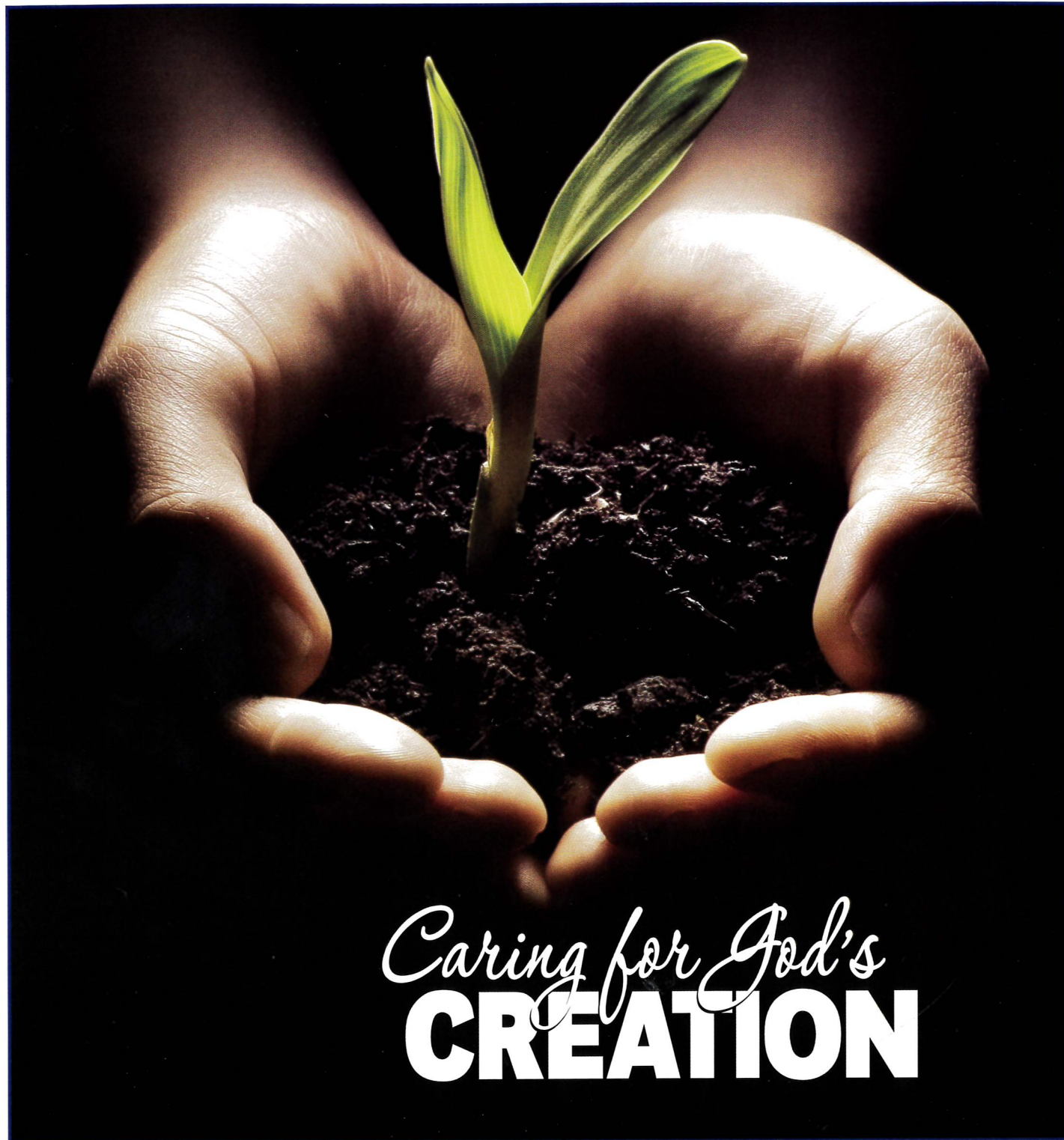


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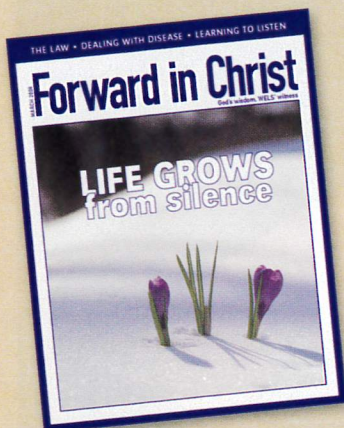
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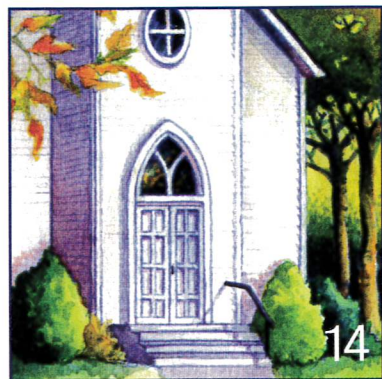


“If we love the Maker . . .
we will respect what
he has made.”



10

DESIGN PICS



14



23

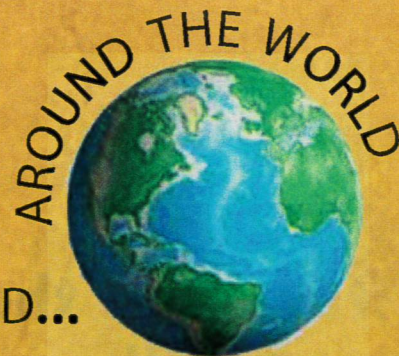
Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

FEATURES

- 10 ENTRUSTED WITH GOD'S EARTH**
As Christians we have a responsibility to take care of the world in which God has placed us.
Paul R. Boehlke
- 12 YOU SHALL BEAR MUCH FRUIT**
God has freed us from sin in Christ so that we are free for a life of service.
Earle D. Treptow
- 14 CONFESSIONS OF FAITH** Tammie Radikopf was looking for a place where she could hear the Scriptures plainly taught.
Alicia A. Neumann
- 16 GOD'S LAW: A WARNING AND A GUIDE** The trumpet of the law sounds a warning for our souls but also guides our actions.
Wayne A. Laitinen
- 28 OUT WITH THE TRASH** Strange ideas collect in our spiritual houses. We need to sweep away our confusion and set it out with the trash.
John A. Braun
- 30 JESUS, ADD, AND ME** A man with attention deficit disorder shares the importance of having Jesus as his focus.
- 36 1GR8MOM** The world's view of mommy-greatness differs from God's view of a faithful mother.
Heather Bode

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

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APRIL

WHAT'S INSIDE by Julie Wietzke

You may have noticed over the past few months that President Mark Schroeder has been writing about the identity of WELS in his monthly column (p. 32). These articles discuss who we are as a synod and the blessings we enjoy.

It can be easy to take these blessings for granted (as it sometimes is with everything our Lord gives us). To remind us even more about what we enjoy as members of the Wisconsin Synod, a new series will feature confessions of faith of adult confirmands—where they came from, why they started attending a WELS church, and why they became members. Articles in this series will highlight the wonderful blessings we have in WELS, especially our doctrine and teachings. They will also show how these doctrines differ from the teachings of other church bodies. Finally they will give us an opportunity to marvel at how the Holy Spirit works faith in hearts and encourage us to keep spreading the Word. Don't miss the first article (p. 14).

Do you have a story that would fit into this series? Send it to "Confessions of faith," Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.

DEPARTMENTS



- 6 **FEEDBACK**
- 7 **DEVOTION**
Together again *James A. Mattek*
- 8 **EDITORIAL COMMENT**
Christian education *Paul T. Prange*
- 9 **QUESTION & ANSWER**
Applying Matthew 18 correctly *Forrest L. Bivens*
- 18 **WHATEVER**
Putting God first *Ellen Schwartz*
- 19 **NEWS**
- 26 **BULLETIN BOARD**
- 27 **POTLUCK**
- 32 **FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK**
A synod focused on its mission *Mark G. Schroeder*
- 33 **BIBLE STUDY**
I am . . . the bread of life *David D. Sternhagen*
- 34 **A THOUGHT**
Hypocrites *John A. Braun*
- 35 **INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY**
God's tool belt for unity: Repentance *Donald W. Patterson*

SPORTS OR CHURCH?

The January issue of *Forward in Christ* mentions football and sports events in the first paragraphs of three articles by page 16. For many, it means attending a football game. How much does it cost you compared to what you would have put in the collection plate had you attended church instead? What you spend your money on says a lot about you. . . .

Looking at these two choices, consider what a difference it would make if [what] you spent on a game were to be spent on God's work instead. That is my proposal. For one Sunday each football season, stay in town and attend church. Pay your "admission" price [that] you'd normally spend attending a game. Just imagine what a difference that would make in your church's offerings!

*Donald Salvesson
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

BLAND REFERENCES TO GOD

In September [Pastor John Braun] wrote an article with the title "Christianity without Christ." You mentioned that the name of Jesus was often missing from manuscripts that you receive from young Christians when they refer to God's work and activity. You suggested that they might be trying to avoid the offense of the cross by referring blandly to God in general.

I believe that this mistake is made by many others beside young Christians. Vice President Wayne Mueller mentioned at a Minnesota District Councilmen's Conference that when he was a seminary professor he found that seminary students were often guilty of referring to God blandly and failing to mention each person of the Trinity carefully in their student sermons. Of course you can say: God created all things. God saved us. God gives us faith. *Opera ad extra non divisa*

sunt. I have heard the same referring to God's work and activity with a repeated "God" in sermons by WELS pastors broadcast from radio stations.

How does it happen that seminary students make this mistake? Does the problem go back to confirmation instruction, day school instruction, high school and college instruction? How many pastors are quite satisfied if a confirmand replies to the question, "Who made heaven and earth?" [with the words] "God did"? Who is to blame? Is the young Christian who writes for *Forward in Christ* to blame, or is the pastor who instructed that young Christian to blame?

It seems to me that this mistake is all too prevalent among the clergy (and also day school, high school, college teachers). I mention this only because I felt that you probably were really not aware how much this is done by others beside young Christians who write for *Forward in Christ*.

Ted Kuske

MILLENNIALISM

Wayne Mueller's article "Take no detours" [Feb.] addresses millennialism errors. Interestingly, those who teach "believer's rapture" based upon 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 fail to recognize the people in Matthew 24:40,41 are not the believers. In Matthew 13:29,30, Jesus explains in the parable of the weeds, that "while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' " . . . More support for this appears in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "We who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to

meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." . . . The day of the Lord appears to occur in sequence, but, as the article says, all of this happens at the second coming and last judgment.

*Don Gretel
Rochester, Michigan*

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

I truly appreciated the article written by Wayne Schulz, "Not alone on this journey" [Feb.]. As a banquet server myself, I am grateful for those at my tables who express their thanks to me. They even sometimes help me clear, saying, "I used to be a server once." For those who aren't quite as grateful—even downright mean at times—I love them anyway, as difficult as that might be. It is at those moments I especially think about Jesus in the upper room washing his disciples' feet. He served with an unassuming yet all-consuming love. Bearing his cross, carrying his strength, I reflect his love every time I go into work.

*Todd Rausch
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

PRAYER

I was so moved by the article, "Resolve to Pray" [Jan.]. Prayer is such a powerful tool in our journey through this life. Since there are people who are determined to prove God's nonexistence through facts, I am thinking that the knowledge of the universe is vast. The accumulated data we have at any given time is never the whole of it. Therefore quoting facts can never prove God's existence. Faith and prayer can only do that.

*Leah Kay Batzli
Cottonwood, Arizona*

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*.

Together again

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. . . . "Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate. Luke 15:20,23,24

James A. Mattek

I've asked people: "Did you have a nice Easter?" The responses vary, but it's not uncommon for people to reply: "It was wonderful. We could all be together again."

The longing to be together

A psychiatrist who works at our agency recently spoke to me about this desire to be together with loved ones. Over the years he has counseled adult children from other cultures. When they were small and their country was at war, their parents sent them away to America to keep them safe. They were separated from their parents and never saw them again. It would seem to me that this was a difficult but loving thing to do.

