that motivates us in all our decision-making and planning. A gospel-centered synod will celebrate the freedom that God gives us in Christ, and it will avoid becoming legalistic, that is, making rules where God has not made them. A gospel-focused synod does not seek the false glory of outward success and growth but will trust in the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the gospel in his own way and his own time, to accomplish God's saving purposes.

The gospel is also at the center of the mission that we've been given—as individuals, as congregations, and as a synod. Just before he ascended, Jesus gave his church its mission: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). As a truly gospel-centered synod, we recognize that God has given us the gospel not only to cherish for ourselves, but also to proclaim and share.

The gospel is our life. It's our motive. It's our message. It's our mission. It's who we are, and it's what our synod stands for.

Next month: We are a synod focused on our mission.

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25,26

“Doesn’t she look good?”

“She looks so peaceful.”

“She had a good life.”

“Didn’t they do a nice job?”

And my favorite, “What can you say?”

What can you say? You can say she is dead! The woman who gave me birth, who smiled at my drawings, who held my hand as I crossed the street and never stopped holding my hand is dead. And it hurts.

It might not have been your mother, but most of us have been at the coffin of one we have loved. Do our tears mean we don’t believe?

Jesus raised Lazarus

Jesus, who knew better than we, wept. His friend Lazarus had died. You could say that Jesus had let him die. After all, word had come to Jesus that Lazarus was sick, but Jesus still dawdled two more days (John 11:4-6). Since God knows when each of his children dies, Jesus knew the moment Lazarus was dead (John 11:11-14). Jesus planned to teach the ultimate lesson, the lesson that would carry all his disciples through some difficult days ahead.

When Jesus and his disciples arrived at Bethany, Martha came out to greet

them. She demonstrated great faith. She confessed that she believed that Jesus could have prevented Lazarus’ death. She even believed that Jesus could ask God, and Lazarus would be raised. “If you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (John 11:21,22).

Jesus told her that her brother would rise again. Yes, she knew that God would raise him up on the last day, which is a wonderful confession. But you have the feeling that maybe she still didn’t know whom she was talking to. Jesus explained it and then he did it. “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” Martha professed her faith in him as the Messiah, the Son of God. That day, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus will raise us

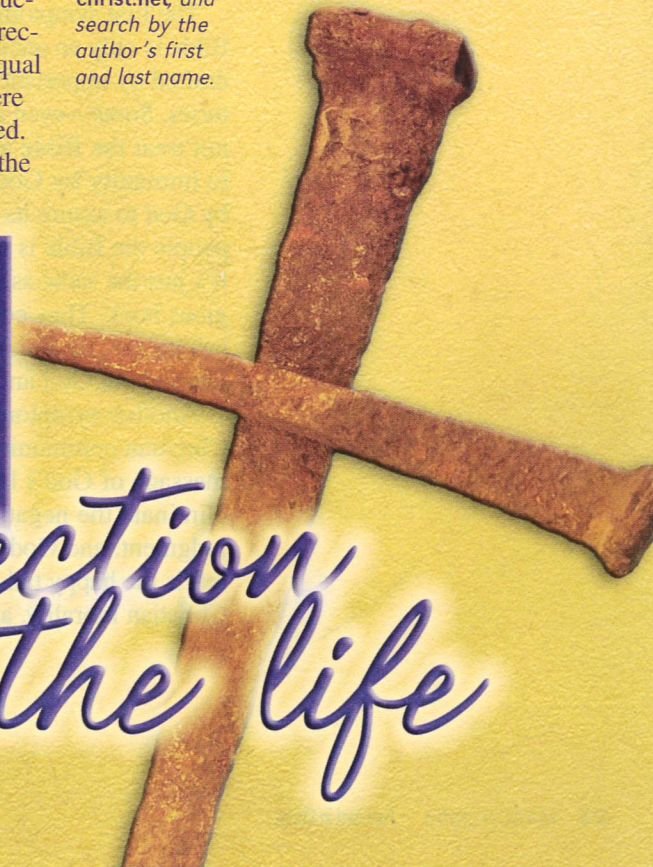
“I am the resurrection” implies that death has power to end life, but another has greater power. The sentence structure seems strange: “I am the resurrection.” It is like Jesus is saying, “I equal the resurrection.” But it is true. There is no other resurrection even claimed. No one, nothing, raises itself from the

dead. The only place “resurrection” fits is with Jesus. He took us and our sins to the cross. Jesus was nailed there for us, died there for us. Those who loved him cried over his death. Then on Easter morning he burst out . . . alive! So, just as resurrection implies death, it also implies life. And that is what we get excited about. Because Jesus equals resurrection, Jesus also equals life. The source of all life—physical, spiritual, eternal—is Jesus.

