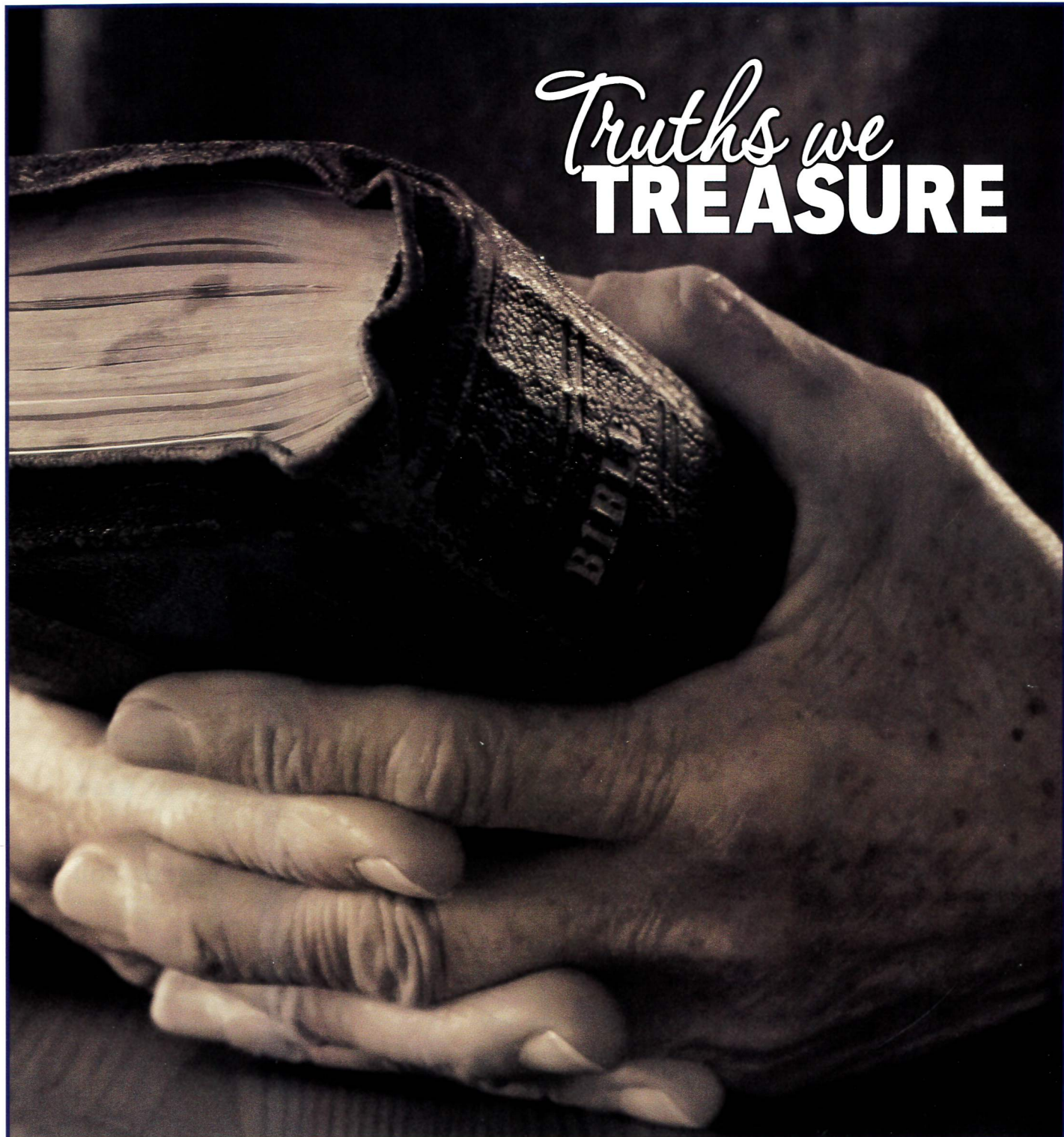


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OCTOBER 2008

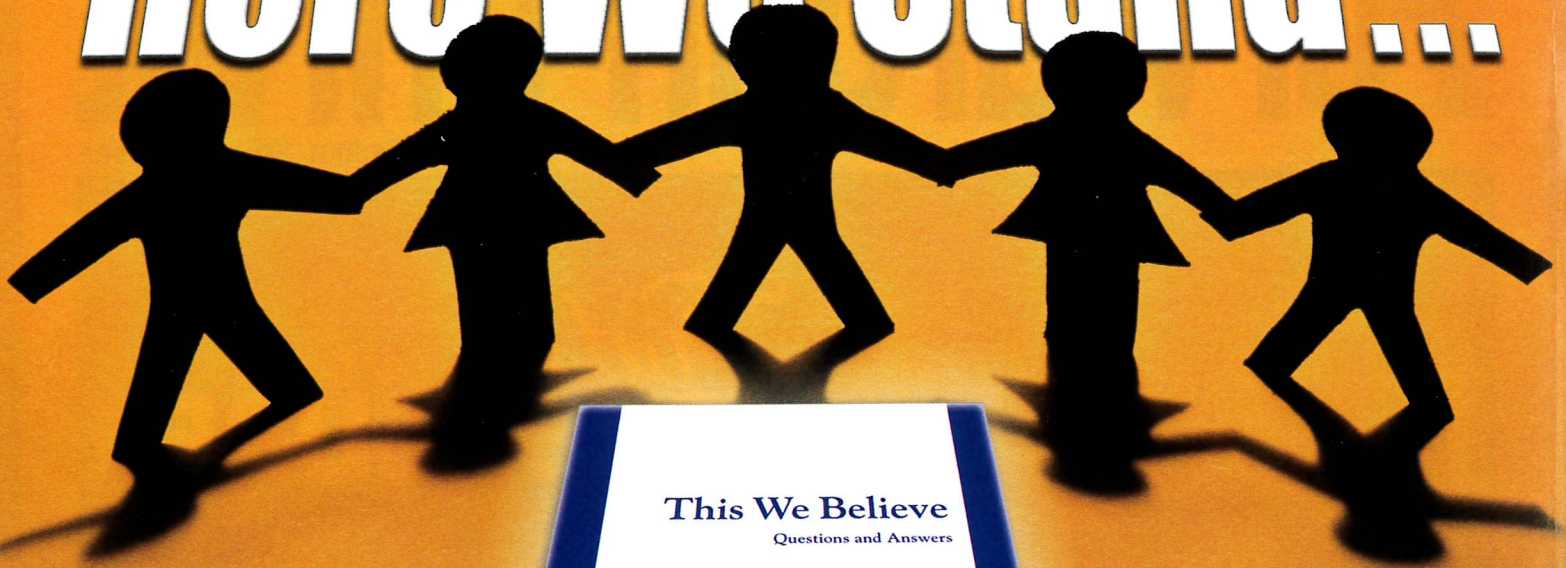
# Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness



*Truths we*  
**TREASURE**

# Here We Stand...



## This We Believe

Questions and Answers



Richard L. Gurgel

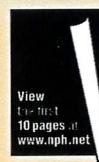
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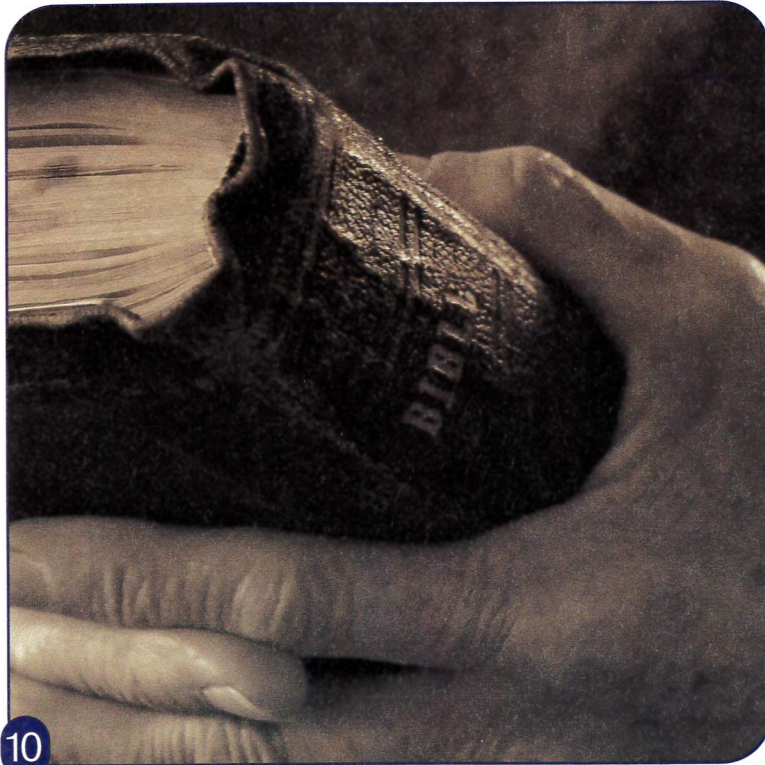
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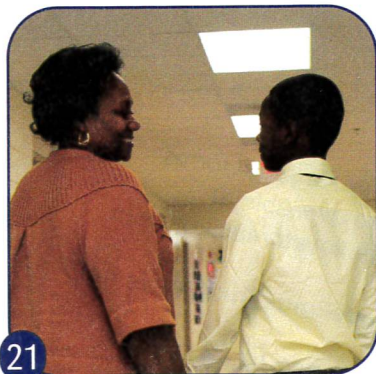


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# “What makes Lutheran teachings so desirable at a deathbed?”