"That's not how the children saw it," the psychiatrist told me. He went on to explain that the children, as adults, struggled with intensely bitter feelings toward their long-lost parents. Why? Because the adult children wanted to stay with their parents and face danger—even death—rather than be split up as a family.

That's how God sees it too. He has that same longing. In fact, the entire Bible is the story of a God reckless with desire to get his family back together. In Genesis, the story begins with the family together. Then there's a painful separation. In the end there's a reunion and then the party begins.

The separation of the family

The parable of the prodigal son is a classic story within that story. You

might know the tale quite well. The younger son leaves home with his dad's wealth and heads for a distant country. Reckless and extravagant, he partied until the cash was gone. Then he thought of home.

The story of the prodigal son is my story and yours. Our Father has clearly spelled out his expectations for us . . . which are for our good. Too often we don't see it that way. At our spiritual peril, we merrily venture into the distant country of greed and gossip, laziness and lust, resentment and rebellion.

When our adventure fails to offer lasting satisfaction, we discover Satan's hollow promises of happiness that left us shamefully eating with the pigs and eating our words. Then we think of home. Our Father's house offers no hollow promises . . . only forgiveness, acceptance, and lasting happiness.

The reunion with our Father

The final scene of the story with the younger son is breathtaking and captivating. The returning son is spotted in the distance. The father runs like he hasn't run in years to embrace and receive back his son. The family is back together.

This part of the story is ours too. Our loving Father runs with open arms to receive each confused and



wayward child. He's thrilled at the thought of his family being back together again. For the sake of his Son he forgives, accepts, and celebrates with all of heaven.

Like the father in the parable, he too is reckless and extravagant. He's reckless in giving up his dearest treasure—his own Son to reclaim us—so he can have the family back together.

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

Christian education

Paul T. Prange

There's no doubt about it: education is valuable. In general, more education means more money, greater employment options, and better job security. Even if education in a particular area does not have much economic impact, it still usually improves your quality of life. When you know how to do something, it reduces your frustration and increases your confidence. When you learn basic facts, you are often able to string them together to draw deeper conclusions, converting knowledge to wisdom.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). You can be very educated, with a lot of useful knowledge, but it does you no good for eternal life unless you know the Lord. Education is valuable, but education for eternal life is priceless.

For eternal life you need to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). He made many promises to you, including that your sins are forgiven through faith in him. He proved that all of those promises were true when he rose from the dead. The basic facts of his life, death, and resurrection put everything else you learn in a new and improved light.

Don't think of Christian education as a Bible class in addition to a regular set of classes that could be found in any public school. Christian education applies the gospel of Jesus Christ in every class. When every thought is taken captive by God's love in Christ and is made obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), no school subject is secular.

Applying the gospel in every subject does not come naturally to human beings. It takes thorough training and repeated practice to become a Christian teacher. It is possible to learn to teach a particular subject without God's Word.

One can study methodologies and strategies. But when God's Word is added, almost everything has to change. The basic premises of the world are turned on their head. Almost every lesson plan is affected.

The gospel also changes the context of education. More money, greater employment opportunities, and better job security become gifts from a gracious God, and not the main point in life. The point of good order in the classroom becomes setting up opportunities to speak law and gospel to students, with the gospel predominating.

I learned recently that homeschoolers like to quote Martin Luther on this subject: "I am afraid that schools will prove to be great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

That quote is strung together from different places in an article of Luther's called "To the Christian Nobility." Luther is actually writing about state universities, which were being newly founded in his day. But

his point, strongly stated, is clear for all ages. Christian education is valuable. It is worth the sacrifice and effort you put into it. Don't take for granted the opportunities you have to participate in it. Give thanks to God for every blessing you have from your Christian education.

Christian education applies the gospel of Jesus Christ in every class.

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

QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

Only in relatively rare cases can openly impenitent sinners successfully hide behind Christ's message of Matthew 18:15-20. The Savior's instruction for us to deal with manifest sinners simply does not provide any safe refuge for those who seek to keep their sin or their impenitence off the agenda of the Christian community. However, the way that some Christians or churches may misuse the procedure outlined here can in some instances allow this to happen. I suspect that is your concern.

Perhaps the most common way professing Christians misuse this privilege and responsibility is by ignoring it or making it a low priority that seldom gets done. Maybe we assume or hope someone else will do this and save us the effort required. That's not right. Nor is it right to drop the issue after an initial and apparently unsuccessful attempt to bring about repentance through private admonishment. Trustworthy, suitable witnesses are to be summoned to intensify the call to godly repentance and reconciliation. Truthfully stated, it is our moral duty to identify and expose sin among fellow believers and lead them to godly contrition and joyful reliance on our Savior. But too often we don't.

It is also counterproductive if we approach a known sinner with a motive or demeanor other than humble love and the desire to serve and win them back to God. If our main motive is to get rid of sinners, shame them, or somehow punish them, they will be on the defensive. The process may turn into a power struggle or a kind of ecclesiastical chess game as they maneuver to circumvent the procedure or look for imagined loopholes. Before speaking with erring brothers and sisters we do well to ponder the parables that precede and follow

Q. Do people hide behind Matthew 18 in order to continue in their incorrect or sinful behavior? How should we use the steps Jesus outlined correctly?

the instructions in Matthew 18—the lost sheep and the unforgiving servant. Both emphasize how the desire to retrieve and forgive the sinner is at the heart of it all.

Procedurally, we may give sinners a way to avoid godly admonishment if we address them without unimpeachable evidence that they are guilty.

We are not to act on gossip or mere hearsay in this noble task. If we are aware of widespread reports of sinful behavior, we may express kind concerns to the person rather than jumping to conclusions based on limited knowledge. Then if there is demonstrated cause for Christian admonishment, we should use good judgment in the manner we approach them. If our commitment is to speak with them lovingly, tactfully, and humbly to serve their deepest needs—and to use mature and loving witnesses to accompany us if needed—we take the high road to serving souls, including those who do not seem to want help.

Even if, after loving and accurate brotherly admonishment, we find that no unanimous conviction prevails in the body of believers and the church is unable to speak the ultimate word of love and warning through excommunication, the offender is by no means successfully hiding behind Matthew 18. Loving calls to repentance have been issued, and we may be comforted knowing that the sinner has received the kind of admonition Jesus wanted him to hear. We commit the matter to the Lord in the confidence that God will not be mocked (Galatians 6:7). We trust God's desire that all come to repentance.

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

Scientists say that the world is suffering. In *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, E. O. Wilson, a scientist, writes to an imaginary conservative pastor suggesting that they stop arguing about creation and evolution. Instead they should join forces to attend to some very serious environmental concerns. Should we listen?

Of course. Environmental concerns do not force one to sacrifice other issues such as creation. Wilson's call for help with environmental issues still remains. Christians actually do have a strong, intrinsic motivation to protect the earth. When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, he was "to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15).

The entrance of sin into the world brought other questions. Do we really

need to care for the earth? Aren't we going to heaven? Won't God maintain the earth for as long as it needs to exist and then it will pass away? Is care of the environment part of the mission of the church?

Wilson assumes that heaven-bound Christians do not care about the here and now. Sadly some Christians have heard God's directive to "subdue" (Genesis 1:28) the created world as license to exploit it without concern for the world God entrusted to us. We can be slow to understand, blind to the applications of our faith, and quick to serve ourselves. The point is that Christianity need not be faulted for a lack of ethics concerning nature. We, as Christians, have the clear directive of the Creator, but we may need to renew our motivation to care for the earth.

As Christians we have a responsibility to take care of the world in which God has placed us. Environmental concerns are part of our stewardship. Paul R. Boehlke



A gnostic view of nature

Already in the early church there were disagreements about the world we live in. The gnostics regarded the material world as fundamentally corrupt, created by an evil god. This teaching rejected material reality and prized spiritual experience. The earth and our flesh were nothing. Such thinking meant avoiding anything natural or asserting extreme self-centered behaviors because nothing really matters—literally.

Interestingly, the gnostic view of the world as an illusory prison has inspired many modern writers, including science fiction author Philip K. Dick, who claimed a vision from God; Grant Morrison, author of *The Invisibles*; and the Wachowski brothers, creators of *The Matrix*. Gnostic ideas continue to float about and capture people's imaginations.

Comments that demean nature and physical reality are still heard not only by such authors but also among Christians. Additionally, Christians may hold the common view that God will preserve us no matter what we do. Yet this can overlook the misery that our actions could cause others.

A Christian view of nature

Actually, Scripture is positive about creation. God must have taken pleasure in creating nature. He originally placed humans into a beautiful garden. He directed Noah to save the animals. He blessed Israel with a land flowing with milk and honey. His rules allowed the land to rest and recover. Impressively, he became material flesh and blood to save us. He even kept his physical body after his resurrection. The challenge for us is to view God's creation from a proper perspective.

First of all, our loving God made everything and has maintained ownership. Psalm 24:1 states, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." The universe is his handiwork, his artwork. We are also his creatures, his design, made from physical material and tied to the rest of material creation. Harm to the environment hurts every creature connected to that system. From our origin we were directed to function as stewards with permission to use but not to abuse nature (Genesis 1:28). If we love the Maker as we are commanded to do in the first table of the law, we will respect what he has made. To trash the environment insults the Designer.

Yet, the Creator is distinct from nature. We do not worship nature when we care for it; we worship God. Nevertheless, God did become flesh and lived among us. He did not think his creation so low that he refused to enter it. He did not think us so low that he refused to redeem both our souls and our material bodies (Job 19:26). Our flesh will rise.

The second table of the law commands love for our neighbor. Therefore, we will not hurt or harm fellow

humans immediately or in the future by damaging the place in which all of us live. We are not free to exhaust resources without regard for the needs of future generations. To take from nature without any thought of long-term effects involves stealing and coveting. Justice calls for sharing the resources God has given us. To pollute or to waste resources in the name of profit constitutes stealing by not paying the full costs of processing. It's murder if it hurts or harms. To cover up known dangers with false claims of safety is false witness.

Even the sixth commandment is not safe from ecological implications. Sex with multiple partners spreads disease and can harm populations and their economies. The World Health Organization reported in 2006 that one in every six adults in Zambia has HIV, the life expectancy at birth has fallen below 40 years, 98,000 people died of AIDS in 2005, and some 710,000 children are AIDS orphans. Indiscriminate sexual activity come with a price. Yet, situations such as we see in Zambia call for us to care for those affected.

Professor Martin Galstad, who taught at Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn., and Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., wrote, "The problem always is to clear the distinction between the realm above us and the realm below us [two kingdoms], and always to use the lower according to the guidance of the higher." Our view of nature ought to flow from our faith.


In every calling we witness

Creation is suffering (Romans 8:22). Since sin entered the world, we experience all sorts of problems in nature. Humans with sinful desires and ever-increasing technological power are able to cause devastating changes. Yet, we are redeemed. The healing and restoration of our relationship with God extends to our relationship with nature. New men and women by faith in Jesus are also in the position of being able to bring healing and to repair. We are to be caretakers.

Martin Luther taught that through the various positions that Christians hold, God acts to bless others. In this manner, God gives food through farmers, order and peace through government, knowledge through teachers, and the gospel of forgiveness of sins through all believers. All these people act as "masks of God" and should perform their vocations well—to God's glory. So it follows that we need to learn all that we can about the workings of creation. Growing Christians will find that care for nature flows from our faith as we honor God and guard our neighbor in all that we do.

Paul Boehlke, a member at Salem (East Side), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, teaches biology at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

Read some ideas about how we can care for our environment on p. 27.



YOU SHALL BEAR MUCH FRUIT

God has freed us from sin in Christ so
that we are free for a life of service.

Earle D. Treptow

“**S**o if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). By taking our place in life and in death, Jesus set us free from the temporal and eternal suffering our sin deserved. When the Lord brought us to faith in Christ, he also set us free from the law. We are not required to produce, with our diligent efforts, a righteousness that will count before God on the day of Jesus’ return.

In the waters of Baptism, our Father covered us with Christ and said of us what he said of Jesus, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). God delights in us through faith in Christ. The righteousness he desires, he gives. Talk about a load being lifted off our shoulders! We need not spend our days and nights frantically seeking God’s approval. We already have it through faith in Christ. That’s freedom from a burden far too heavy to carry. We are free, indeed!