So each year as God’s creation hints of a new cycle of life, we put on our Easter best, take our lilies to church, and open up our voices for all to hear, “I know that my Redeemer lives . . . He lives and I shall conquer death” (*Christian Worship* 152:1,7). The one who held my hand is not dead; she lives with the Resurrection and the Life. And so will I.

Contributing editor David Sternhagen is pastor at Crown of Life, New Orleans, Louisiana.

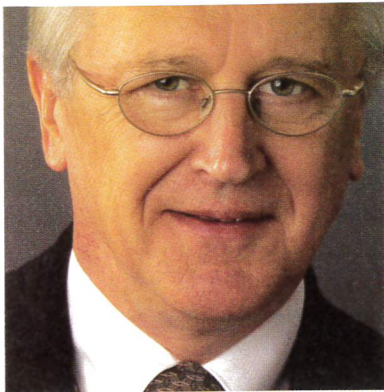
This is the third article in a seven-part series on Jesus’ “I am” statements. To read other articles in the series, go to www.forwardinchrist.net, and search by the author’s first and last name.



I AM
*the resurrection
and the life*

Because Jesus equals resurrection, Jesus also equals life.

David D. Sternhagen



John A. Baird

Really irrelevant

Irrelevant Christian Syndrome (ICS)—a term I'm using—does occur naturally. The apostle Paul told us about it. He reminded Christians that some would consider Christ crucified as just so much foolishness—irrelevant and useless (1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5). John began his gospel reminding Christians that the world did not recognize Christ when he arrived here on earth (John 1:10,11).

Christians and the message of the gospel will always be irrelevant to the world because “the man without the Spirit . . . cannot understand” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The world has a terminal case of pICS (perceived Irrelevant Christian Syndrome). The world rejects Christ. Only the Holy Spirit working through the gospel can cure hearts that think Christ is foolishness.

But Christians can acquire a real Irrelevant Christian Syndrome (rICS). It's an infection that causes them to forget what makes them different and what gives them spiritual strength. The symptoms simply make them look just like everyone else. Here are some of the symptoms I've noticed.

The first symptom is to think that the Bible is only an ancient book of wisdom drafted by important people over the centuries. Some—even some Christians—do not treat the Bible as a revelation given to humanity by God himself, inspired by God to assure its reliability. For these people the Bible is not fully irrelevant. It's just the same as every other great religious book. They contend that the Bible has no special authority to shape our ideas about God and spiritual truth.

Another symptom occurs in some Christian communities when the harsh message of God's law disappears. They eliminate the negative talk about sin, judgment, and God's anger. All that is left is the happy talk of love, fellowship, Christian morality, and hope. But when

Christians eliminate the concept of sin and God's punishment, they become irrelevant. They create happy people who continue in their godless behavior but smile with the illusion of their own self-worth and a false self-image.

The third symptom soon follows: Jesus becomes not a crucified Savior but a teacher or example. If one eliminates sin, judgment, and death from the vocabulary, one might ask why anyone needs Jesus. Why even talk about a Christ crucified? One has removed the reason for his coming—human sin. The Christian message without a Savior crucified to atone for human sin becomes as irrelevant to the problems of sin and death as whistling in the dark to calm fears.

A case of real Irrelevant Christian Syndrome occurred last December. A Christian leader in California was invited to talk to an assembly of the Union for Reform Judaism in San Diego. He told them that the key to build a congregation was “just be nice to people—smile!” Good advice, but advice that any CEO might offer to the staff of a department store or fast food chain. But it is without Christ crucified! He would have offended his audience with the gospel.

Of course, Christians can become so grumpy, so stuffy, so wary of outsiders, so unfriendly that they do not embrace those who need the message of Christ. Christians acquire real Irrelevant Christian Syndrome when they lose the message they have, when they keep the message to themselves, and when they sit smugly behind barriers.