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## Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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*1 Kings 8:57*

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OCTOBER

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

As Christians, we have the timeless truths of God's Word. The law convicts us of our sin and shows us our need for a Savior. The gospel tells us about God's abundant grace in sending all mankind his Son, our Savior, to take our sins away.

The healing power of God's Word comes up often in the pages of this issue. Pastor Michael Feuerstahler shares how the promises of God's Word are especially powerful on the deathbed (p. 10), a time when we may need God to calm our fears. The gospel also can comfort us during other difficult times in our lives. Linda Buxa relates how a congregation is using the Word to bring healing to broken families and those suffering from the pain of divorce (p. 30). Finally, the Scriptures bring unity to us as a church body by keeping the gospel message—as well as our mission to spread those life-saving truths—in front of us (p. 35).

Once we have been healed by the Word, we—as individuals and as a synod—can be joyful in all we do. WELS President Mark Schroeder shares more about that joy as he continues to look at who we are as a synod (p. 32).

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CONFESSIONS

I thoroughly enjoy reading the "Confessions of Faith" articles and applaud all who are willing to share their stories. What better way to remind born and bred WELS members how fortunate we are. The articles and the authors are shining examples that the Holy Spirit's work is alive and well. Please continue this as a regular feature in Forward in Christ.

Randi Carlson
Goodhue, Minnesota



Re: "Confessions of faith" [Aug.]. This was an excellent story, told with such a sincere heart. I know Caroline must have felt abandoned by all, but perhaps that was the way the Lord was going to bring her to him. I rejoice with her that she is now my sister in Christ.

I did have some suggestions that would clarify two points in the story.

First, Caroline was "re-baptized, this time in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit . . . not in the name of the Watchtower Society!" I was surprised at the terminology that implied that Caroline was baptized again. The first baptism, done in the name of a non-existent god, is not a baptism at all. Caroline was baptized for the first time on her confirmation day.

Second, Caroline's first marriage was a tragedy. Her story pointed out

that dating was forbidden among the Jehovah's Witnesses. She described courtship, with a chaperone accompanying the young couple who were "committed" to each other, as a stumbling block to her discernment of her ex-husband's character. Though the manner that Christians use to find others to marry, whether dating people or courting, is a matter of personal choice in Christian liberty, courtship is a model that has a long history of producing successful marriages. American dating does not enjoy the same history.

Juliette Akers
Albuquerque, New Mexico

SUICIDE

The article by Prof. Bivens pertaining to suicides brought back memories of my 30 years tenure as a county coroner. Even though I have been retired from that office for 22 years, I can still recall unique situations in those numerous suicides that

I was obligated to investigate during those years.

Among the elderly people the depression was usually caused by poor health, lack of finances, or troublesome personal relationships. Among younger people, especially teenagers, the act was usually committed after only brief conscientious thoughts about it. I don't think they contemplate the finality of the act nor the effect it has on family and friends.

At any rate, suicide is self-murder. Of course we cannot judge or delve into anyone's mind or heart; however, it seems that they are rather self-centered individuals who fail to rely on words of wisdom contained in the Scriptures, where there is a wealth of help if we have faith and sincerely believe.

Ewald Reichert
Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin

OBITUARIES

In "Feedback" [Aug.], I read with particular interest the letter submitted by the reader (name withheld) under the caption, "How we dress."

I quote the last paragraph: "The only complaint I have of Forward in Christ is your obituaries are so brief. I'd like to know more of our Christian servants—teachers and parents and widows, too."

I understand there is an expense in producing this wonderful publication and not always room for details. . . . But when an obituary is printed, I often wondered the names of other family members who mourn the loss—widows, widowers, siblings, etc.

So now I have voiced my only complaint of Forward in Christ. It has always been a mystery to me as to why there are members of WELS who do not subscribe to monthly mailings of this publication, as it not only presents wonderful articles but also news items such as graduations at our secondary schools. This is another mystery—why this is not "proclaimed" or noted in our church bulletins. I know it is not possible for everyone to attend graduations at Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, but once having attended a graduation at Mequon, the sight of the wonderful young men entering the ministry is very impressive and thought-provoking—one that you remember.

Irene Kolb
Madison, Wisconsin

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

# Prayer: A fatal mistake?

*“You made a fatal mistake when you sent me to the LORD your God and said, ‘Pray to the LORD our God for us; tell us everything he says and we will do it.’ ” Jeremiah 42:20*

Stephen H. Geiger

**N**ebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered Judah, just as Jeremiah had prophesied. Huge numbers of Jews went into exile. The Babylonian government set up a puppet king to rule over the poor who were left behind.

The puppet king was assassinated. The Jews who still lived in Judah were terrified. They imagined the return of avenging Babylonian soldiers. They made a plan: “Let’s flee to Egypt.”

## Turning to God in prayer

Before they left their country, they approached Jeremiah and asked him to pray. “Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do” (Jeremiah 42:3).

Sounds good, doesn’t it. Troubled people were facing a challenging moment, and they turned to the Lord.

It seems to get better. The Jews told Jeremiah, “Whether [the answer] is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 42:6). Not only did they want a prayer: They confessed they would submit to the Lord’s will.

Sounds wonderful.

All may appear wonderful as we turn to the Lord in prayer too. Our dilemma may not involve Babylonian soldiers but an illness or a decision or a loved one. We might even pray, “Lord, let your will be done.”

Could such a prayer be a problem?

## Disliking God’s answer

These frightened Jews received an answer. “Don’t flee to Egypt. Stay where you are. God will protect you from the Babylonians.”

They didn’t like that answer. They said all the right things, but in the end they didn’t like the answer.

Do we pray prayers that say all the right things but after discovering God’s clear guidance in Scripture or observing how events turn out, we feel lingering anger, disagreement, and bitterness toward God?

Jeremiah’s audience did. Jeremiah responded, “You made a fatal mistake when you sent me to pray. With your prayer you told God that you would accept whatever he determined, but in your hearts you felt the opposite.” Judgment followed. They did go to Egypt, but God killed them there.

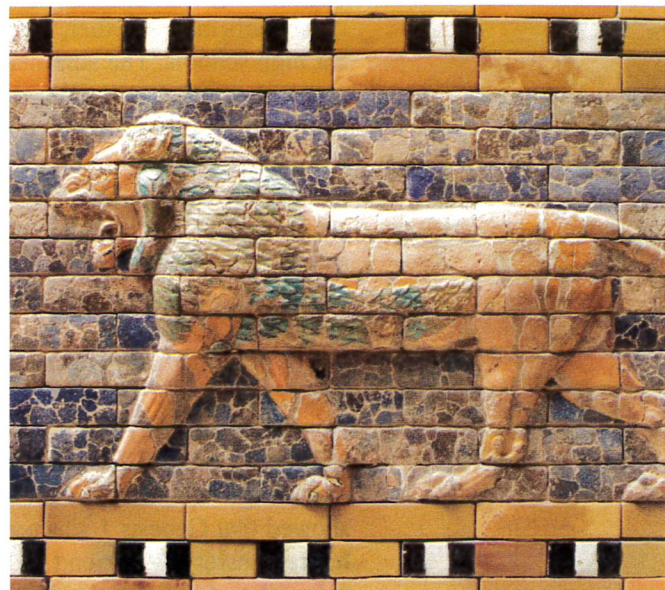
We may think back to some of our own prayers and recognize that our sinful flesh promoted a very similar contradiction—lips that confess confidence in God’s will but inner thoughts that hang on to our own will.

Can our prayers be fatal mistakes?

## Confessing our sinful prayers

To see the judgment we deserve is to have a new fear, not of what might happen because of a sickness or a dilemma but of what should happen when we meet our God.

As a new prayer now crosses our lips, a prayer that confesses how we have fallen into sinful prayer, know this: it is a gracious God that opens our eyes to see our sin; it is a gracious God who rebukes us through the examples of Old Testament Scripture; it is a gracious God who wipes away those sorrowful tears with the name of Jesus. He already endured the eternal consequence for every self-willed prayer. We plead, “Lord, have mercy on me.” The Lord assures, “I have. Every sin-



ful prayer has been erased. Every imperfect prayer has been replaced by the perfect prayers of your substitute, your Savior. Be at peace.”

Such peace helps us take the uncertainties and dilemmas and anxieties of life to the Lord in prayer. No longer need there be a lingering, internal insistence that our ways must become God’s way. Instead, our prayers can be expressions of absolute submission and rock-solid confidence. We are passing on our concerns to the Savior of our souls. He loves us, there is no doubt. He does what is best, always and without a doubt.

This is our confidence.

Such confidence is never a mistake.

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

*Pictured: The lion from the wall of Babylon: Pergamon Museum, Berlin.*

# Beyond logic

**Paul T. Prange**

**A**t first I thought I lost my friend because of evolution.

We had gone to the same middle school and were confirmed together, but we went to different high schools. The summer between freshman and sophomore year, I noticed that he hadn't been in church, so I went over to his house. He told me that he could not go to church anymore because he had learned in high school that evolution, not creation, was true. In our liturgy we sang, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth," and he couldn't sing that anymore in good conscience.

My grandpa had given me a book called *The Handy Dandy Evolution Refuter*, and I went through every point in it with my friend. I brought up the Bible passages I had learned in my high school religion class, passages that showed that Genesis 1 was not a myth or a poem but real history. My friend had to admit that there were a lot of holes in the theory of evolution.

And then, after a while, he also had to admit the real reason he did not want to go to church. Going to church made him feel guilty because he was messing around with his girlfriend.

I learned a valuable lesson that summer. The average person who objects to a doctrine in the Bible doesn't do it for purely intellectual reasons. The average person who objects to the Bible does it because he thinks that the Bible does not allow him to do what he wants.