Freedom from death is freedom for life

Perhaps another preposition is in order: for. The Son who sets us free *from* sin and death also sets us free *for* a life of service. Dr. Luther, in his explanation of the Second Article, beautifully explains the for: “All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”

Don’t misunderstand. It’s not as if Jesus lived and died in our place because he was desperate to have people live for him and serve him. After all, God “is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything” (Acts 17:25). No, this freedom *for* is a blessing for us. It’s an outlet for all who love the Lord.

Simply stated, God’s love for us leads us to live for him. In the Father’s gift of his Son and in Jesus’ willing life and death, we find love defined. Love takes action to address a need, regardless of the cost. Jesus took action. He submitted to his Father’s will. He placed himself on the cross and gave himself into death—all to address our need for forgiveness and the righteousness necessary to stand before God. Though it cost him his Father’s love, Jesus willingly paid the price.

Free to love

St. Paul writes, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1,2). The Lord wants us to copy his love. But if love addresses needs, how exactly are we to demonstrate love for God? He has no needs for us to address.

Oh, but he does! He chooses to hide himself behind the needs of people around us and make those needs his own. By

meeting the needs of our neighbor we show love for God. When we lend an ear to our frustrated coworker, we lend an ear to the Lord. Remember what Jesus said? “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). When we put an arm around the shoulder of the sad, when we extend friendship to the lonely, when we reach out to the disenfranchised, we love the One who loved us.

Doesn't that open up a whole new world? Nearly everywhere you look you'll see people to love. Across the dinner table you'll see a spouse who needs more from you than a meal or a paycheck—she needs your attention and appreciation; he needs your support and encouragement. Locked away in his room you'll find a teenager who needs more than clothing, a cell phone, and a stocked refrigerator; he needs your time and your interest, even if he imagines that the stocked refrigerator will suffice.

Next door you'll see a lonely widow who feels forgotten; she needs your company. Across the street you'll spot a neighbor juggling six boxes after returning from the store; he needs your hand. At the office you'll notice a coworker swamped with responsibilities; she needs your empathy and your assistance. Every need is an opportunity to love.

In Matthew 25, as Jesus talks about the judgment, he says that he will present his people's acts of love as evidence of the faith in their hearts. “For I was hungry and you gave me something eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matthew 25:35,36). How encouraging! Jesus remembers our works. The people that we serve and help may not notice our acts of love. But that doesn't really matter. Jesus remembers.

Free to serve in a multitude of ways

Note, too, in Matthew 25, the works that Jesus cites. We'd rather expect him to showcase extraordinary deeds like giving a million dollars to charity; rescuing a drowning child; or, at the very least,

going to some far-off land to preach the gospel. Instead, the Lord highlights works that most would classify as mundane and insignificant. All they did was address needs in the normal course of life.

How freeing! We don't have to dream up works to do to please God. We don't need to search high and low for ways to serve the Savior. We'll have our hands full just addressing the needs right in front of us.

The Lord promises as much. “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

The Lord, who made us, brought us to faith, grants us the talents we have, and empowers us to live a life of love, doesn't stop there. Call him a full-service God in this matter of Christian living: he even places works before us to do, that we

might be a blessing to people around us. Those opportunities don't appear by chance. God himself throws them in our paths. And does he ever! The more that the Lord opens our eyes to needs, the more that we realize that there are far more opportunities than we could ever seize.

For some that's frustrating. What child of God wants to pass up opportunities to serve? When tempted to frustration, we do well to keep in mind who we are. We haven't been promoted to God and never will be. The responsibility for meeting the needs of the world is the Lord's. We're merely his instruments, through whom he will bless some. We're free to address the needs he places before us, with the strength he provides, to the glory of his name and for the benefit of others.

We are free in Christ to serve!

Earle Treptow is pastor at Zion, Denver, Colorado.

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

By meeting the needs of our neighbor we show love for God.



"I wanted to know who God was, because I needed him more than ever. . . . The church I was going to wasn't focusing on Scripture. . . . There was just a lot of liberal stuff going on. . . . No one could explain anything to me. . . . I want my family to go to a church where I am told 'This is what the Bible says' not 'This is what I think.'"

For these and other reasons, Tammie Radikopf went searching for a new church. Previously a member at a Southern Baptist church, she was looking for a place where she could hear the Scriptures plainly taught—and she found Our Savior's in Port Orange, Fla.

A time of questioning

"Church has just always been a part of my life," says Tammie. "I grew up Southern Baptist. Everyone in my family is Southern Baptist, and my dad is a Southern Baptist pastor." Tammie attended a Southern Baptist megachurch for 11 years, and worked there for almost six.

It wasn't until her divorce in 1997 that things changed.

"That shook my world a lot," says Tammie. "For the first time, I wanted to know who God was because I needed him more than ever. And the church I was going to—even though it was a great, exciting, huge church—they weren't focusing on Scripture."

During this time of questioning, Tammie met Greg. Shortly before they were married, she began attending his church. "It was a Lutheran church, but it was not a WELS church," she recalls. "And that church was even more far away from Scripture than the Southern Baptist church I was going to. There was just a lot of liberal stuff going on, and the pastor really wasn't taking a stand on scriptural issues. I was very miserable there."

After a lot of praying, Tammie and her family began looking for a new church. "Through a community event called Family Days, we saw this Lutheran church called Our Savior's," Tammie remembers. "Pastor Dobberstein talked to us and we went and visited. My husband said, 'Maybe this is the church,' but I wasn't 100 percent sold right away. I'm kind of ashamed to admit I pulled a Gideon. I prayed, 'You know, God, I think

Confessions of faith

Why are you a member of WELS? What does this church body have that makes it unique from hundreds of others? In this series, you will read about why some choose to join WELS and what members treasure most about being WELS.

Alicia A. Neumann

this is what you're saying, but I don't really like it. So I'm putting out the fleece. If this is what you want, you've got to give me a sign.'"

That Sunday they visited Our Savior's again. Tammie saw something in the bulletin that caught her eye—a scrapbooking group would be meeting later that week. Tammie was further intrigued by the woman organizing the event. She remembers telling her husband, "That sounds like the name of the woman I've been e-mailing for three years about scrapbooking. I wonder if it's the same woman?" And it was!

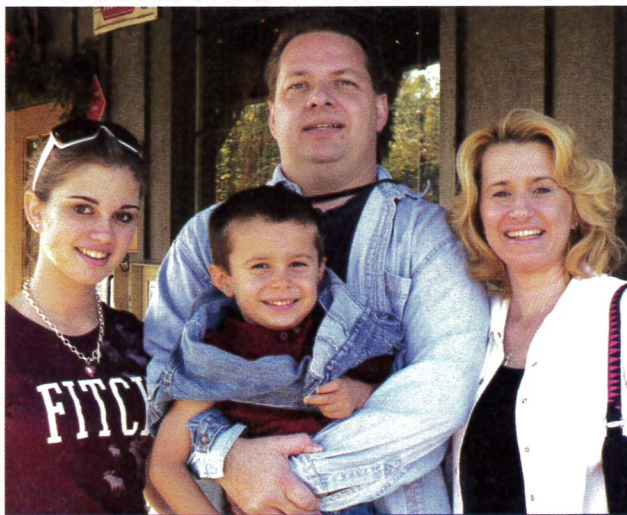
But Tammie wasn't convinced. "I thought, 'No it's just a coincidence,'" she says. "I told God, 'No, I'm laying the fleece out again.'"

The next day, Tammie was driving to work and heard a mini-sermon on a local Christian radio station. "I'm listening to this pastor, and I'm loving it!" she remembers. "I'm thinking, 'This guy knows his Bible! This is the church I want to go to! This is the church—God, are you listening to me?' And at the end of the program, it said his name was Pastor Donn Dobberstein from Our Savior's Lutheran Church!"

A time for answers

Refreshed by the radio sermon, Tammie and her family began attending Our Savior's regularly. Dobberstein introduced them to WELS' beliefs and practices through Bible study. Tammie says those classes changed her life. "I can remember crying through so many of them, because for the first time—and keep in mind I've been in church my entire life—things were making sense. I was understanding what everything meant."

Soon Tammie was telling everyone about her church. Her husband's family started attending and also became members. "We can't imagine being



Tammie Radikopf (right) with her daughter, Samantha; son, Ronnie; and husband, Greg.

anywhere else than Our Savior's because of WELS' stance on the Bible," says Tammie. "WELS has had the same beliefs for over 150 years, so they don't even sway with so many of today's denominations that are trying to make it user-friendly."

Although she was excited by WELS' focus on Scripture, Tammie says that a few things took some getting used to. "For me, right away, I had a hard time with infant baptism," she says. "I grew up believing that if you're baptized as an infant, you're not going to heaven. Period. Southern Baptists believe in the age of accountability, where you don't get saved or baptized until you're old enough to know what you're doing—usually anywhere from 10 years old and up."

But Tammie says Dobberstein helped her understand the Lutheran practice. "It was one of the Bible classes that I just cried like a baby. It makes so much more sense to me that we're born totally depraved. We need salvation from the minute we're born, not when we're 10 years old and can admit we're a sinner."

Another big adjustment for Tammie was communion. "In the Southern Baptist church, communion is done in remembrance; it's not for forgiveness. They believe it's just a symbol; they don't believe that it's

actually an extremely special sacrament. But it is for the forgiveness of sins. I'd never heard that word "is"—even though it was in the Bible, they'd brush right over that word. It was a revelation for me. Now I'm so excited on the Sundays we have communion. I get to be one with God again! It's a lot more special to me now than it's ever been."

Tammie says that the only other thing that took some getting used to was the music. "In the beginning I didn't like

the music," she recalls. "But now I get tears on Sunday morning during the music. I realized you don't go to church to be entertained; you go to church to worship. And when you focus on these hymns and songs that have been sung for generations and generations, the words are so powerful. You can have your own little worship right there in your chair while you're singing the songs."

Tammie says that focus on the Scripture is why she loves WELS. "It's not a country club—you're there to learn about the Bible, to learn about God, and how to apply the Bible to your life," she says. "We keep going back to Scripture, and the fact that Pastor Dobberstein and the Wisconsin Synod are not afraid to stand behind what the Bible says. And I'm new, but I'm sure WELS takes a lot of heat for it. But I just love my church, and I have never been happier in my life. I just feel like this is 100 percent where God wants us to be."

Alicia Neumann is assistant editor of Forward in Christ.

Do you have a story to share about how you became a WELS member or what you treasure most about WELS? Send it to Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Stories may be used in the magazine or online.



GOD'S LAW: A WARNING and A GUIDE

The trumpet of the law sounds a warning for our souls but also guides our actions.

Wayne A. Laitinen

It's been said that over every church door there ought to be a sign that says: "You are entering the combat zone."

Some of us, like Atlas, are nearly bent to the ground with the responsibilities of our world. The one coming to worship and battling for his soul must first compete with shopping lists, sports schedules, meal plans, and business schedules. As the combatant settles into the pew he sighs inwardly, "This better be good!" Translation: "This had better be relevant in the vast complex of my day-to-day survival!" From sermons that begin with a Jay Leno-type mono-

logue to Dr. Phil coping mechanisms, plenty of preachers stand ready to supply members' felt needs. Relevance comes by avoiding the harsh proclamation of God's law and then becomes only the soapy foam of happy talk. The offense of the cross in pulpit and pew is too painfully obvious. "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong" (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

The battle opens on another front for those who have no problem leaving the world behind. He or she finds the old familiar distractions: the ques-

tionable character of the fellow worshipper, provocative clothing, the grating voice of the preacher, the words we knew since childhood and speak mindlessly—or the ones that we can never get a grip on because they change weekly. What's a pastor to do? Certainly not lead the service in a droll monotone. Must the pendulum swing to the other side? Must he bend all of his dramatic talents—real or imagined—to make God's Word "more alive"? And if he does, how does he do it? By soothing sinners with platitudes? If the law is abandoned, no convicted sinners hear the gospel. Instead the law applies to

others and the gospel makes them contentedly smug.