Christians are more than smiling, happy, upright people in this world of sin, turmoil, and death. They have the message of Christ crucified to share. That makes them relevant. Don't contract real Irrelevant Christian Syndrome. Smile and speak of Jesus.

GOD'S tool belt for unity

Donald W. Patterson

What needs to be fixed? Our tendency not to listen.

One morning when my boys were small they were out in the driveway before we left for school. They were playing a game with a baseball bat and what looked to me like a rock. One was pitching while the other would swing at it. Each swing raised the potential of a rock heading toward the house. I had told them before not to throw or hit rocks around the house. So, when I saw what they were doing, I grabbed the bat out of one of their hands and raised my voice in disappointment. I quickly shut objections down with my “don’t throw rocks” speech.

Silence reigned all the way to school. Finally, as we rounded the corner to enter the school parking lot, my older son said, “Dad, that thing we were hitting was a wad of paper.” I said, “Why didn’t you tell me sooner?” He replied, “Dad, when you get that look in your eye and the vein bulges in your neck, we can’t tell you anything.”

Has anything like that ever happened to you? Did you ever jump to conclusions before hearing the whole story? Not listening is a major problem in many relationships. If we don’t actively listen to what someone is trying to tell us, we will miss the truth.

In his Word, God gives us a tool for unity. It’s called being quick to listen. Do you know where to find it? It’s found in the letter written by Jesus’ brother, James. He had seen his brother listen well to many people. James knew that it was a key to all close relationships. Read the passages below and answer the following questions to increase your listening skills.

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires (James 1:19,20).

Familiarize yourself with the tool


- What does it mean to be quick to listen and slow to speak?
- Why is being slow to speak the first step to understanding another person?
- If we slow down and listen, how will that prevent us from becoming so easily angered?
- Verse 20 shows us why we often express our anger so quickly. What are we trying to accomplish?
- Why does anger fail so miserably at producing a change in others?
- What does God give us to create righteousness in others?

Use the tool

- Identify someone in your mind that is a good listener. How could you learn to imitate that person?
- Strike up a conversation with a friend and make yourself ask 20 questions before saying anything else?
- Ask those closest to you whether you are a good listener. Also ask them how you can improve your listening skills.
- Next time you are discussing an important issue with someone, before you respond, repeat what you think you heard him say. You may be surprised by the results.

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

This is the third article in a 10-part series on Christian unity. Find this article and answers online after March 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net



The cancer in his
brain had already taken
away his sight, and the doctors
told him it would soon take his life. But
Jim, dying at 61 years of age, was happy.

Jim expressed his joy to me during our visits in his last weeks.

“Pastor Burger, you know when you put butter on a hot ear of corn, and that butter just slides off as it melts? That’s what God is doing with my troubles. Soon I will be in heaven and I won’t have a care in the world.”

He was echoing the joy of the apostle Paul: “We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. . . . Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:14,16-18).

Forgiveness of sins

On another visit Jim expressed his joy in the forgiveness of sins. “Pastor Burger, do you remember Frank Sinatra’s song, “My Way”? I could have written that song. I lived too much of life my way, and believe me, it was the wrong way.” Then, through repentant tears, he continued, “But God loves us and forgives us. It’s just such a relief.”

Jim was simply restating what Paul had said about the certainty of reconciliation with God in a risen Savior: “If, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been

reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:10,11).

The promise of heaven

Days before his death, a happy Jim told me, “Pastor Burger, you know what it was like when you were five years old and coming home from school, and the bus stopped at your street and the door opened and there on the sidewalk was your mom, smiling, crouching down, and opening her arms wide to catch you and embrace you as you ran to her? That’s how I see going to heaven. Jesus is waiting for me, and I am almost home.”

Jim was living Peter’s words, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you. . . . Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:3,4,8,9).

Jim’s happiness is our happiness because we share a risen Savior. Even though there is sickness and loss in our lives, our sins are many, and death is inevitable, we can say “Happy Easter!” and mean it. Christ is risen! Victory over sin, death, and all evil is ours!

Norman Burger is pastor at Shepherd of the Hills, Lansing, Michigan.

Norman F. Burger

Coming home

A dying man reminds us that even when sickness or death hit we can be joyful.