That principle seemed to be true as I grew up and heard people talking about the roles of men and women. I had learned in middle school that to have separate restrooms for men and women was just as bad as having separate restrooms for

black people and white people. We learned that the only difference between boys and girls was how they were raised. But the Bible distinguished between men and women especially when it came to their roles in life. Our middle school teachers did not want us to live in that kind of "ignorance." So I heard them say that the Bible, or at least that part of it, must be wrong.

I've noticed that principle in the great sexuality debates going on in some Christian denominations. People want to live the way they want to live, and if the Bible says something different, they say it must not be true, or at least that part of it must not be true.

Sometimes, as in the case of my friend, the objection is not so direct. People feel guilty, so they find some part of the Bible to complain about, particularly if the doctrine is not perfectly logical.

As I listen to people object to one part or another of the Bible, it becomes clear to me

why Jesus summarized our work as "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations" (Luke 24:47). We preach and teach law and gospel for practical reasons, not intellectual ones. God's law cuts through the garbage

of logical, intellectual objections. God's gospel—grace in Jesus beyond all logic—heals the wound.

And when it comes to finding strength in times of temptation and doubt, our help really is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

**We preach and teach law and gospel for practical reasons, not intellectual ones.**

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



# QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

I'm not surprised to hear of confusion regarding these terms. They have a rich and somewhat debated history plus a varied use by people today. A review of these things can give us valuable lessons.

## Religiously bad words

The term "pagan" is from the Latin *paganus*, meaning "rural, rustic, of the country." The word "heathen" is derived from Gothic and Germanic vocabulary for a "dweller on the heath." Both words take us back to a less cultivated or developed time. Eventually, however, the words were used more to describe religious traits than geographic or cultural characteristics. Respected dictionaries commonly reflect this by defining heathen as anyone not a Jew, Christian, or Muslim. A related but nonreligious connotation of paganism is "primitive, barbaric," as opposed to "domesticated, civilized."

Precisely when and why the words made the transition to the religious sphere is unclear. Some linguists link it to the general observation that Christendom first flourished in major urban centers and the church had difficulty maintaining religious influence over people in rural areas, who were less "Christianized." Others add the thought that "heath dwellers" and the rustic had a habit of submitting to the established church when threatened but then returned to their pagan ways as soon as missionaries were out of sight. Thus the term heathen took on the meaning of idolatrous people who practiced the old, pre-Christian religion sometimes with a façade of Christianity.

## Religiously good words?

Today paganism and heathenism can denote those who are considered culturally uncivilized or religiously "primitive." But the terms are used to identify religiously active people connected with pre-Christian religious practices. Neo-paganism is a modern movement to revive nature worship and other nature-based "spiritual paths," including neo-Druidism and Wicca. Neo-pagans consistently profess many gods or maintain that everything is god. Some include folk and tribal religions.

## Q. Who exactly are pagans or the heathen? I heard that some people consider Christians to be pagans.

To have professing Christians labeled as "pagans" or "heathen" is quite unusual and linguistically inaccurate. What you heard might be referring to attempts to blend Christianity with neo-pagan thought. People who openly question traditional beliefs and view Christian churches as hypocritical or power hungry might speak of

themselves as "Christian" and "pagan" at the same time. It is instructive to note how "pagan" and "heathen" are increasingly used in complimentary ways, to promote religion that biblical Christianity has always considered idolatrous and incompatible with the Christian faith.

## Religiously instructive words!

Ironically, serious neo-pagans and dedicated Christians lament some of the same problems. Modern heathen refer to "fluff-bunny pagans," who take casual and inconsistent approaches to their spiritual practices. Christianity has long lamented similar "fluff-bunny Christians," who strongly resemble the "heath dwellers" who retained a façade of Christianity but whose lives gave more evidence of idolatry. These seldom allow religious conviction to interfere with personal lifestyles, and, as the caricature has it, "sing hymns as if they were laundry lists."

Who exactly are pagans or the heathen? I suspect that it is increasingly hard to give a definition that will satisfy everyone. Maybe it's too late to insist that the words must refer to those who adhere to non-Christian, idolatrous, polytheistic, and pantheistic religious views. But it's never too late to embrace, enjoy, dedicate ourselves to, and testify to that eternal gospel: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15). That is thoroughly Christian and precisely what all pagans and heathen, however defined, need to hear.

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

The truths we treasure as Lutherans bring great comfort at life's end.

Michael T. Feuerstahler

# Let me die

*"Pastor, my mother is terminally ill. Would you visit her?"*

I had gotten to know Sally and her mother well when Sally's daughter was enrolled in our preschool ten years ago. The entire family attended a Pentecostal church and expressed no interest in Lutheranism . . . until now.

To my surprise, Sally told me that her mother was baptized and confirmed a Lutheran. Although her mother regularly attended the Pentecostal church with Sally and her daughter, she never was comfortable with its teaching. Consequently, she never became a member. Now that she was diagnosed with terminal cancer, she desired the ministrations of a Lutheran pastor.

What makes Lutheran teachings so desirable at a deathbed? Comfort abounds in the three "solas" of our Reformation heritage: *sola gratia*—grace alone; *sola fide*—faith alone; *sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone. As a Lutheran, you boldly confess them in life. Your pastor will use them to comfort you in death.

## *Grace alone*

Grace is God's undeserved love. Most of us understand the "love" part; at times we may struggle with the "undeserved" part, especially on our deathbeds. During our busy lives, the passage "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) may never disturb us, but it might when it's our turn to meet death. The date of death on the grave marker will be a stinging, permanent indictment of the imperfection that marked our lives and all human life.

Medications may help manage any pain or discomfort we have during the dying process. But don't expect any of it to soften death's blow. A faithful Lutheran pastor will not fill our heads with empty ideas about the great beyond. How can he? We've heard him proclaim, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56). In every sermon he's preached, he's told us how we have failed God's expectations and can't make up for our sins by the good we've done.

His message is the message of God. Sin is serious. If we doubt that, then we need to observe how our own bodies age. On the deathbed, when breathing becomes shallow and difficult, the cause of death becomes more evident. Nothing anyone—including doctors, nurses, and technicians—can say or do will change what is happening. Clearly we come to realize our need for divine intervention.

Then grace comes to the rescue! Our pastor will eagerly direct us to and comfort us with the "rest of the story": "The wages of sin is death, *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" God doesn't see something salvageable in us that compels him to cancel the wages of our sin. We are unworthy of his love. Yet God's heart bursts with love for us. That's grace. Grace alone compelled God to send his Son in human flesh. Grace alone moved Jesus to be like us in every way but one—he is without sin. Grace alone prompted Jesus to suffer and die for the wages he did not earn. "When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (Titus 3:4,5).

## *Faith alone*

On our deathbeds, we may be tempted to focus on the good we've done. Or we may come to realize that we have not done enough to earn entrance into heaven. Our pastor will eliminate any expression of false confidence or inadequacy by turning us away from what we have done to the One whose works make the difference in our destiny.

Faith is only as good as the foundation on which it rests. One can have a strong faith that he can fly if he jumps out of an airplane. But such subjective faith won't change the objective reality when he comes crashing to the ground.

Faith alone looks to Jesus Christ alone. We can be sure that at our deathbeds, our pastor will apply the inspired writer's encouragement, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). He will keep us focused on Jesus. Unlike us, Jesus didn't fail in his attempt to obey God's commandments. He kept God's law perfectly in our place. He went to the cross as the innocent Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. He rose from the dead to prove his victory over death. He became the sinner's only hope for reconciliation with God and for life after death.

By God's grace, we believe in Jesus as our Savior. Consequently, we are justified by faith. In other words, God declares us righteous because he no longer sees our sin; he sees his Son's atoning blood covering our sin. That's genuine deathbed comfort and certainty! Forget about any perceived good works. Forget about the sins we've committed. Look to Jesus alone! Even though at death we receive the wages of our sins, we are not receiving punishment for our sins. Jesus took the punishment

# a Lutheran!

for our sins upon himself. His bloodstained cross and open tomb assure us that nothing impedes our entrance into heaven. Faith alone looks to Jesus alone.

## *Scripture alone*

On our deathbeds, our pastor won't overwhelm us with sentimental stories or flowery poems. He has a much more potent tool to use as he ministers to us—the powerful Word of God. Like all of us, he believes that the Bible is the verbally inspired, inerrant Word of God. The comfort he brings doesn't originate in his own imagination but in Scripture alone.

In Scripture we find God's great and precious promises and his answers to all of our pressing questions. We might ask, "Will Jesus be with me?" Jesus answers, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We wonder, "Will Jesus really take me to heaven?" Jesus answers, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2,3). We question, "Will Jesus raise my body to life?" Jesus answers, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26).

I ministered to Sally's mother during the last month of her life. I directed her to God's love, a love that moved God to take action to save her in spite of her sinfulness (grace alone). I turned her eyes of faith to Jesus' cross and to his work to redeem her (faith alone). I used the precious promises of God's Word, which strengthened her faith and calmed her fears (Scripture alone).

She confessed her sin and her faith in Jesus.

*She died a Lutheran.*

*Michael Feuerstahler is pastor at St. Mark, Brown Deer, Wisconsin.*



# The LUTHER

The emphasis of Lutheran worship is the Word of God. We gather together to hear the Scriptures as thousands of God's people have done before us.

John M. Koelpin

**B**elievers in Jesus expect to hear God's Word when they gather for worship. This is especially true of Christians whose heritage rests on the Reformation foundation of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone).