Somehow Uzzah comes to mind. With every good intention he tried to help God by righting the ark of the covenant when the oxen stumbled (2 Samuel 6:6). Even so, God made it clear that he did not need Uzzah to help him. In another incident, God gives us a glimpse into his heart when the cavalier Nadab and Abihu brought unwholesome innovation into the worship of the LORD. "They died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:2). We must guard our steps. . . .

What do we need to hear?

Jesus stood in the synagogue of Nazareth to read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it to the attendant, and sat down to expound the text (Luke 4:14-20). He spoke God's truth, but the message he proclaimed drove his hometown congregation to take him to the edge of the cliff. Like churches of our day, those who teach the whole counsel of God are the special object of conflict. God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. We must guard our steps. . . .

That means we must enter God's house with an understanding of what must happen there. The trumpet warning must sound: the law must be preached. And the law always accuses. "The law *always* accuses us; it always shows that God is angry" (The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, 128). But because the believer in Jesus is totally sinner and totally saint at the same time, he or she needs the law. First the sinner within needs the harsh crushing threats of the law.

In fact, whenever the law is preached to the Christian there will be two conflicting and simultaneous reactions. The old sinful nature—the

sinner within—will feel only the painful accusation of conscience and will convulse, as if in the throes of death. It's startling—unnerving—for none of us likes to be internally conflicted. In Romans 7, Paul says that he felt alive apart from God's law. But when he was confronted with the commandment, "Do not covet," sin sprang to life. Paul became more acutely aware of his failings once he knew his sins. The knowledge of his sin buried him under God's just judgment. The law is the only language which the flesh—even the flesh of the believer—can understand.

Once the sinner within finds no excuse and no evasion, the gospel of gracious, undeserved forgiveness brings new life. Then the two forces within battle: sinful nature versus faith. Our faith must engage the enemy within. By the power of the Holy Spirit through the gospel, our faith or our new self can gain victories over the sinful nature. We have been well-trained in the school of the Holy Spirit to go through another daily drowning with Christ so that we will also rise with Christ to new life!

Another reason for the law

Yes, the law *always* accuses. But it does not only accuse the Christian.

The apostle Paul also rejoiced in his new self or new person, who, at the same time, finds comfort of conscience in Christ's forgiveness alone. Because of this Spirit-given faith, the new self sees the commandments of God as a guide to put his faith into action. Just as Adam, in the perfection of Eden, found nothing objectionable to God's command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so we, who have been created in Christ to "be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24), rejoice in God's com-

mandments. They give direction to our life of faith, just like the trumpet sound in ancient times guided city residents to action.

This teaching is beautifully summed up in Psalm 119 where the psalmist rejoices in the entire counsel of God. The psalm is filled with synonyms for the Word of God: precepts, decrees, righteous laws, statutes, and commands. No doubt, this is why Psalm 119:105,106 is often used by us as proof that Christians use God's law as a guide or rule: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws."

Perhaps you've experienced these two natures of God's law as you read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Not only are we struck down by the statement that our righteousness must be greater than that of the Pharisees, but we strive to live at peace with our enemy, to give without expectation of recognition, and to struggle against hatred, lust, and worry. How often in their letters don't the apostles list the works of the spirit and the works of the flesh. When we read them we lament how often we have done the latter and how feebly we have done the former! At precisely that time we breathe a sigh of repentance and plead for the strength of the Savior to obey the law of love!

The very admonition to guard our steps as we go into the house of God presumes the cross of Jesus has empowered us to do just that!

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

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

WHATEVER

Putting God first

God never lets you down. He will be with you through anything and everything when you trust and believe in him.

Ellen Schwartz

My adrenaline was definitely still rushing when I came out of the finish chute at the State cross country meet. My teammates and I thought that we ran pretty strong and congratulated each other on sticking together as a pack. But we suddenly found out that our team really had run strong—strong enough for the WIAA Girls Division 2 title. It's hard to put the feeling we had into words. I'll just say it was extremely exciting and probably one of the best days of my life.

Eventually though, I got to wondering, "If I find this much joy from an earthly victory, why don't I get this feeling more often?" Why don't I get this excited every Sunday in church, or whenever I hear God's Word? Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that we shouldn't enjoy our blessings here on earth, but surely the good news of salvation is much more to be happy about than a simple earthly championship.

After we won State, I wanted to share my good news. I told my grandparents, my friends, and my neighbors. Whenever the opportunity arose, the natural thing for me was to tell people. So once again, I started to think, "Why don't I always share my faith the way I shared my team's success story? Shouldn't I be far more eager to share the gospel story with my neighbors, friends, and relatives who don't know Jesus as their Savior?"

The truth is, my faith isn't as strong as I'd like it to be. I now realize that I hadn't been putting God first in my life all the time. And whatever pushes God out of that number one spot—be it friends, family, sports, money, grades, or whatever—can let you down. Friends can betray you, grades can drop, you could get injured, money never seems to be enough, and even family members can turn their backs on you. God, however, never lets you down. God will be with you through

anything and everything when you trust and believe in him.

I think I'm learning to trust God more and more in my life. I'm getting back in the habit of praying before I go to bed at night and also more throughout the day. I pray that I will be more enthusiastic about sharing my faith with others, including my dad.

God does give me opportunities. Recently my little sister was sick on Sunday and missed church. A couple of days later she was cheer-leading for a basketball game and my dad, who isn't Christian, went to pick her up. My mom mentioned that there was church that night and I encouraged him to go, but in reality we weren't expecting anything. Usually my dad will come to church for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, but not much more. We hope and pray that the Holy Spirit is at work in my father's life, so we share our faith.

When you put everything into perspective, every single day could be the best day of your life, but it's all nothing compared to an eternity in heaven. We don't have to worry about our problems here. Yes, we should pray about them! But as we pray we can remember what's in store for us when we die: an eternity to spend in heaven with Jesus. Now that's something to get excited about!

Ellen Schwartz, a sophomore at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at St. Matthew, Janesville, Wisconsin.



Obituaries

Laura Ann Loeffler 1973-2007

Laura Loeffler (nee Follendorf) was born Sept. 1, 1973, in La Crosse, Wis. She died June 3, 2007, in Almonte, Mich.

A 1995 graduate of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at New Salem, Sebawaing, Mich.

She is survived by her husband, Thomas; one son; and two daughters.

Priscilla Goseyun 1934-2008

Priscilla Goseyun (nee Hoffman) was born Dec. 26, 1934. She died Jan. 17, 2008, in Peridot, Ariz.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.; East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.; Our Savior, Bylas, Ariz.; and Emanuel, New London, Wis.

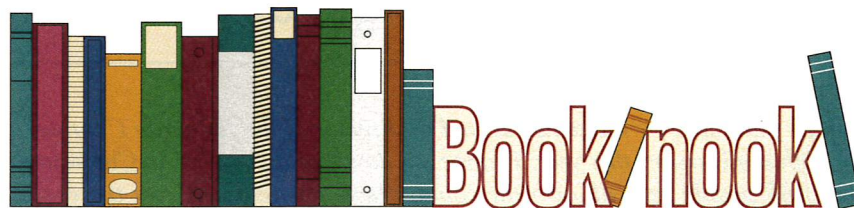
She is survived by her husband, Everette; one son; four daughters; three brothers; and 19 grandchildren.

Gerald E. Free 1930-2008

Gerald Free was born Dec. 13, 1930, in Manitowoc, Wis. He died Feb. 12, 2008, in Neenah, Wis.

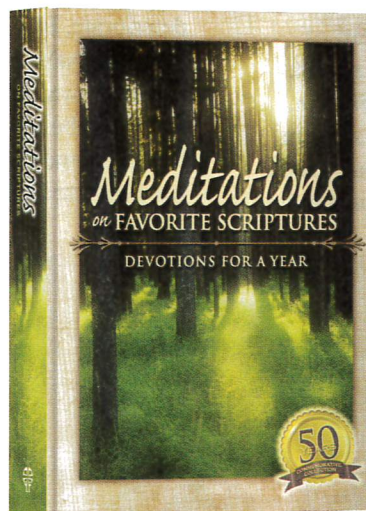
A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Zion, Bonesteel, S.D.; St. John, Herrick, S.D.; Faith, Platte, S.D.; Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.; Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.; and Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis. He also served as coordinator of the Forward in Christ 150th anniversary celebration. He served as president of the Nebraska District and as first vice president and second vice president of WELS.

He is survived by his wife, Judith; two sons; three daughters; 16 grandchildren; and three step-grandsons.



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.

Daily devotional source



\$15.99

Meditations on Favorite Scriptures is a compilation of devotions from the first 50 years of the original *Meditations* written by WELS pastors, thus assuring the reader of sound biblical theology from cover to cover. Knowing the Bible verses were chosen by pastors who have been thoroughly educated in the Scriptures, readers are assured that the devotions were thoughtfully written for their comfort and guidance, based on the Word of God. I am pleased that *Meditations on Favorite Scriptures* contains devotions that are written in a manner easily understood. What a great joy it is for us to be able to read these Christ-centered devotions daily.

There are enough devotions for each day of the calendar year. The devotions follow a topic for each week. Each devotion starts with a Bible passage and ends with a prayer, making for a complete devotion. The Scripture passage index can be a helpful reference for readers.

The fact that the devotions are easy to read and understand makes the book very versatile. It is useful as a family devotion book for all ages. Grade school and high school students can read and understand it thus making it a good source for classroom devotions.

So, as a whole, *Meditations on Favorite Scriptures* is a book that can be recommended for families and/or schools, to be used all year, every day, through every season of the year. May these devotions help everyone who uses them to grow in their faith.

Paul Fritze
St. John, New Ulm, Minnesota

**READ
THROUGH MY
BIBLE IN 3 YEARS**

MAY 2008

1. Luke 21:1-24	17. Ps. 6
2. Lk. 21:25-38	18. Ps. 7, 8
3. Lk. 22:1-13	19. Ps. 9, 10
4. Lk. 22:14-30	20. Ps. 11, 12
5. Lk. 22:31-46	21. Acts 1:1-11
6. Lk. 22:47-62	22. Ac. 1:12-26
7. Lk. 22:63-23:12	23. Ac. 2:1-13
8. Lk. 23:13-25	24. Ac. 2:14-36
9. Lk. 23:26-43	25. Ac. 2:37-47
10. Lk. 23:44-56	26. Ac. 3
11. Lk. 24:1-12	27. Ac. 4:1-31
12. Lk. 24:13-35	28. Ac. 4:32-5:16
13. Lk. 24:36-53	29. Ac. 5:17-42
14. Psalms 1, 2	30. Ac. 6
15. Ps. 3, 4	31. Ac. 7:1-43
16. Ps. 5	

Q&A with Mary Prange, director of the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee

For 15 years Mary Prange has served as director of the Lutheran Chorale, a Milwaukee-based choir that's celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Prange sat down with Forward in Christ to talk about this milestone, and why more than 600 people from all over the country have participated over the years.

Question – Tell me about the Lutheran Chorale—how was it started?

Answer – The group was actually started in 1957 when Professor Fred Bartel gathered a group of singers for the installation of Rev. Werner Franzmann, who was the editor of *The Northwestern Lutheran*. It was such an enjoyable experience for the singers that they decided to organize into a more formal group. They asked Pastor Kurt Eggert, who was an outstanding musician, to be the director. They presented their first full-length concert in the spring of 1958 at Grace in downtown Milwaukee.

Question – Tell me more about the members of the chorale.

Answer – Our membership always ranges between 60 and 65 WELS members from several congregations in the Milwaukee area, people who are committed to fine chorale music with strong gospel texts. The goal is to keep a balanced choir of really the best musicians we can find. We have several current members who have sung in the chorale almost since the beginning. So that's really something.

Question – Do you have any favorite musical selections?

Answer – Well, I would do a whole concert of Bach every time, but I realize that we wouldn't keep our audience. So I try to balance the program so that we sing some major works of Bach and Mendelssohn, as well as some new composers; but I also try to always include some congregational hymns so there's some audience participation. There's nothing like singing a hymn with a church full of people and a magnificent organ and superior instrumentalists. That's really spiritually uplifting for people. When audience members talk to me afterward and they have tears in their eyes and they say, "That was just such a moving experience for me," I'm grateful to the Lord to have had an opportunity to do that.

Question – How did you become involved with the Lutheran Chorale?

Answer – I sang in the chorale beginning in 1974 when I came to Milwaukee to teach at Atonement. So I sang under Pastor Eggert until 1993. When his health began to deteriorate, I took on more and more of the responsibility for rehearsals. When his health prevented him from continuing, I was selected by the officers to be the new director. I was being tutored all those years, but I didn't know it at the time! There have been just the two of us who have directed the chorale in this 50-year history—that's pretty amazing for an organization.

Question – Do you think that's part of what's given this group its longevity?

Answer – First of all, I'm delighted that there are people who are interested in singing serious church music. I think the members find it spiritually uplifting. It's not always fun to go to rehearsal every Sunday night. But when the concert actually occurs, I think a lot of the people stay [with the chorale] because they find that it's not only musically challenging, but they have a common bond of faith with all of the other people they're singing with.

Question – How would you summarize your experience with the Lutheran Chorale?

Answer – You have to start with a love for music. I grew up in a home where music and worship were so important and such a priority in our lives. Then it's amazing to be able to sing in an organization and also direct an organization where the focus is proclaiming the gospel—the Word—through music. That's really the motivation for me as a singer and as a director: to be able to present the gospel in song, to combine those two very wonderful gifts of God.

A 50th anniversary concert will be held April 27 at Grace, Milwaukee, Wis., at 1:30 and 4 P.M. For more information about the chorale, read an expanded interview with Mary Prange online at www.forwardinchrist.net.



Mary Prange

Teen finds way to reach out to the community

“Somebody asked me for clothes, so I went and got them some clothes at this crisis center I used to live at,” says Matt Schmidt, 17-year-old member at Salem East, Milwaukee, Wis. At the time, Schmidt was just helping someone out. But soon this act of kindness snowballed into the start of the “Laundro-Matt CleanWearCare” outreach project at Salem East.

Schmidt and Roger Lowry, also a member at Salem East, found out about a large surplus of donated clothing at Pathfinders Youth Shelter. Schmidt and Lowry take the surplus (which would have otherwise been donated to Good Will), have the clothes cleaned at the local laundromat, and help distribute them to people in the neighborhood who need it. Congregation members are donating money to help pay for the cleaning.

“This project is kind of new,” says Schmidt. “It’s been slow through the winter, but as the weather starts to get better we’ll get together and come up with some more ideas, like where to go to get some more clothes.” Schmidt says he’s in the process of making some cards to hand out that encourage people to donate clothing directly to Salem East.

Jim Sonnemann, pastor at Salem East, says this project not only meets the physical needs of people in this low-income neighborhood, but is also a great way to reach the community with the gospel. “Right now, we’re developing some materials that we can put into the bags,” says Sonnemann. “We want to include something that gives the story of God’s plan of salvation and some encouraging words. . . . We have contact with a lot of people for almost no cost. It’s a very economical way to share the gospel.”

Online learning helps equip the saints for service

A mother works to raise her three children; a man volunteers to teach Sunday school at his church; an older couple looks for spiritual nourishment. What do these people have in common? They can be equipped in their walks of faith through online courses on WELS.net University.

WELS.net University is a Web site devoted to both instructor-led distance learning classes and independent study. WELS originally developed this site to supplement the training for employees at the Synod Administration Building in Milwaukee, Wis.; however, several areas of ministry soon saw the potential for reaching congregations through this online learning platform.

“In many ways it’s the same as traditional training material, but it also allows for online discussions that help students learn from each other over a period of time,” says Martin Spriggs, WELS chief technology officer. “Essentially the course content ‘evolves’ and becomes more useful as people use it and contribute to it.”

WELS Technology Trainer Sallie Draper says several of the online courses, such as the Shepherd’s Staff church management software training, make use of all of the capabilities of the WELS.net university platform. “We’ll have online discussion boards, video tutorials, and hands-on exercises that students can complete,” she says. “And then we’ll recap and explore further in a weekly Web conference to review the concepts that we’re going through.”

Although many courses are still in development, a variety of topics are currently available on WELS.net University. WELS Commission on Evangelism, for example, is offering a Bible study on John. WELS Technology is providing support for con-

gregations using WELS Web Hosting. And WELS Youth Discipleship has added four parenting classes and 13 Sunday school mini-courses to the online curriculum.

To date, more than 12,000 people have visited WELS.net University. After completing an online Sunday school course, one user shares, “As someone who is not a teacher, I found the course ‘Teaching the Way Children Actually Learn’ most helpful. I’m sure the material in this course is old hat for professional teachers, but most church members who volunteer to teach Sunday school are not trained educators. The course was eye-opening for me, and it got me to see the

WELS.net University

Welcome to WELS.net University

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value of Sunday school in a child’s spiritual growth.”

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Early childhood education reaches children and parents

It might be one of the synod's best-kept secrets: WELS operates more early childhood centers and preschools than Lutheran elementary schools. And for good reason, according to Martin Luther College Early Childhood Professor Cheryl Loomis—"This is a great opportunity to minister to families, to do outreach in the community, and to educate the whole child."

board-approved plan, when funding is procured the center will expand by four rooms: another preschool room, a toddler room, an infant room, and a family room for parent information classes, raising its maximum capacity to 50 students.

Just what is early childhood education (ECE)? It is not glorified baby-sitting, nor is it elementary

have given Techtmann a full year to get the preschool ready before admitting any students. This includes working with an architect on building plans, creating budgets, writing parent and employee handbooks, ordering supplies, preparing a curriculum, advertising in person and print, and—what she considers her main concern—building relationships in the community.

The congregation is also building relationships through a Mom's Morning Out program and the Henry County Moms Meet Up Group, started by Seager's wife, Lara Beth. This group now has 160 moms, all with children under age six. When the preschool opens, these moms will already be familiar with people at Hope.

"The preschool is especially important to Hope since it is a mission congregation and very new itself," says Techtmann. "It is our hope and prayer that, as relationships are built, the families bring their children not only to preschool but also to church each week."

Seager says that although a preschool is just one of many ways to proclaim Christ as Savior, it's one of the best ways to establish and build a relationship with people. "We're caring for the most important thing in their lives, their children. They will learn that we're honest, truthful, and caring. That we are responsible with their children will lead them to trust us when it comes to caring for their souls."

Laurie Gauger

(Adapted from MLC InFocus)



MLC graduate Katie Sievert and a student at the MLC Early Childhood Learning Center in New Ulm, Minn.

Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., began educating early childhood teachers in 1994. In 1998, the college opened its own early childhood center, where MLC student teachers work under experienced supervising professors to polish their skills in a warm, gospel-rich environment.

The opening enrollment at MLC's center was three. It rose to seven by the end of that year, and this year, its 10th anniversary year, 30 children attend. According to a governing

school teaching. It's the nurturing of children ages 0-8, which requires a specific body of pedagogical knowledge. Knowing this, congregations establishing preschools—like Hope, Henry County, Ga.—want an ECE director who has mastered early child growth and development, ECE program administration, and developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction.

Janine Techtmann, the MLC graduate assigned to Hope, fit the bill. Pastor Paul Seager and his congregation

WELS Early Childhood Education

- 400 ECE ministries
- 569 WELS ECE teachers
- 9,567 children in ECE ministries

Statistics from the 2007-08 CPS school statistics: www.wels.net/jump/schoolstats.





Preserving the story of God's grace to WELS

"Like Plato's shadows in the cave, some things can be seen only against the proper background," Pastor James Schaefer reflected in the forward to the first issue of the *WELS Historical Institute Journal* in 1983. "The interest of the *Journal* is not simply the past for its own sake . . . but to contribute to understanding our WELS identity and background."

The *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, is just one part of the work of the WELS Historical Institute. Started in 1982, the Institute's purpose is to preserve and present the story of God's grace to WELS. "The WELS Historical Institute makes it their business to pass these stories on to future generations," says Dr. Mark Braun, president of the institute.

One way to pass on these stories is through the *Journal*, designed to appeal to pastor, teacher, and layperson alike. It includes "heavily researched articles interspersed with personal reminiscences and translations of old letters and documents," says Braun. "I am now finishing a long article on the career of Pastor John W. O. Brenner, synod president from 1933-53 at the time when the debate between the Wisconsin and

Missouri Synods was heating up. I find it fascinating to hold in my hand the original documents from momentous times in the synod's history."

Another way to experience the past is to visit Salem Landmark Church in Milwaukee, which has been dedicated as the museum of the Wisconsin Synod (see pictures above). It contains artifacts such as furniture, clothing, books, and pictures that are donated by WELS members and congregations.

The WELS Historical Institute membership currently consists of 25 organizations (congregations, school libraries, etc.) and 336 individuals. Braun and these members hope to spur an interest in the past. "J. P. Koehler, who wrote the first history of the synod and taught church history, has been called the best Lutheran historian in America by Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, who taught church history at Yale University," Braun shares. While each seminary student completes a church history thesis, and some have gone extensively into primary sources in the archives, Braun encourages others, especially students, to get involved. "I would like to see more students from Wisconsin Lutheran

College, the area universities, and even from the Lutheran high schools get more hands-on experience in primary-source research," Braun says.

Members, special gifts and bequests, as well as grants from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans support the institute. How can you show your support? Subscribe to the *Journal*. "Give up lattes for a week and you can afford a year's subscription," Braun suggests. Include a trip to the Landmark Church museum on your church or school tour of synodical stopping points in Milwaukee. Send old files, papers, and artifacts from your church or school to the institute.

"As a church body blessed by God, we have much worth keeping and preserving," says Braun.

To subscribe to the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, contact Pastor Curtis Jahn at 414-615-5753; jahnc@nph.wels.net. For tours of the Landmark Church, call museum curator Char Sampe at 414-464-3559. Send materials and artifacts to WELS Historical Institute, c/o Prof. Alan Siggelkow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 111831 N Seminary Dr, Mequon WI 53092.

WELS 2008 district conventions

Each of the 12 districts holds a convention each biennium, generally in the even-numbered years. (The synod convention is held in the odd-numbered years.) Every pastor, professor, and male teacher of the district plus a lay delegate representing each congregation attends the convention as a voting delegate. Other members of the district are welcome to attend as guests.

District conventions are held for the following purposes:

- To meet as a group to carry out the legislative responsibilities of the district, such as holding elections, accepting new members, formulating resolutions to send to synod convention, etc.
- To celebrate God's blessings.
- To nurture faith.

Here is the schedule of the 2008 district conventions:

Arizona-California

June 9-11
Arizona Golf Resort, Mesa, Ariz.

Dakota-Montana

June 10-12
Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.

Michigan

June 10-12
Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Minnesota

June 10-12
Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Nebraska

June 9-11
Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

North Atlantic

June 10-11
Resurrection, Virginia Beach, Va.

Northern Wisconsin

June 8-10
Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

Pacific Northwest

June 12-13
Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des Moines, Wash.

South Atlantic

June 9-11
Holiday Inn Resort, Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.

South Central

June 9-10
Calvary, Dallas, Texas


Southeastern Wisconsin

June 10-11
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

Western Wisconsin

June 8-10
Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Questions about specific district conventions may be directed to the president or secretary of that district.



Let your
light shine

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. May they inspire you to let your light shine even brighter. If you have an example to share, send it to 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; fic@sab.wels.net.

On Feb. 5, a category F2 tornado devastated Gassville, Ark., a town of approximately 1,700 people. Although no one was hurt, more than 300 homes were damaged and approximately 25 businesses were destroyed.

In the wake of this disaster, volunteers from Trinity congregation in nearby Mountain Home, Ark., headed into Gassville to help clean up. "We're a very regional church," says David Kapler, pastor at Trinity. "We have a list of about 24 prospects in Gassville. Also one of our families that has not attended church for quite a while was affected by the tornado. We helped tarp their roof and board up broken windows, and told them, 'Please let us know if we can help you further.'"

That act of kindness really struck a chord. "The family was really grateful," says Kapler. "One of the family members was telling people in her community about us. She said to me, 'I told people that my church came and helped me out!' She called Trinity 'my church.'"

Kapler says he hopes to see that family return to church in the near future. "We've been in touch and pray that they will join us for worship to see that we are even more concerned about their family enjoying the eternal home Jesus has provided for us."