But which words of God will worshipers hear on any given Sunday? Who chooses them, and how do they decide? Since the Bible does not mandate any set of lessons for worship, we are free to choose them. For example, in 1946 Pastor W. A. Criswell from First Baptist in Dallas, Texas, decided to preach through the entire Bible verse by verse. Nearly 18 years later, he finished! Others have chosen different approaches. Some congregations explore a book of the Bible or a Bible topic for a few weeks or months. A national or local crisis might call for a special set of readings for a week or two.

### Choosing the readings: the past

But sometimes pastors or congregations choose readings that may miss some important passages of Scripture. To help congregations read the "whole counsel of God," many churches follow a set of prescribed readings called a lectionary. A lectionary generally consists of lessons from various parts of the Scriptures that are designated for the Sundays of the church year.

Using a prearranged set of lessons in worship is nothing new. God's people have followed some order of readings since the Old Testament days of the synagogue. When Jesus visited his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Why Isaiah? He either asked for it or that was an assigned reading for the day.

The church of the New Testament era followed suit. The apostle Paul urged Timothy to "devote yourself

to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13). On more than one occasion, Paul assumed that his letters would be passed from congregation to congregation and read when they gathered together (1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16). Nearly 100 years later, the church father Justin Martyr (A.D. 100–164) described the worship of his time: "On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits."

We cannot say with certainty which method the early Christians used to determine the lessons read at worship, but early indications are that they read through a book or letter consecutively week by week. This style of reading, called *lectio continua*, is still used today. For example, the readings from *Christian Worship* use this style for the second lessons for Year A (p. 163). From Pentecost 3 through Pentecost 17, the pastor reads consecutive verses from the book of Romans. Even though reading consecutive lessons may have been the standard, lessons were chosen on festival days to match the occasion. On Christmas the early Christians read how the Father sent his Son to earth, on Easter they read about the resurrection of the Son from the dead, and on Pentecost they heard about the Holy Spirit's activity in building the church.

### Choosing the readings: lessons to help believers

Unlike true consecutive readings, which offered worshipers a book or letter in its entirety, lessons chosen for festival days gave worshipers only a slice from the greater whole. As a result, the individual lessons were called a *pericope*, from the Greek for "a section" or "a cutting-out." As the church year grew from three main festivals to entire festival seasons, the use of continuous readings waned while the use of distinct lessons for

each Sunday increased. Eventually, the

scattered pericopes were gathered into a single book called a lectionary. The word

# AN WAY of worship

*lectionary* can refer either to a series of readings like the historic lectionary or to the book that contains the readings. For example, the pastor reads from the Lectionary, which is the book at the lecturn.

Lectionary readings and the church year are intimately connected. The festival half of the church year from Advent through The Day of Pentecost provides the framework for a yearly review of Christ's life. The nonfestival half of the church year from Trinity Sunday through all the Sundays of Pentecost focuses on the life of the Christian. The lectionary readings throughout the church year remind us of God's love for us in Christ Jesus and encourage us to follow as his disciples. Such a structured, yearly walk through the life of Christ helps believers keep their attention on the great acts of salvation history and helps present a consistent approach to all of God's Word.

Throughout the centuries, the Gospel Lesson—taken from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John—has consistently presented the theme for each Sunday. We expect to hear Luke 2 during Christmas, John 19 on Good Friday, and Matthew 28 on Easter Day. In addition to the gospel reading, lectionaries often include a reading from the New Testament epistles and, at times, a reading from the Old Testament.

Two thousand years of church history have produced a number of lectionaries. However, since the late 400s the so-called historic lectionary has dominated the Western church. The historic lectionary was so ingrained and beneficial that even amidst the sweeping changes of the Reformation era, Luther and his associates retained its use. Still today, a modified version of the historic lectionary appears as the "One Year Series" in *Christian Worship*.

## Choosing the readings: more choices

The Western church experienced far-reaching lectionary reform in the 1960s. The Second Vatican Council proposed a new three-year cycle of readings instead

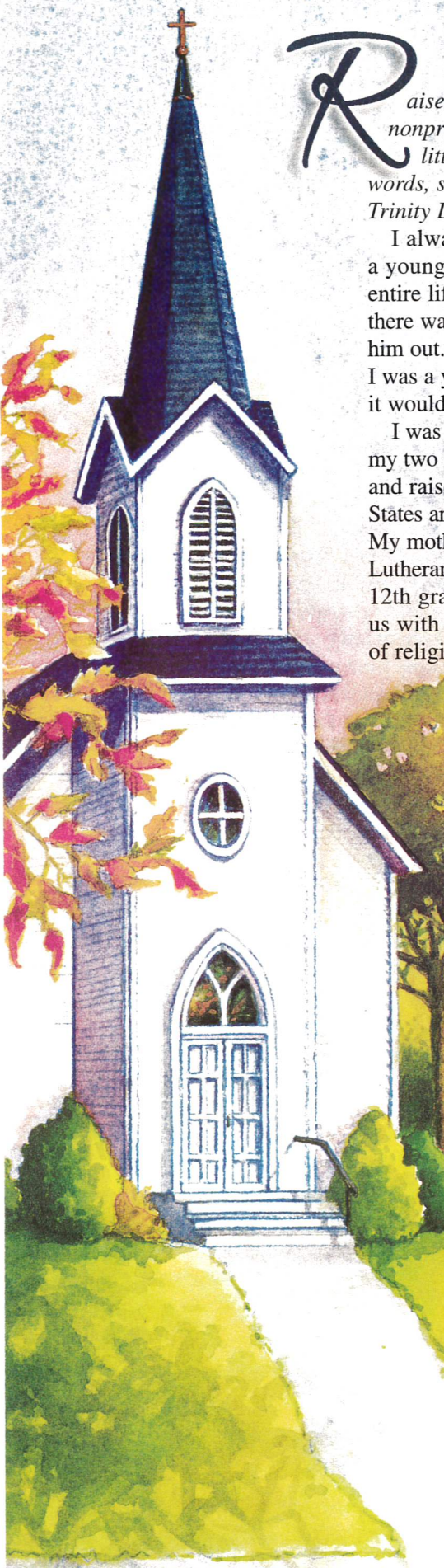
of the historic one-year series. In the "Three Year Series," the Gospel Lesson follows Matthew (Year A), Mark (Year B), and Luke (Year C) in consecutive years using semicontinuous readings. John's gospel provides the narrative during the Easter season each year and also supplements Mark's shorter gospel throughout Year B. The First Lesson has readings from the Old Testament as well as some readings from the New Testament book of Acts. In the "Three Year Series," these readings generally fit the theme of the day with a prophecy that finds its fulfillment in the Gospel Lesson. A majority of the Second Lessons follow the ancient custom of *lectio continua*. As a result, the Second Lesson does not always fit thematically with the other two lessons.

With the arrival of *Christian Worship: Supplement*, the WELS Commission on Worship has produced a supplemental lectionary to the "Three Year Series." The Gospel Lessons from the "Three Year Series" have remained the same. However, the First Lesson emphasizes Bible history instead of prophecy, and the Second Lesson has abandoned *lectio continua* in favor of a more thematic approach.

Worship leaders could, and sometimes do, select the readings for worship week by week. Using a lectionary, however, sets before preacher and people a balanced approach to God's counsel, with Christ as the head and God's people his body.

*John Koelpin is pastor at Calvary, Dallas, Texas.*

*This is the fifth article in a nine-part series on Lutheran worship.*



**R**aised by a nonpracticing Muslim and a nonpracticing Lutheran, Tyra Khan knew little about Christianity. In her own words, she describes what led her to join Trinity Lutheran Church in Bay City, Mich.

I always felt I needed religion, even as a young child. I very much felt a void my entire life and knew somehow God was out there waiting for the right time for me to seek him out. I believe this was not possible when I was a young person living at home because it would not have been supported.

I was not baptized as a child; neither were my two sisters. My father was born in Pakistan and raised Muslim. He came to the United States around age 25 in order to go to college. My mother was raised Lutheran and attended Lutheran school from kindergarten through 12th grade. However, neither parent raised us with any strong connection to any form of religion. We were required to adhere to

the traditional Muslim behaviors—no pork, strict discipline, modesty in dress

and behavior, limited exposure to popular culture such as music and television programs. Unfortunately, we were never told why we were expected to follow these rules. We were never educated or informed about God, creation, or what happens to us when we die. As you can imagine, this was a very confusing and often-times frightening way for a child to grow up.

**The really funny thing about what led me to Trinity in Bay City is that it had nothing to do with God—or so I foolishly thought.**

I was looking for a preschool/daycare for my daughter, and Trinity was only a few blocks from my home. A friend recommended the preschool/daycare, and I sent my daughter there when she was three years old. She continued on in the preschool the next year, but at that point I was not seeking to learn about the church. I was scared and apprehensive about asking people about the church. I thought I would not be welcome because I knew nothing about organized religion or Lutheranism.

As part of the preschool, my daughter was involved in singing at the church two or three times a year, and we always participated. I really enjoyed my experience and felt com-

## 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.

Tyra Khan as told to Nicole Balza

comfortable there. Of course, the members of the congregation were very gracious and welcoming. Finally, I got the nerve to call the pastor and ask him about membership. I explained I knew absolutely nothing about the Lutheran religion. He invited me to attend the classes that were just beginning.