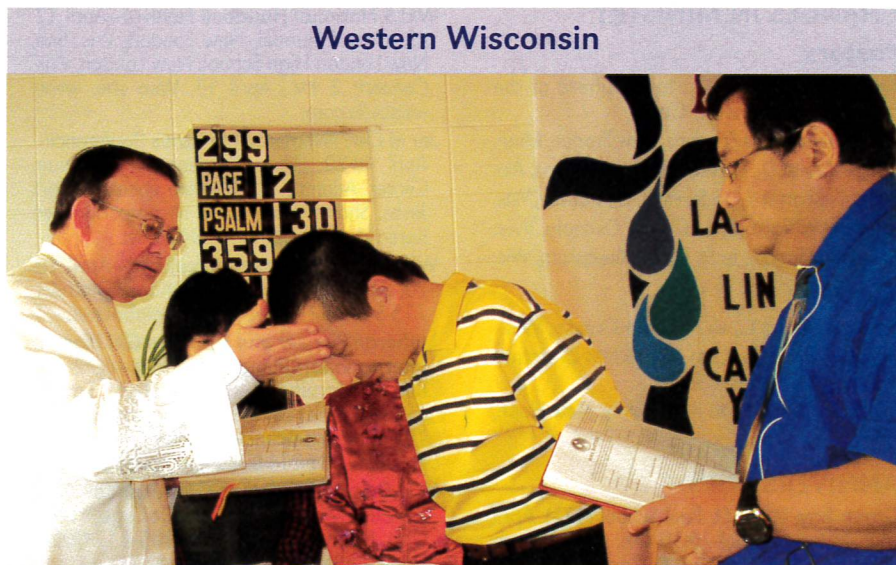
District news

Southeastern Wisconsin

Students of **Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee**, are supporting WELS mission efforts in Nepal. They are providing funds so medical and dental equipment can be purchased for the free clinics WELS sponsors every two months. At the most recent clinic, held in January in the Himalayan Mountain area, more than 500 patients were treated. Patients also received Christian literature: 600 copies of the booklet "The Promise" and 40 copies of "Jesus the Christ," a guided self-study book, were distributed.

South Atlantic

A **pastor/teacher conference**, "Treasures New and Old: A Conference on Creative Excellence in Worship," was held Jan. 23-25 in Atlanta, Ga. The conference focused on honoring tradition and exploring modern worship issues. "'Treasures New and Old' is the idea that Lutherans do worship a certain way for a reason—there's theological rationale and depth behind why we do what we do," says Bryan Gerlach, administrator for the Commission on Worship and a presenter at the conference. "We don't have to throw away treasures from



Pictured are (l to r) Pastor Glen Schmiede, Lin Cong, and Ching-Pi Lin. Cong; his daughter, Candy; and wife, Lanju Yang, were baptized on Feb. 10 at Eastside, Madison, Wis. The family began taking English as a Second Language classes at Eastside in October 2007, and decided they wanted to be baptized around the Chinese New Year. "My husband [Pastor Schmiede] did the baptism and Ching-Pi Lin, a [Pastoral Studies Institute] student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, translated into Mandarin," says Karen Schmiede. "Because of the language barrier, our congregation members haven't really had a lot of communication with Chinese-speaking people. So this was a nice experience for them, too."

the past, but neither should we use those treasures in a dull and unimaginative way. To emphasize that in the keynotes and then talk about how to accomplish that in the workshops—that, in a nut-

shell, was the highlight of the conference. It was highly appreciated."

The district reporters for this month are: SA—Christopher Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

WELS news briefs

Commission on Youth Discipleship 414-256-3274; cyd@sab.wels.net

The **WELS International Youth Rally**, under the theme "Follow the path, Lead the way," will be held July 8-11, 2009, at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. The theme is based on 1 Timothy 4:12: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." Several district youth rallies also are planned for 2008. To learn more about the 2009 International Youth Rally and the 2008 district rallies, go to www.welsyouthrally.net.

Commission on Worship 414-256-3226; worship@sab.wels.net



The **WELS National Conference on Worship, Music & the Arts** will be held July 28-31 at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter,

Minn. The new WELS hymnal supplement, published in summer 2008, will be the centerpiece of the conference. Along with new hymns, psalms, and liturgical elements, worship at the conference will feature four new concertos based on supplement hymns and a WELS-commissioned setting for handbells of "In Christ Alone" by Getty Townend. Other highlights include a Festival Choir and Orchestra concert; exhibitors and music publishers, and more than 50 presentations and workshops. "Presenters at the conference feature several younger and 'first time' presenters—the next generation taking its place in WELS musical and worship leadership," says Bryan Gerlach, administrator for the Commission on Worship. For more information or to register, go to www.wels.net/jump/worship-conf.

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

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Kieselhorst, Philip L., to Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo.

Koch, Henry T., to Friedens, New Prague, Minn.

Roebke, John D., to Lamb of God, Madison, Ala.

Schoell, Martin E., to St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.

Staab, William A., to Grace, Osceola, Wis.

Swenson, Troy S., to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.

Teachers

Benrud, Jana L., to First, La Crosse, Wis.

Lauber, Pamela J., to Key to Life Christian Childcare, Weston, Wis.

Meitner, Cinda L., to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.

ANNIVERSARIES

Green Bay, Wis.—St. Paul School (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; lcf Frank@new.rr.com.

Hortonville, Wis.—Bethlehem School (125). April 26. Alumni basketball. April 27. School anniversary worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; school open house, dinner, and program at noon. School office, 920-779-6761.

St. Peters, Mo.—Good Shepherd (25). April 27. Worship, 4 P.M.; dinner and program to follow. RSVP requested by March 31. Jim Boggs, 636-978-6791; jboggs@gluth.org.

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.

Clatonia, Neb.—Zion (125). June 22. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP by June 1. 402-989-4775; zion_clatonia@hotmail.com.

Red Wing, Minn.—St. John (150). Aug. 15. Concert with Koiné, 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.

Allagan, 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

Pathways to Christ Women's Retreat—April 4-6. LaSure's Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. Theme: "Jesus is the Rock." 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. Host, Emanuel, New London, Wis. Site, New London High School, New London, Wis. Concert, 2 P.M., April 13. Web site, www.wellsbells.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@comporium.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 Pinacar Derbies—April 19. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Lutheran Girl Pioneers, 608-781-5232; lgp@charterinternet.net. Lutheran Pioneers, 888-214-8225; lpooffice@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, 414-425-4225; jweber@wi.rr.com, or Howard Wilsman, 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.

Camp Phillip Work Weekend—May 2-4. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. 920-787-3202; office@campphillip.com; Web site, www.campphillip.com.

WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee 25th anniversary celebration—May 8, 6 P.M. Grace Center, Grace, Milwaukee, Wis. Guest speaker, Gianna Jessen. 414-727-8176; office@welsflmilw.com; Web site, www.welsflmilw.com.

Commencement events

- **Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.**—May 16. Concert, 7:30 P.M. May 17. Graduation service, 10 A.M.; call day service and assignment of graduates, 2:30 P.M.

- **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**—May 20. Vicar assignment service, 7 P.M. May 22. Call day service and assignment of graduates, 10 A.M.; concert, 7:30 P.M. May 23. Graduation service, 10 A.M.

- **Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.**—May 23. Concert, 7 P.M. May 24. Graduation service, 10 A.M.

- **Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.**—May 23. Concert, 7 P.M. May 24. Graduation service, 10:30 A.M.

Camp Phillip Family Fest—June 13-15. 920-787-3202; office@campphillip.com. Web site, www.campphillip.com.

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.

45th Annual LWMS Convention—June 26-29. Site, Marriott Star Pass Resort, Tucson, Ariz. Hosted by the Grand Canyon Circuit. Registration deadline, May 15. Web site, www.lwms.org.

Summer Hebrew Institute—July 21-25. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Prof. Thomas Nass, nasstp@mlc-wels.edu. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu/home/administration/offices/specialservices.

MLC, DMLC, and NWC Reunion Weekend—July 25-27. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Celebrating five-year incremental class reunion (2003, 1998 and all previous classes ending in three or eight). Steve Balza, 507-217-1731; balzasj@mlc-wels.edu. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu/home/alumni.

Training Camp-A Lutheran Camp for Kids—July 27-Aug. 1. Site, YMCA Camp Duncan, Ingleside, Ill. Web site, www.newlife-wels.org, click "Training Camp."

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

Retired WELS called worker reunion—Aug. 6. 9:30 A.M. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. J. Fenske, 262-677-2602.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium—Sept. 22-23. Theme: "The Church." 262-242-8100; Web site, www.wls.wels.net.

NAMES WANTED

Chico/Paradise/Orland/Forest Ranch, Calif.—Paul Johnston, 530-247-6918; DakotaDad@aol.com.

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.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

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

GUEST PREACHER NEEDED

Missoula, Mont.—June 15, 22, and 29. Lodging provided along with reimbursement for preaching. Justin Cloute, 406-543-8222; cloutejr@hotmail.com.

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.

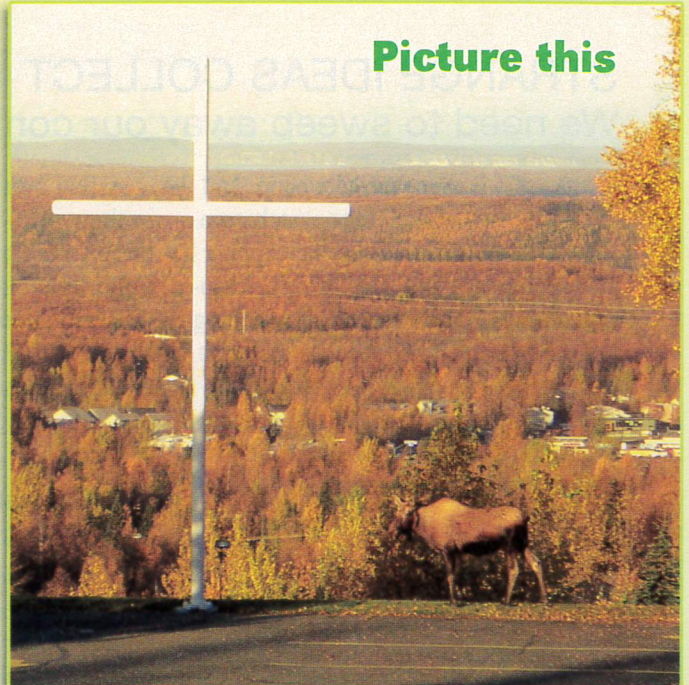
Going GREEN

Here are just a few things that can make your church or school greener. Even if you have doubts about global warming, support efforts that are smart and save resources.

1. Recycle paper, plastic, newspaper, glass, and aluminum cans. Make it easy for people to recycle by installing visible, dedicated containers in church and school meeting places.
2. Reduce, reuse, recycle. Plan to recycle unused bulletins and handouts. Encourage the use of thrift shops.
3. Change your bulbs. Switching your incandescent light bulbs to either florescent bulbs or light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs will save money and energy. Put LED bulbs in all of your church exit signs. Remember that all florescent bulbs do require recycling because they contain mercury.
4. Look for the Energy Star label for appliances in church kitchens. Plan for the use of leftover food from church functions.
5. Turn off unused lights.
6. Car pool, walk, or take the bus. Combine trips whenever possible and remember that fuel-efficient vehicles will help your wallet at the gas pump and decrease the output of greenhouse gases.
7. Consider tankless hot water systems in applications that do not require large capacity or insulate the hot water tank.
8. Consider the use of programmable thermostats for heating and air conditioning.
9. Plant a tree. There is a legend that Martin Luther was asked what he would do today if he knew that the world would end tomorrow. He is said to have replied that he would plant a tree. Trees and other plants absorb carbon dioxide and give off oxygen during photosynthesis. A single tree will absorb approximately one ton of carbon dioxide during its lifetime.

Submitted by Paul Boehlke, professor of biology at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. For more of Boehlke's insights on caring for the earth, go to p. 10.