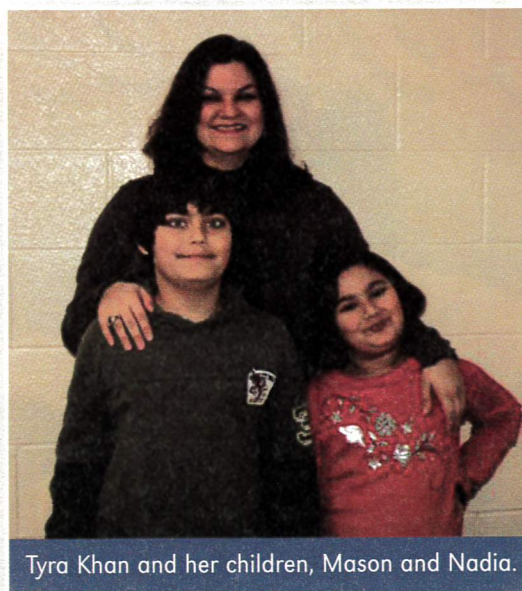
I nervously attended my first class and didn't say a word. After attending classes for a few weeks, I felt more comfortable and began reading a Bible at home. The other pastor provided me with several books to take home and read. The book entitled *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel changed my life! I was completely immersed in the book and read it cover to cover in three days. Pastor Schulz gave me more books on the topic, and I continued my classes.

Finally, after about 12 weeks, I completed the classes and felt that I had a much better understanding of Jesus. I felt Trinity was right for my family. My children and I were baptized on Dec. 17, 2006.

I was attracted to Lutheranism because I really connected to the sense of service to God and others and the fact that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven—that it is given to us by grace and faith alone. Other religions were unappealing to me because they instruct people to find ways to earn God's favor, a true impossibility.

**My son, Mason, is 12, and my daughter, Nadia, is 7.** Nadia has been attending Trinity's school since she was three and now is in second grade. She has grown up with God's Word and is absolutely confident in her faith. She has no doubts about God.

Mason was a little more like me, unsure and in foreign territory when it



Tyra Khan and her children, Mason and Nadia.

came to God and church. He attended public school from kindergarten through fifth grade and honestly had no interest in learning about God. I made the extremely important—but not popular—decision to enroll him at Trinity's school for sixth grade last year.

He fought me every step of the way at first. By this time, we had been baptized and were members of the church. Mason was not thrilled by all of these

changes, but I knew this was the right thing to do. Eventually, he became more comfortable with church attendance and the school. It took some time for him to want to talk about Jesus. I kept on a steady path of Bible reading, church attendance, and assisting him with his catechism and hymnal work. Slowly, he began to make comments here and there about "our Savior" and things Jesus had done in his time on earth. I really didn't know if he believed what he was being taught. One day, I asked him point blank if he believed Jesus was the Savior of the world, to which he replied, "Yes!"

We are so new in our faith and life as Christians. It is almost like starting life over with a new sense of certainty and purpose.

I find it so amazing how God changes our lives just at the moment when we least expect it. I was never a person to believe that faith alone was realistic. I needed concrete proof! I was arrogant enough to believe God had to prove himself to me and that I needed to understand everything he did in order for him to be real. I now realize that we are to listen to him and learn about what he has done for us. This passage sticks with me from my early visits to Trinity: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" (Matthew 7:13). God transforms us, and we need to realize that we do not change by ourselves.

*Tyra Khan is a member at Trinity, Bay City, Michigan. Nicole Balza is a member at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.*

*Do you have a story to share about how you became a WELS member? Send it to Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.*

## Another point of view

Mark Schulz, the outreach pastor at Trinity, Bay City, Mich., describes introducing Tyra Khan to Christianity: "The greatest challenge I faced with Tyra was convincing her that what the Bible said was true. Tyra is a lawyer and wanted evidence to support that the Bible was true. I gave Tyra two books to read, *The Case for Christ* and *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel. Lee Strobel had been a lawyer at one point in his life and had also questioned the teachings of Christianity. These two books helped Tyra. Obviously, being in the Word over time also helped convince Tyra that the Scriptures were indeed the truth."

# Overseeing



## God's people

Michael A. Woldt

Public ministers of the gospel are called to proclaim God's Word as God wants it proclaimed.

When a state trooper signals you to stop, it's not a suggestion! The trooper has the law on his side. His badge gives him the authority to stop and detain you. While the trooper has authority, it is not absolute. He may only exercise his authority in keeping with the law and the Constitution of the United States.

Officers are given authority to serve and protect the people of their communities. Public ministers of the gospel are called to serve and protect God's people. They don't carry shiny badges, but their work is backed by divine authority.

The Christian church has one ministry: proclaiming the gospel in Word and sacrament. We preach Jesus Christ crucified and risen! "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This one-gospel ministry can be carried out privately

by individual believers who are all "priests" (1 Peter 2:9). It is also carried out publicly through called ministers of the Word. The gospel has the same authority whether it is used privately or publicly.

### Called to serve God's people publicly

In keeping with God's will, Christians call qualified individuals to serve them with the gospel. Public ministers stand in the place of Christ as they proclaim his Word. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

As ambassadors of Christ, called workers aren't in the business of making suggestions or offering personal opinions about spiritual matters. Public ministers of the gospel are called to proclaim God's Word as he wants it proclaimed. They are not permitted to offer their own



ideas instead of God's. "Let the one who has my word speak it faithfully" (Jeremiah 23:28). The apostle Paul once wrote to a young pastor named Titus and gave him this charge: "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15). Ministers preach and teach with authority when, after a careful and thorough study of God's Word, they are able to say, "This is what the Lord says!"

God's people respond to such faithful teaching of God's Word by obeying their leaders and submitting to their authority (Hebrews 13:17). "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13). That's God's plan.

God's plan doesn't give pastors or other called workers the right to dominate the people they serve (1 Peter 5:3). Christian ministry requires a servant's heart. Nor does God ask his people to blindly accept everything their called workers tell them. The Bereans are described as people of noble character who not only received the message with great eagerness but also "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

In matters decided by the Word of God, public ministers of the gospel are to be obeyed when they faithfully teach that Word. They represent Christ. When God's Word doesn't speak, public ministers have no right to bind the congregation to their personal opinions.

### **They serve in various ways**

Do you think of a police officer as someone who patrols city streets in a well-marked vehicle equipped with bright lights and loud sirens? That may be the most common picture of police work. However, not all officers serve that way. Some work undercover to infiltrate gangs and break up drug cartels. Some process evidence collected at crime scenes. Some handle incoming calls and coordinate department resources when emergencies arise. Some serve in towns, cities, and counties; others serve on a national level, crossing state lines in pursuit of known felons.

When you hear the title "minister," it is natural to think of a pastor serving a congregation of believers. The pastoral ministry may be the most commonly recognized form of public ministry. Pastors are typically trained and called to serve an entire congregation of believers, young and old, male and female. God's people ask their pastors to preach, preside, admonish, counsel, publicly administer the sacraments, and serve as spiritual overseers of the congregation.

Yet public gospel ministry can assume other forms to meet the needs of God's people. Nowhere in Scripture does the Lord prescribe a specific form of public ministry. In fact, the New Testament speaks of various forms of the

one-gospel ministry, without attempting to describe the exact functions of each form. Paul wrote, "In the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Specific forms of public ministry are determined by the divine call of Christ through his people. God's people are free to call a pastor to serve the elderly of the congregation through a visitation ministry or to call qualified individuals to serve the congregation's youth. God's people are also free to call ministers of music, ministers of education, ministers of family and youth, ministers of evangelism, or others to perform specific functions. The scope and duties may vary, but all who hold these offices have been called by God through his people to serve in the one ministry of the gospel.

### **Women in the public ministry**

When I was a child, it never crossed my mind that women would one day serve as gun-toting officers of the law. How things have changed! I am grateful for all the dedicated women who work in law enforcement to serve and protect me.

But what about the church? Can women serve in the public ministry? Will our congregations someday be served by female pastors?

The Bible does not forbid women from being called into the public ministry of the gospel. But it does set some limits. Scripture directs that women in public ministry are not to exercise authority over men. "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:11-13).

Christian women ought to be encouraged to use the gifts God has given them in his service. Christians will examine every form of public ministry to see if women may serve. The determining factor will not be cultural changes or perceptions of society but the principles that God lays out in his Word.

Why don't we call women to be pastors? A pastor is commonly charged with general congregational oversight. The pastor teaches men and has authority over men. Love for God keeps us from calling women to serve in ways that God expressly forbids. In our world of gender equality, that may seem unfair, but it is better to do as God directs than as we think.

*Michael Woldt is pastor at David's Star, Jackson, Wisconsin.*

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

# WHATEVER

## Tattered Bible, tired message?

The Bible is God's message to us, and we must be careful not to take its message for granted.

Christopher Dostal

The other day, upon entering my religion classroom, I spotted a tattered old Bible lying on the front desk. At first, I gave it no more thought than the aging copy of *The Cat in the Hat* that sits upon my bookshelf.

But the sight of the tattered Bible came back to me a few days later, when I was having a discussion with a Christian friend.

While talking, I quoted the words of Romans 8:28 as proof of God's guiding hand in our lives. The conversation had been conventional up to this point. But my friend shocked me with his response.

"You point to that passage for everything! Are there any times that verse *doesn't* apply?"

Granted, I frequently use Romans to back up my beliefs. But still, it got me thinking. What if many of our Bible verses are as worn out to us as the book that contains them?

Take, for example, John 3:16, undoubtedly the best known of all Bible passages. The words of "the gospel in a nutshell" bring tremendous joy to a penitent unbeliever hearing them for the first time. But to me, these same words are often recited without regard for their meaning, lost in an endless sea of random Bible trivia.

If we're just going to ignore the message of the Bible while we rattle off preprogrammed responses, why not just build a gospel-spewing robot army to spread the Word to the four corners of the earth faster than a speeding bullet? Are we so quick to forget what Scripture really is?

We treat the Word of God as a one-way road, providing comfort only to the receiver, when in reality it is a

multilane freeway, giving vast consolation to both the listener and the speaker. I was all too quick to forget that, and my friend called me on it.

**Why not give the old tried-and-true passages a rest and look to other parts of the Bible?** With 1,189 chapters and more than 31,000 verses in those chapters, there is plenty of material to go around. Why shouldn't we challenge ourselves to find something new?

Plus, we must read various portions of the Bible in order to find new verses. In doing so, we just might stumble across a chapter or verse that applies to our current condition. In his infinite wisdom, God inspired the Bible writers in such a way that passages provide relevant messages for people of all time periods.

And teenagers need that comfort as much as, if not more than, anyone else. Every day we face temptations from all sides. The devil knows that now is the best time to strike. When we are still spiritually young, he seizes every opportunity he can get. We cannot afford to ignore the messages contained in Scripture.

**So the next time you read a familiar section of Scripture, stop. Think.** Don't just let the words glance off your cerebrum. Instead let them sink deep into your soul. God has given us Scripture for a reason—to increase and nurture our faith. Now the challenge: we must remember this every single time that we use the Bible. It is God's message to us, and we must be careful not to take its message for granted.

After all, if you're going to let the words get worn out, you might as well fill the empty space on the desk with an old copy of *The Cat in the Hat*.

Christopher Dostal, a junior at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a member at Grace, Milwaukee.



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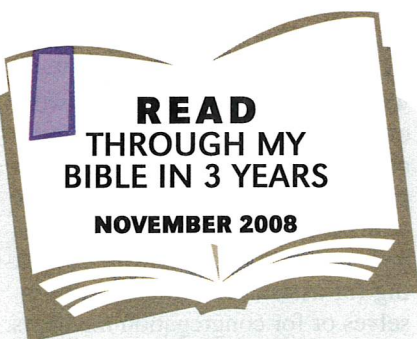
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|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Romans 9:14-29   | 17. Ex. 26, 27       |
| 2. Rom. 9:30-10:21  | 18. Ex. 28           |
| 3. Rom. 11:1-10     | 19. Ex. 29           |
| 4. Rom. 11:11-24    | 20. Ex. 30, 31       |
| 5. Rom. 11:25-36    | 21. Ex. 32           |
| 6. Rom. 12          | 22. Ex. 33           |
| 7. Rom. 13          | 23. Ex. 34           |
| 8. Rom. 14          | 24. Ex. 35:1-36:7    |
| 9. Rom. 15:1-13     | 25. Ex. 36:8-37:9    |
| 10. Rom. 15:14-33   | 26. Ex. 37:10-38:31  |
| 11. Rom. 16:1-16    | 27. Ex. 39, 40       |
| 12. Rom. 16:17-27   | 28. 1 Corinthians    |
| 13. Exodus 21:1-32  | 1:1-17               |
| 14. Ex. 21:33-23:19 |                      |
| 15. Ex. 23:20-24:18 | 29. 1 Cor. 1:18-2:18 |
| 16. Ex. 25          | 30. 1 Cor. 3, 4      |

## Obituaries

### Lillian V. Raabe 1914-2008

Lillian Raabe (nee Siewert) was born April 12, 1914, in Stevensville, Mich. She died June 20, 2008, in Onalaska, Wis.

She taught at First, La Crosse, Wis.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Lester; two sons; one granddaughter; three great-grandchildren; and nine brothers and sisters. She is survived by two daughters, eight grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-granddaughter.

### David L. Rosenau 1948-2008

David Rosenau was born Feb. 21, 1948, in Mankato, Minn. He died July 13, 2008, in Show Low, Ariz.

A 1983 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.; Zion, Toledo, Ohio; Gethsemane, Cibique, Ariz.; and Shepherd of the Mountain, Cedar Creek, Ariz.

He is survived by his wife, Micki; two sons; one daughter; seven grandchildren; his parents; and two brothers.

### Brent Arthur Schmidt II 1961-2008

Brent Schmidt II was born Sept. 19, 1961, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died July 16, 2008.

A 1983 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at

Grace, Tucson, Ariz., and Our Savior, Pomona, Calif.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents and numerous uncles, aunts, and cousins. He is survived by his wife, Karen; one son; one daughter; his parents; one brother; two nephews; and two nieces.

### Pauline Ellen Toensing 1932-2008

Pauline Toensing (nee Press) was born May 9, 1932, in Sioux City, Iowa. She died July 19, 2008, in Syracuse, N.Y.

After receiving certification from Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich., and St. John, St. Paul, Minn.

She is preceded in death by her parents, three brothers, and one grandson. She is survived by her husband, Bert; two daughters; six grandchildren; and one sister.

### Elton H. Huebner 1920-2008

Elton Huebner was born Sept. 22, 1920. He died July 26, 2008.

He served at Mt. Zion, Kenosha, Wis.; Grace, Milwaukee, Wis.; St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.; and WELS Board of Trustees, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Helene. He is survived by one son, five daughters, seven grandchildren, two brothers, and two sisters.

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

Finding out more about the history of WELS

has just become easier. You can access past and present articles from the *WELS Historical Institute Journal* online on the WELS Historical Institute Web site, [www.welshistory.org](http://www.welshistory.org). The Web site also contains interior and exterior photos of Salem Landmark Church in Milwaukee, located near the site of the birthplace of WELS. The synod museum, on the lower level of the church, houses more than 1,000 artifacts and pictures from our synod's past. News updates will let you know what the institute is doing to continue to preserve and present the story of God's grace to WELS members.



## Q&A with Pastor James Mattek, CEO of WLCFS

Recently Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service (WLCFS) broke ground for its new assisted living facility in Hartford, Wis. Forward in Christ caught up with Pastor James Mattek, the chief executive officer of WLCFS, to find out more about WLCFS and the services it provides.

### **Question** – What is Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service?

**Answer** – I like to describe WLCFS as a place where people can find help at unique times in their lives. We help seniors as they transition to a less independent role through our senior living facilities. We help laypeople and called workers who are struggling mentally, emotionally, and spiritually through our Christian Family Counseling program. We also provide a number of educational services to families and schools.

### **Question** – Does WLCFS serve only WELS members in the state of Wisconsin?

**Answer** – We describe our services as Christian, yet hold fast to the truths and beliefs of WELS. At the same time, we know that all people, not just WELS people, need our services, and if our professionals can help them while also providing spiritual guidance, that's an even greater benefit.

Thanks to technology, our Christian Family Counseling therapists are able to work with pastors and teachers throughout the country and around the world in a timely and efficient way to help them with issues that might otherwise not be addressed.

Even though we are physically headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis., we provide services through our Member Assistance Program—mental health counseling by way of secure video and telephone link—that goes beyond the borders of Wisconsin. We currently work with clients in Colorado, Michigan, and Illinois, and we continue to look at ways to expand that program.

### **Question** – How has your ministry changed?

**Answer** – WLCFS has changed a great deal since it began in 1965 as a convalescent home for the elderly. We have grown and expanded to include a retirement community and assisted living facilities. Although the agency discontinued its adoption program in 1994, we still offer educational programs for teens and families. Over the last three years we have worked to create a specialized counseling program with qualified experts in a number of fields. We also have worked to strengthen the connection between our Christian Family Counseling program and the called

workers of our synod so that we are able to respond quickly and appropriately to their needs.

### **Question** – What challenges are ahead for WLCFS?

**Answer** – The area of senior care. With advances in health care, plus new options like assisted living, there has been a delay in or even an elimination of the need for skilled nursing care for many people. Over the past decade, the number of nursing home beds in Wisconsin has decreased by 50%, while assisted living facilities have increased 300%.

When Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center, the skilled nursing facility of WLCFS, was established in 1965, it was created to serve the Lutheran community. Today, just one in four residents at Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center is a WELS/ELS member. Instead, WELS/ELS members are choosing other options for their long-term skilled nursing care needs that are closer to home and still meet their spiritual needs. Assisted living and independent living options are now far more important, and it is what WELS/ELS members are turning to WLCFS to provide.

### **Question** – What do you see as WLCFS' role in the overall ministry of WELS?

**Answer** – I see our agency's role as an important one in the synod. We are working hard to provide called workers with a support system that they otherwise wouldn't have. Our therapists consult on a nearly daily basis with pastors, teachers, missionaries, and staff ministers who call us looking for assistance either for themselves or for congregation members. Through this spiritually strengthening service, we have been able to prevent approximately four called workers a year from leaving the ministry.

In addition to helping called workers, we also recognize our role as a leader in the area of senior care. Within the next ten years we anticipate expanding our assisted living options to not only care for the physical needs of our aging WELS members but for their spiritual needs as well.

Finally, we see our work with teens, through our Peer Leadership Program, as an important step in nurturing and guiding the next generation of synod leaders and laypeople.

Learn more at [www.wlcfs.org](http://www.wlcfs.org).



Pastor James Mattek

## Program reaches out to kids, community

In an economically deprived neighborhood in Milwaukee, Wis., some children are going hungry; others don't have warm clothes; and many have no safe place to go after school. Many of these children come to Youth Haven, a year-round program for kids ages 6-12 run by Risen Savior Church. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, children come for open gym, get a nice warm meal—and most important, hear God's Word.

The program began in fall 2000 when Risen Savior made a concerted effort to reach out to its multicultural community, where almost a quarter of the population is under the age of 14. "We started listening to our neighborhood, and they said they needed a safe place for their kids to go after school," says Kenneth Fisher, pastor at Risen Savior.

In the beginning, however, few children attended. "There was a lot of hesitation [from the parents] to believe that a white church would be concerned about their black children," says Fisher. But the congregation stuck with it, and now more than 45 kids attend Youth Haven three days a week.