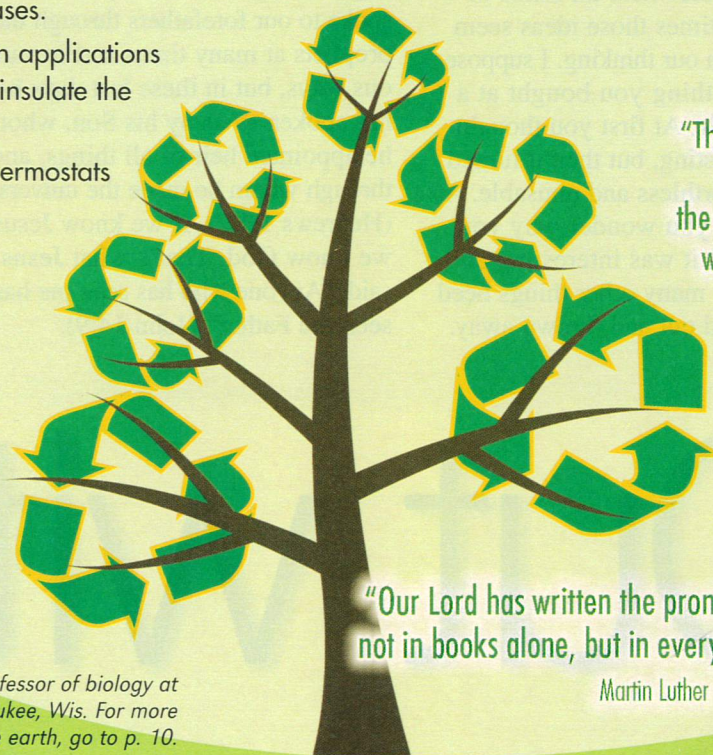
Picture this



A new pastor is welcomed to Alaska by his first moose sighting—right out the living room window! Last October, on the first cold day since Pastor Brian Hackmann took a call to Peace, Eagle River, Alaska, three moose spent the night sleeping on the church grounds. Hackmann and his wife Tricia (who took the photo) spent the next morning watching the cow (pictured) and two calves parade around the church property.

Submitted by Brian Hackmann

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.



*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."
Psalm 19:1*

"Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime."

Martin Luther

STRANGE IDEAS COLLECT IN OUR SPIRITUAL HOUSES. We need to sweep away our confusion and set it out with the trash.

We have cable television, and I usually hate to watch commercials. When they appear I take the remote and start surfing. I usually have to do this when I'm watching television by myself, because the habit will drive others crazy—especially my wife. But if you spend any time channel surfing, it won't take you long to find some religious program. Those programs come in a wide variety of formats with religious ideas more varied than the formats.

Of course, you don't have to look for "religious programming" to find ideas about religion. Programs about the Bible and Christ show up on the History Channel, Discovery, and other channels. Some programs assume a particular religious bias and appear on network television too. Even movies sometimes touch on religious ideas or moral issues. *The Golden Compass* and *Juno* are two recent examples.

We live in this world of ideas. Everyone seems to have his or her own opinion about God. Our eyes see and our ears hear all kinds of ideas. Sometimes those ideas seem to show up in our thinking. I suppose it's like the thing you bought at a rummage sale. At first you thought it was interesting, but then it turned out to be worthless and unusable. At some point, you wonder why you ever thought it was interesting and wonder how many other things need to be cleaned out and thrown away.

A few quirky and broken concepts in the world of religious ideas pass themselves off as interesting and important. However, they are worthless and should be discarded. As a matter of fact some of them are dangerous and need to be quickly put out with the garbage. Here are four of them.

1 God hasn't revealed anything clearly to us.

This idea is as old as Satan's words to Eve, "Did God really say . . .?" and as contemporary as *The Da Vinci Code* or *The Golden Compass*. I don't doubt that it will be around long after all of us are gone. But that does not mean we have to keep this idea in our spiritual houses; it should be discarded.

The truth is that God has revealed his heart clearly to us. His great love in Christ for us sinners is as clear as John 3:16. The Bible is clear: God's love in Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews began his letter, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Hebrews 1:1,2). If we know Jesus, we know God. That's what Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

2 The Bible is no more reliable than any other book of ideas.

If someone suggests that the Bible is just a collection of religious texts created by ancient people, let's be clear. It is a collection of religious texts, but it's much more. The Bible provides a clear and consistent message from beginning to end—from Moses to John, a span of almost 2,000 years. It tells us of the entrance of sin and death into the world and the remedy God himself provided when he promised a Savior. Then it traces both sin in the world and the promise until Jesus arrived and left the grave empty.

Out with



The ancient manuscripts of the Bible are not as unreliable as one might imagine. In the world of manuscripts, the text of the New Testament is more reliable than the text of Caesar's *Gallic War*, which many students have translated on their way to mastering Latin.

The Bible was not just made up as history moved onward. Peter, an apostle and eyewitness, wrote, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitness of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). Finally we believe that those who wrote the Scripture—both Old and New Testaments—"spoke from God as

they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21)

3 All religions are simply different ways to the same God.

In my channel surfing, I heard this idea expressed this way, "Just like all rivers lead to the same sea, so all religions lead to the same God." Well, this is at best an interesting idea, vividly expressed. Yes, we can all stand at a sunset and marvel at the beauty or stand at a distance and wonder at the grandeur of the mountains. They show us God's power and majesty. Only a few people claim there is no God (Psalm 14:1 and 53:1).

But not all religions have the same idea of God. Christians, Muslims, and Jews have different concepts of God and how humans can approach him. The concepts are incompatible. Even all Christian concepts of God are not the same. The only way we can think that they are all the same is to ignore the differences. Then each one ceases to be what it professes to be. Muslims believe Jesus is a teacher like Mohammed; Christians believe Jesus is God and man come to earth to redeem sinners; Jews do not accept the exclusive claims of Jesus and Christianity. How can these all be the same unless two of them abandon principal and fundamental ideas?

We must not make war with one another because of our differences, but I do not want to give up what Jesus said of himself, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one

comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). No, it's time to clean house, give Jesus the prominent position he deserves, and discard the idea that all religions are the same.

4 God encourages the good in us and overlooks the bad.

The natural religion of the human heart hopes that this is true and has been hoping it from the very beginning. We think we can help God along by hiding our failures and sins from his view, covering them up so others and even God won't see. Remember, Adam and Eve did that. Religions—except for Christianity—suggest that we can make up for the bad by sacrificing, doing better, or at least having the best intentions.

But God did not overlook the bad. He had full knowledge of what Adam and Eve did and what each of us does. He knows. He knew from the beginning. Instead of divine amnesia about our sins, God punished them all. "God made [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21) so that "the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). If God simply overlooked sins, then he didn't need to send Jesus to suffer and die.

So I must throw out the garbage no matter how appealing it might seem. I do that because I wish to hold tightly to the one treasure God himself has given—Jesus.

John Braun is the executive editor for Forward in Christ.

the trash

John A. Braun



Jesus & ADD,

me

A man with attention deficit disorder shares the importance of having Jesus as his focus.

There in the dimly lit, white-walled, concrete-floor basement I called my study, I lay on my couch. My thoughts quickly and uncontrollably swirled. *I've got to get my sermon done.* My prep work was done, yet my brain could not focus long enough to write anything. I feared another Saturday would come where I'd be frantically finishing the written manuscript. After that, I'd have to memorize it before that evening's service. Yet, I knew that no matter how many times I went over it, I'd never get it fully polished.

My catechism lesson isn't done yet. I have to teach tomorrow. The children deserve better than what I've been giving them.

Members are upset with me. No matter what I do, I can never get it right. I plug one hole of the leaky boat only to have another spring up on me.

My fantasy football team is in disarray. All the guys are probably laughing at me. I have to show them that I can still get my team fixed in time to win the league.

My wife is frustrated with me. She keeps saying that we don't communicate enough and that I'm so distant. I guess I haven't really noticed.

My daughter wants me to play with her. I just can't seem to find enough time. She'll probably grow up despising me.

Why doesn't my depression medicine seem to be working anymore? I can't calm down. I'm sinking further into a pit of despair. I don't know how long I can keep this up.

Just call off tonight's meeting. No one will care. Yet, I would live with guilt the rest of the week. Besides, it's the Lord's work. I shouldn't have those thoughts. Still, I can only imagine what we will be talking about tonight. I'm not looking forward to it. *Lord, save me!*

Somehow the Lord got me off my couch. I went to the church meeting that night. That started a path towards my resignation from the pastoral ministry three months later. In the meantime, another previously unforeseen path made itself visible. It's a path I've been walking on for quite some time—the way of ADD.

Living with ADD

I suffer from attention deficit disorder (ADD)—a disorder characterized by inattentiveness and distractibility. People often misunderstand ADD. They look at the many symptoms, find some that fit them, and say, “Well, I have that” or “I do that, but I’m okay. I don’t need help. I’m able to adjust.” What they fail to recognize is that those who need help are the ones who have so many symptoms that their life is affected negatively. Now, looking back, I wonder how things would have been different if I had known about ADD sooner.

When I was young, my mother often sent me to the pantry to fetch several items. Rarely did I come back with everything the first time around. It never ceased to amaze my mom that while I couldn’t remember all the pantry items, I knew every Super Bowl played—teams, scores, and MVPs.

During school, my bookbag became heavier the older I got. This was due to my lack of concentration during school. I needed to be by myself in my room at home because I was always distracted at school.

In college, my tutor told me how impressed he was with my work ethic, discipline, and relatively good grades. But he expressed concern about my slowness in getting my assignments done. He also saw my lack of a social life. While my friends went out, I had to stay back because of my studies. I never felt like I had studied enough. My grades were never terrible, though they hardly ever met my expectations because of the time I put into studying.

Did I not pay enough attention in class? Perhaps, but it wasn’t due to lack of trying. Every day found me zoning out or nodding off in class. My brain could only handle so much before sensory overload kicked in.

While playing team sports such as soccer and basketball, my brain often “blitzed.” When I got the ball, my mind raced so fast that everything became a blur and I’d panic. Meanwhile, my teammates and coaches yelled to slow down or pass the ball. I just wanted to scream back, “Be quiet! Give me a chance to focus!” Long distance running was the one sport I thrived at. Its constant, steady rhythm cleared my head.

As a vicar, I was diagnosed with reoccurring depression. The doctor thought that the recent death of my grandma had probably triggered it as well as my perfectionist tendencies. We should have known there was more to it. On

the same day, I totaled my car. I had been so focused on finding a sign for the pharmacy that I failed to notice the red stoplight above me.

After being in the ministry for several years, I took a leave of absence to get my life in order. After working with several counselors, I was diagnosed with ADD and began taking medication to help control the symptoms. That was when I decided to resign from the ministry.

Right now I work at two low-paying jobs. I moved my family from a large parsonage to a two-bedroom apartment. We live paycheck-to-paycheck. I’ve thought of going back to school, yet the money isn’t there. More than ever, I want to serve the Lord in some sort of full-time capacity. That desire has never left me, but I hesitate to say that I’m ready to serve full time if it means serving as the sole pastor of a congregation.

To make matters worse, I’m becoming restless again. I want my present situation to change now, but the Lord is saying, “Wait!” I’m left with fighting back sin, doubting myself, and battling feelings of impatience and discontentment. I’m left to wonder what will become of my family and me in the years ahead. I worry. I fear.

Working through ADD with Jesus

Yet, through it all, I overcome. I overcome my ADD with Jesus. Nothing—none of ADD’s symptoms and traits, no depression, no hardship or frustration—can separate me from “the love of God that is in Christ Jesus [my] Lord” (Romans 8:39).

Where has Jesus been during my life? Everywhere! He was there in my younger years, getting me through my frustrations with school and sports. During my years as a vicar and pastor, Jesus continually lifted me out of pits of despair and depression. Even today I see him getting my life and marriage back on track. I’m productive at work. My wife and I are closer than we’ve ever been. My imagination at times can rival that of my daughter when we play together.

Jesus gets me to see my ADD as a gift. He forgives me when I say or do something stupid and irrational, but he also uses the creative trait of my ADD through writing and drawing.

Jesus is my focus. He keeps me from concentrating too much on past mistakes and regrets. With his Spirit, I fix my heart and mind on Jesus, giving him my full attention. Trusting Jesus, I press on toward heaven, where a perfect stability of mind awaits. Until then, I go forward—Jesus, ADD, and me.

Due to the personal nature of this article, the author has asked to be kept anonymous.