"I think what it's done is build up a positive attitude in the neighborhood," says Fisher. "I think that's been the most positive impact—that parents come in contact with the church as a

place that is really doing something and is demonstrating, in a tangible way, Christian love for their children. And that opens up the door for discussion."

And oftentimes those discussions lead to something more. So far, five families have become members of the church; many of the kids in the program have enrolled in Risen Savior school; and more than 100 children—both from the school and from Youth Haven—were baptized in the past two years.

"My children have truly, truly grown tremendously," says Ms. Earnestine Goodlow, coordinator of Youth Haven. "When I first took this position, I tell you I could have walked in there and told some of those children I was Jesus Christ and they wouldn't have known the difference. They knew nothing about God, nothing about their Savior."

But Goodlow says that's all changed. The kids now know the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments and their meanings. She says some of the children are coming to church on Sundays—but she would like to see all of them attend regularly and eventually enroll in the school.

In the meantime, she hopes to expand the Youth Haven program by finding volunteers to help the kids with their homework. Goodlow already collects quilts, hats, gloves,



Ms. Earnestine encourages Jaron, one of the kids who comes to Risen Savior's Youth Haven program each week. There, children can learn about God's Word and have fun in a safe environment. Risen Savior is just one of the churches in the Milwaukee area that is reaching out to economically deprived communities.

and scarves for the Youth Haven kids. She also runs the food pantry at church. "All of the children need to be fed God's Word, but they need bodily food too," says Goodlow. "Youth Haven is such a blessing to the community; it's such a blessing that the church has opened up its doors for that. And we've grown so. My dream is just that the program expands and continues."

## Updated curriculum to help students

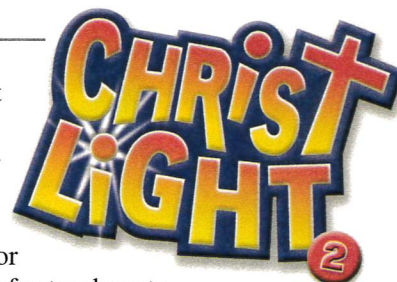
In an effort to appeal to a wider variety of learning styles and more actively involve the students, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, is revising the widely used Christ-Light religion curriculum for Lutheran elementary and Sunday schools. Although a release date has not yet been set, Ray Schumacher, Christ-Light curriculum director, says many people are working diligently on the project, which will include updates to the existing lessons, eight new topical courses, and more than 6,000 visual images throughout.

"Every one of our students lives in a world which, by and large, follows gods other than the true and living God," says Schumacher. "And some students grow up in homes where the truth about Jesus isn't taught. How important it is that in our elementary schools and Sunday schools the

message of Christ is taught faithfully and clearly!"

He says the revised curriculum will offer a more balanced menu of auditory and visual activities for children and will be easier for teachers to use. Other new features include a separate Sunday school curriculum package, a special packet of seasonal lessons, CDs of hymns and other music to enhance memorization, high-resolution teaching pictures, and a DVD with activities for younger children.

"We pray that God will bless these materials as we use them to proclaim his name to a large number of children," says Schumacher.



## New program looking to develop prospective principals —

In an effort to provide more in-depth training to male students who will be taking on leadership roles in WELS schools, the Commission on Parish Schools is working with Martin Luther College to develop an internship program for prospective principals.

While the norm in most educational settings is to hire a teacher with numerous years of experience as principal, WELS oftentimes must call young male college graduates to become school leaders due to the great need for principals. According to Jim Brandt, administrator for the Commission on Parish Schools, about a dozen WELS schools ended the last school year looking for a principal. Some of these positions were filled by Martin Luther College (MLC) graduates.

The new Principal Internship program is being designed to allow graduates with gifts for administration to “learn the ropes” under the guidance of an effective school leader, says Brandt. In the program, MLC male graduates would be assigned as interns in an urban school for two years. “They will take on limited administrative duties,” says Brandt, “working under an experienced principal at his school.” The interns will be assisted in evaluating their experience after one year,

and after a second successful year will most likely be assigned to serve as principals at other schools.

The rewards are twofold. “This will introduce more male teachers to urban experiences as well as train them to be principals,” Brandt says.

Parish Schools and MLC are seeking funding to implement a pilot program. They hope that the first principal interns will be assigned in May 2009.

Brandt sees plenty of opportunity for growth in this program, including using other types of schools besides urban. “With a large percentage of WELS’ active principals in their 50s and 60s, this model as a way to invest the collected wisdom from a generation of faithful school leaders in the future champions of Christian education,” says Brandt.

This program will work in tandem with the existing Principal Apprentice effort, in which male graduates are assigned to a school as an apprentice principal and a local experienced principal from another congregation mentors the graduate and helps the congregation hand over principal duties over a two-year period. Brandt hopes that the new Principal Internship program will eventually make the Principal Apprentice program obsolete.

Finding a way to strengthen our school leaders—who are, as Brandt says, the face of our schools—is important for the future of WELS Lutheran elementary schools, which are in the 17th straight year of enrollment decline.

“We need to strengthen our Lutheran elementary schools. They are important ministries of our congregations, avenues of outreach to our communities, and hold the great majority of future called workers of our church body,” says Brandt. “If we don’t provide attention to and develop strong leaders for our schools, what can we expect to happen with future enrollment? It’s a critical component in the overall mission of our church.”

## ACT PROGRAM

The Commission on Parish Schools is not only trying to provide leadership training to recent graduates but to experienced teachers as well.

Through the Administrative Candidate Training (ACT) program, experienced male teachers who have shown gifts for positions of greater leadership are given an opportunity to hone their skills through leadership training events and projects.

Experienced WELS principals serve as mentors in the yearlong program.

“When I went through the ACT program, it just filled in so many gaps that were missing and instilled more confidence in myself in my leadership abilities,” says James Brohn, a participant in the 2008 ACT program and new principal at Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.

Brohn also appreciated the fellowship with the other participants, the mentors, and the presenters. “[It was good] to bounce questions, ideas, problems, whatever off each other,” he says.

This yearlong program has already been conducted twice—once in 2005 and once in 2008—through grants from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Eighteen teachers have participated in the program so far; nine have since accepted calls to positions of greater leadership.



Participants of the 2008 Administrative Candidate Training program attended the National School Leadership Conference in June.

## Equipping Latinos for service

Arturo Aguilar wasn't always a member at Pan de Vida, Santa Ana, Calif. Born in Mexico and raised "100 percent Catholic," he says he was hesitant to accept an invitation to Pan de Vida when Pastors Michael Foley and Christopher Schroeder knocked on his door in 2002. But Aguilar did go. He was so impressed with the Lutheran service that he soon became a member. Now he wants to share God's Word with Latinos in Santa Ana.

To better prepare for outreach, he—and other Latinos throughout the country—are receiving training through WELS' Cristo Palabra de Vida (Christ Word of Life) Hispanic education program. Designed to raise up leaders from the Latino community, this program provides different levels of theological training for lay workers, preseminary, and seminary students. Most lay worker and preseminary training is done locally at the student's home church and supplemented by regional and national training events. At the seminary level, through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute, students have the choice of studying remotely or completing their training on campus.

So far, three men have graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, another is studying to be a pastor, and several are at the preseminary level. In addition, 25 men and women across the country have taken introductory courses in a program that trains lay workers to become certified assistants in their home congregations.

Pablo and Claudia Torres, members at St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis., are two of those people. Originally from Guatemala, they came into contact with Pastor Tim Flunker, Hispanic outreach director, shortly after moving to the United States. They began taking English as a Second Language classes with him in 2005 and soon enrolled their children in St. Paul school and became members of the church.

For a year now they have been

working through the congregation assistant program with Flunker as well as helping with Spanish Bible studies and St. Paul's English as a Second Language program. "I like to know and comprehend the Bible because it's so interesting for me," says Pablo. "We have a small group in our community, and I start to teach the Bible to them because it's important for the salvation of the soul. And when I talk with my wife, we are talking about the purpose of the life. God brought us here, and I don't know [why] he want me but he started us to these classes—this is the purpose that God give us."



Fifteen men and women from across the country attended a Cristo Palabra de Vida national theological training seminar at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in June. Many are studying to be congregational assistants in their churches.

The same is true of Rubén Gaviria, originally from Colombia. He says it was God's will that he ended up at Northdale, Tampa, Fla. The congregation wants to begin outreach to the largely Hispanic community, and Gaviria and his wife are the only ones in the congregation that can speak Spanish.

Gaviria has been taking classes to prepare for outreach. "We are plan-

ning to start maybe two lines: one is English as a Second Language, and for the other side we are going to offer a Bible class," he says. "So this is a learning thing for everybody—for the community and our church. For me, I need to be prepared. So if they are going to offer more classes, if the will of God I will be there."

Prof. Mark Goeglein, director of the Cristo Palabra de Vida Hispanic education program, hopes that more people like Aguilar, Gaviria, and the Torreses will get involved. "The future of our synod's ministry to Hispanics is going to be greatly enhanced by raising up leaders and people who can do mini-

stry from that culture," he says. "It's my hope that many of the pastors across the synod who find themselves asking, 'How am I going to reach the Latinos that are living and moving into my community?' can look to bilingual Latinos in their congregations who are anxious to share the gospel with their people and can partner with them in ministry."

For more information, e-mail [crisopalabradevida@sab.wels.net](mailto:crisopalabradevida@sab.wels.net).

## WELS news briefs

### BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION 414-256-3237; bme@sab.wels.net

Construction has started on the **new chapel at Martin Luther College** (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. Due to increases in the cost of steel and oil, the final construction bids came in at about \$800,000 over the \$7.5 million previously approved by the Synodical Council. MLC plans to use \$300,000 in contingency funds as well as \$500,000 of its reserve funds to cover the additional cost. The use of these funds has been approved by the Synodical Council. The newly named Chapel of the Christ is still on target to be completed by fall 2009.