**Jesus gets
me to see
my ADD
as a gift.**



Mark Schweden

A synod focused on its mission

Who are we as a synod? What characterizes our synod as a group of Christians who walk together in a common faith?

We've begun to answer those questions by saying that we are a synod that is grounded in the Word of God and centered in the gospel. With humble thanks and appreciation we see what a blessing it is to belong to a church body that stands boldly on the truth of God's unchanging Word. We treasure the fact that the gospel—the good news of God's grace in Christ—is what has made us children of God and is the motivation for all we do.

But the story of what our synod is doesn't end with the blessings that God has given to us in his Word and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It only starts there. The story continues as we look at what we do with the Word of God and the message of Christ that has been entrusted to us. We belong to a synod that treasures the gospel so much that we are committed to giving that treasure away to as many people as possible. Our mission *is* missions.

As Jesus was about to leave his disciples for the last time, he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). In those parting words, Jesus was telling the disciples who they were: his witnesses and his ambassadors. He was reminding them that they were brought to faith through the good news of his grace. And he was telling them what to do: "Go! Share that same message with the world."

And they went. They went to their friends and family. They went with the good news to their communities and synagogues. Generations of disciples followed them, crossing oceans and

continents and cultures, proclaiming the good news of Jesus to the world.

In our Wisconsin Synod, we value and treasure the gospel that God has given us. But we also recognize that this is a treasure not to be hoarded and locked away only for ourselves. It's a treasure that is meant to be shared. It's our God-given mission to share it. It's our purpose in life as individuals. It's the focus and direction of our congregations. And it is the defining theme of our work together as a synod.

The spirit of missions is alive and well in our synod. We've recognized the importance of taking the gospel across the lines of culture and language to various ethnic groups within our own country and have dedicated substantial resources to do that. Our ministerial schools are serious about instilling a "mission-mindedness" in every future called worker. And we've committed ourselves to planting new congregations at home and expanding our mission efforts overseas.

By God's grace, all of these things are happening in our synod. We assert that sharing the gospel with the world is a priority; our synod's convention last summer resolved to expand our mission efforts. But we always need to be on guard not to let other priorities and distractions elbow aside our essential mission of proclaiming the good news to all creation.

The day that our synod stops focusing on our mission of sharing the gospel with the world is the day that we stop being faithful to the Savior who called us. Thank God that we are a synod that, by his grace, is focused on our mission of proclaiming the good news to all creation.

Next month: We are a confessional Lutheran synod

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

Jesus' disciples were right, "This is a hard teaching." Jesus had just said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53).

The real manna from heaven

It had all started off innocently enough. Jesus had just fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Nothing gets people excited like free food, especially free food from someone with limitless resources. So they followed him. He was showing them his divine power as the Messiah, and they wanted the free food.

But Jesus told them that they should look for food that gives them eternal life (John 6:27). They said, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (John 6:30,31).

Jesus was offering them much better bread. That food that came down from heaven, manna, only lasted a day and they had to eat it every day. After awhile they even got tired of it. Jesus tells them that he is the real

manna from heaven. "I am the bread of life." He is the bread that doesn't just keep them alive; he gives them life. At another time Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). The life that this Bread gives us is powerful, victorious, and—here is the big one—eternal.

The only Bread of Life

But Jesus pushes the picture. He doesn't just suggest that as the Bread of Life he can give them life; he tells them that he is the only one who can give them life. Without the Bread of Life there would be no life at all. "I am THE bread of life." Jesus refuses to be just another miracle worker, another Moses for them. He boldly claims to be true God, the world's Savior, the only Bread of Life.

That idea of the Bread of Life was a little hard to swallow for some. It still is. Few people have trouble swallowing Jesus as one of many appetizers that add some flavor or spice to life. It's not so bad if you want to have Jesus in your life as an example of how to be loving and caring. And he might be useful if he actually could make you prosperous, maybe even rich. But to say that without him

you aren't really alive and you never will be is a little too hard to swallow.

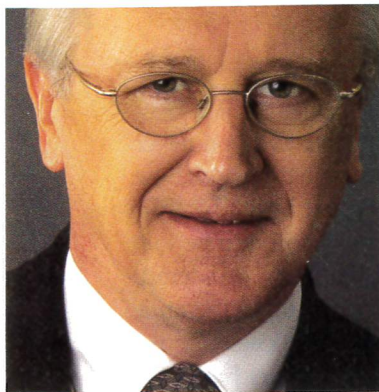
Some in the crowd began to grumble because Jesus claimed to be the only Bread of Life. They wondered how Jesus, who grew up in the area and had a family they knew, could be so arrogant. But Jesus had said something similar even before he fed the multitude: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" (John 5:24). Claiming to be the Bread of Life was simply a vivid reminder of John 3:16. We have tasted the Bread of Life by faith. Only the Bread of Life that comes down from heaven can keep us alive forever. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (John 6:51).

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This is the fourth 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.

LAM
the bread of life

Jesus is the bread that doesn't just keep us alive; he gives us eternal life.



John A. Brann

Hypocrites

Studies suggest that the unchurched consider Christians to be hypocrites. They see Christians going to church on Sunday morning and then during the week they see something different. The news media are quick to point out that hypocrisy. Lead stories announce that people who were members of a church have committed unspeakable crimes from pedophilia to murder.

Yes, such events do occur. Christian marriages collapse because one partner decides to find sexual excitement outside the marriage. Christian families explode with domestic violence, drugs, or a host of other problems. Personal integrity and honesty disappear before the temptations of money, power, prestige, and ambition. When such things happen—make no mistake they do—they give all Christians and especially Jesus a black eye.

The perception that Christians are nothing but hypocrites is not new. Christian failure and sin have accompanied the Christian witness throughout history. One might even be so bold as to suggest that the history of the church, like the history of the secular world, is filled with arrogance, greed, bloodshed, and a struggle for power.

Even if we look at our own lives, we find that we are not perfect. I know the gaps and holes in my Christian life. Yes, to those outside I am a hypocrite. I keep my failures hidden most of the time, but I pray that my mistakes will not become so evident that they keep someone else away from Jesus.

I have a couple of observations about the accusation that Christians are hypocrites. First, Christians do fail. Lutheran Christians too. We fail to live out our faith in countless ways every day. Living a life worthy of the Savior who has claimed us is a struggle. Sometimes we fail miserably and bring disgrace to ourselves, our faith, and our Savior.

But the Savior has achieved a full and complete forgiveness for me and for all. We have been *declared* holy and righteous. We have not been *made* holy and righteous. That step is yet to come in the perfection of heaven. Now we struggle just to make progress. This is not an excuse for failure; it's only a realization of where we are in our walk with Jesus—our discipleship.

We are saints and sinners at once. We turn from the failures—those we hide and those we cannot hide—and look to Jesus for the assurance of his forgiveness. We repent. That's a Christian's daily exercise. The assurance of his full and complete forgiveness sets our failures behind us and also gives us power to make progress in our behavior. By his forgiveness, we go on one more day, grateful that his blood cleansed us and that he permits us to live for him.


Those outside the church—the unchurched—will notice our contradictory behavior and conclude that we are nothing but hypocrites. One more observation: how seriously should we take the criticism of those who do not know Jesus? They see no reason for accepting the Christian message. Is the criticism just another excuse to continue without Jesus? How can they understand the way forgiveness works in the Christian life if the gospel remains foolishness to them? Don't they also resent Christians for being too good and too moral? Don't they look down on us when we fail to go along with their immorality?

I'm saddened by the criticism because I'm saddened by every failure Christians make—my failures included. But I'm pleased to be a disciple of Jesus. The outsiders accused him too. Yet he welcomed sinners and ate with them. So, Lord, may I sit with you, unworthy though I am.

GOD'S tool belt for unity

Donald W. Patterson

What needs to be fixed? Repentance in relationships



When I was 18, I worked in a cabinet shop. I made raised panel doors. My closest coworker was a 55-year-old man who had a drinking problem. Sometimes he even came to work a little under the influence. One day while I was sawing some boards on a table saw, a splinter flew up into my eye. With liquor on his breath this fellow came over to “help” me. Holding a pencil, he raised up his hand and said, “Here, let me get that out for you.” “Not a chance!” I thought. The last thing I needed was some dizzy person digging around in my eye with a pencil. I could not have a trusting relationship with that man until he sobered up. He must deal with the beam sticking out of his own eye—the abuse of alcohol—before he could help me get the splinter out of mine.

The same is true of every other relationship. We cannot be in close, trusting relationships if we will not deal with our own sins. So many people stumble trying to help others by criticizing them and correcting them when all the while they are caught up in their own failures. It is a spiritual truth: we must first understand our own sins and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. In other words we must be repentant before we can help anyone else repent.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives us this rule of thumb about relationships. Look at how he says it:

¹Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in

your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:1-5).

Familiarize yourself with the tool

- How does Jesus help us see his point through exaggeration?
- Of what sin are we guilty if we try to help someone else before we repent of our own sins?
- Why would someone resist letting us help them if we showed no sign of repentance ourselves?
- How does repenting of our own sins help us see clearly how to help someone else get free from sins?
- How does knowing Jesus and his grace help us learn to repent often?
- Describe how one sees clearly enough to restore someone else.

Use the tool

- Ask someone who you really trust what “planks” are in your eyes.
- Repent of those planks to God and to that friend. Then cling to the forgiveness of Jesus.
- Write down how you feel after that exercise in a thank-you card to that friend.
- Repentance involves two parts: contrition and faith. Describe how each of these played a role in Peter's relationship with Jesus after he denied knowing him?

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

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



THE WORLD'S VIEW OF MOMMY-GREATNESS DIFFERS FROM GOD'S VIEW OF A FAITHFUL MOTHER.

Heather Bode

The day God blessed me with my first child, I began my pursuit of mommy-greatness. After all, this is what I'd wanted since I was a little girl watching my mother care for my siblings. The least I could do, out of thankfulness for this blessing, was give motherhood my best. I soon learned the basics: motherhood was exhausting . . . and messy . . . and difficult.

The world's view of mommy-greatness

Driving around town with small children didn't leave me with much time to gaze at passing scenery or read bumper stickers while waiting at a red light. Then one day a license plate caught my eye. It read: 1GR8MOM. I was instantly craning my neck to catch a glimpse. What did 1GR8MOM look like? Was she well groomed? Did she wear a constant smile on her face?

Suddenly, this slogan symbolized everything I felt I was lacking. I found myself frustrated and thinking: "I sure wasn't 1GR8MOM when Ben smeared Vicks® VapoRub® all over his bedroom wall. I bet 1GR8MOM would have noticed her daughter eating the tulip bulbs out of the garden. I wonder if 1GR8MOM leaves the house without brushing her teeth."

The pursuit of greatness even caused quibbling amongst Jesus' disciples. When they asked Jesus which of them would be the greatest, Jesus replied, "For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest" (Luke 9:48). We are to serve instead of be served.

In today's world, mommy-greatness is measured by standards like how many extracurricular activities you can haul the children to and still put dinner on the table, or how many of your children are on the honor roll, or how many hours

you volunteer at your child's school. Maybe it even depends on whether or not your pumpkin pie is homemade.

These are all noble ways to serve our children. As a Christian mom, I am concerned about my children's physical and academic needs. But I am more concerned about their spiritual needs.

Serving them by teaching God's Word

When I see Jesus' words about greatness in Luke 9, I think of mothers passing their fingers under hymn lines so their children can follow along. I think of mothers on Christmas Eve, lip-synching the words to every song and passage their children will recite. I think of mothers whispering bedtime prayers. I think of mothers struggling to get their children to church and Sunday school each week.

To the bystander, these actions may not look like signs of greatness. But because Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go . . ." these are, indeed, signs of greatness. Christian mothers do these things not out of the pursuit of greatness but in the hope that, someday, their children will pass along this Christian heritage to future generations. The gift of God's Word with its promise of eternal life . . . what could be greater than that?

Will I ever drive a car with a license plate that reads 1GR8MOM? I'm sure my children are not waiting in line at the DMV to order my personalized plate. Thankfully, I'm not worried. I know that I don't have to measure myself by the world's expectations for great mothers. God's standard applies to my life and to yours.

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