### WELS INVESTMENT FUNDS 877-888-8953; welsfunds@sab.wels.net

**Mr. Mark Arnold** became the new director of WELS Investment Funds, Inc.—an organization that provides professionally managed investment portfolios for WELS congregations and affiliated agencies—in August. Arnold replaced Mr. Jim Holm, who took a new position in April as executive director of WELS Foundation. Arnold will be working with congregations to see how WELS Investment Funds can best meet their financial needs. Arnold has been associated with investments and insurance since 1988 and has a background in finance and office administration. For more information, visit [www.welsfunds.net](http://www.welsfunds.net).

### COMMISSION ON WORSHIP 414-256-3265; worship@sab.wels.net

More than 1,000 people—a record number—attended

the **National Conference of Worship, Music & the Arts**, July 28-31 at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. This year's conference featured more than 60 workshops on a variety of topics, exhibits, corporate worship opportunities, and concerts—including a performance by the conference's largest high school honor choir of almost 130 WELS students nationwide. In addition, the new *Christian Worship: Supplement* was introduced.



The Commission on Worship sent *Children Making Music*, a DVD encouraging children, parents, and congregations to make music-making a part of their lives, to every WELS congregation and school in August. The DVD consists of interviews with children, musicians, parents, and congregation leaders about the importance of music—for their lives and for spreading the gospel. The project, funded through the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation, was developed by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, with input from WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It was developed, in part, to cultivate future musicians for the church. For more resources, go to [www.wels.net/jump/childrenmusic](http://www.wels.net/jump/childrenmusic).

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



### BOARD FOR WORLD MISSIONS; 414-256-3233; dan.koelpin@sab.wels.net

Approximately 45 missionaries, Board for World Mission members, administrators, and others attended the World Mission Conference at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, July 28-Aug. 1. Missionaries from 12 foreign mission fields attended, many of them in the United States on furlough. The World Mission Conference is held once every four years.

"[This conference] offers a much needed opportunity for selected members of the world mission team to gather, compare notes, be uplifted through worship and study in the Word, and gain insights on specific issues that better enables them to carry out their work," says Dan Koelpin, administrator of WELS World Missions.



## District news

### Arizona-California

**King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.**, hosted the concert band of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, on May 17. With more than 150 people in attendance, King of Kings members used this opportunity to introduce themselves to the neighboring community. "Many members and neighbors enjoyed a wonderful concert that evening!" says Kristen Buege, a member at King of Kings.

### Michigan



Children enjoying vacation Bible school at Apostles Lutheran Lapeer Mission in July. Twelve children attended and 17 adults helped with the event—a success for the small congregation, which held its first worship service last March. "We have found opportunity to reach out to a community that has never been served by a WELS church and is in need of the gospel," says Pastor Timothy Spiegelberg.

## In the news

### Retired pastor Kirby Spevacek and his daughter Roxanne,

members at Shepherd of the Valley, Surprise, Ariz., were interviewed as part of their local TV news station's July 7 story on traumatic brain injury. Roxanne suffered brain trauma when her family was in a car accident that killed her mother and seriously injured her father more than a year ago. "God has a plan for me in my life," Roxy said during the interview. "He could have let me die. I was this close to dying. I mean I



### Western Wisconsin

Members of Peace, Loves Park, Ill., broke ground for their new church building and preschool on July 13. "After developing goals for the future of the congregation's ministry, it was determined that a new building and relocation of the church were necessary if the goals were to be met and the congregation's ministry expanded," says Tim Gumm, pastor at Peace.

### Pacific Northwest

Members of **Grace, Kenai, Alaska**, handed out approximately 500 invitations to the church's vacation Bible school during Kenai's July 4 parade. Christin Leckwee, member at Grace, says many of the congregation's "little evangelists" also helped out. "The kids are always very willing and excited to serve Jesus in this way," she says, "and many people come [to vacation Bible school] because of the invite."

### Happy anniversary!

**SEW—Lynn Kozlowski**, an organist at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., celebrated 50 years of musical service on Sept. 7.

**WW—Peace, Janesville, Wis.**, is celebrating 50 years throughout 2008.

**AZ-CA—Trinity, Ridgecrest, Calif.**, celebrated 25 years on July 13.

District reporters for this month are: CA—Hermann John; MI—John Eich; PNW—David Birsching; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

was really close. He kept me here and he obviously has a plan for me." Her sister, Colleen Blakely, and Colleen's husband Paul, members at Grace, Glendale, Ariz., were also interviewed.

**Emily Rose Neeb**, student at Pilgrim Lutheran School, Mesa, Ariz., was featured in the May 21 edition of Mesa's newspaper, *The Tribune*. Neeb was recognized for winning the national handwriting championship in May, beating out a record 177,000 participants nationwide. She was judged on the size, slant, shape, and spacing of her letters. She took home \$1,500 in

prizes, including a computer system for her class. Her teacher also gets a free trip to Washington D.C.

The Associated Press ran a July 17 story on **Steve Boettcher**, member at Calvary, Mequon, Wis., when his TV production company, Boettcher/Trinklein Television, received an Emmy nomination for its PBS series, *Pioneers of Television*. The series ran in January and featured Boettcher and Trinklein's interviews with more than 100 celebrities, including Merv Griffin before he died.

## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

## Pastors

Ash, Ronald V., to retirement  
 Bitter, Robert A., to retirement  
 Dobberstein, Verlyn J., to retirement  
 Kuske, Matthew D., to St. Paul/St. Luke, Lomira, Wis.  
 Mueller, Wayne D., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.  
 Rockhoff, Roger W., to Zion, Gainesville, Fla.  
 Schulz, Marcus L., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.  
 Soukup, Stephen P., to Grace, Grand Anse, Grenada  
 Warmuth, John E., to Immanuel/St. John, Neillsville, Wis.  
 Witte, David A., to Bethlehem, Oshkosh, Wis.

## Teachers

Bakken, Debra S., to St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.  
 Behnken, Carrie E., to Good Shepherd's, West Allis, Wis.  
 Bock, Suzanne E., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.  
 Bremer, Katharine R., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
 Cain, Amy M., to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.  
 Datka, James L., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Denney, Katie J., to Our Saviour, Lake Havasu, Ariz.  
 Eckert, Ruth M., to Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich.  
 Edenhauer, Mary E., to St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis.  
 Frelitz, Amber M., to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.  
 Fritze, Paul J., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.  
 Grunze, Kristie K., to St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.  
 Hayes, Aubrey L., to Trinity-St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.  
 Hochmuth, Mary E., to Westside Christian School, Middleton, Wis.  
 Hopfensperger, Andrea, to Little Lambs of Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.  
 Huff, Megan, to Hope Middle School, Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Johnson, Daniel W., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.  
 LaRocque, Michele L., to Immanuel, North Richland Hills, Tex.  
 Markgraf, Dale E., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.  
 Matthies, Lygia L., to Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.  
 Metzger, John L., to retirement  
 Obermiller, Greg T., to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.  
 Ollendorf, Nancy M., to St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.  
 Pagels, Carol J., to retirement  
 Polack, Duane U., to retirement  
 Powers, Danielle D., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

Raddatz, Kathrine E., to St. Paul, North Fond du Lac, Wis.  
 Roth, Michelle L., to St. Peter's, Plymouth, Mich.  
 Sadler, Emily J., to Bethel Little Lamb Preschool, Galesville, Wis.  
 Schoenherr, Carol A., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.  
 Sebald, John A., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.  
 Uttech, Peggy A., to Trinity-St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.  
 Wilde, Elizabeth L., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.  
 Winterstein, Wendy D., to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.  
 Zabel, Susan K., to Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.  
 Zastrow, Donovan M., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.

## COLLOQUY NOTICES

Pastor Mark Story, formerly a pastor in the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches of Ontario, Canada, and Pastor Alain Chapdelaine, previously a pastor associated with the Association of Free Lutheran Churches in Quebec, Canada, have each requested a colloquy for the purpose of serving in the WELS pastoral ministry. Correspondence related to these requests should be addressed to Pastor Joel Petermann, President, North Atlantic District-WELS, 14 Cross St, Merrimack, NH 03054; 603-880-8574; nadpwels@sab.wels.net.

## ANNIVERSARIES

Kendall, Wis.—St. John (100). Oct. 5. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow; special service, 1:30 P.M. RSVP requested. Don Yahnke, 608-463-7536; orot2@yahoo.com.  
 Marinette, Wis.—Trinity (125). Oct. 5. Worship, 9 A.M.; German meal to follow. 715-732-9868.  
 Jenera, Ohio—Trinity (125). Oct. 12. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; fellowship to follow. Nov. 9. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; meal and presentation to follow. Arleen Bolwerk, 419-420-5504.  
 Janesville, Wis.—Peace (50). Oct. 12. Worship, 9 A.M.; fellowship to follow. Nov. 9. Anniversary commemoration, 9 A.M.; banquet at Pontiac Convention Center, Janesville, Wis.; 1 p.m. RSVP by Nov. 1. Doug Baron, 608-757-0176; Roger Streich, 608-752-5684; rwlehmann@sbcglobal.net.  
 La Crosse, Wis.—Mount Calvary-Grace school (50). Oct. 12. Worship, 11 A.M. Pictures and memories requested ASAP. 608-784-8223, principal@mcglutheran.org or excare@mcglutheran.org.  
 Burlington Wis.—St. John (150). Oct. 26. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; coffee fellowship between services. 262-763-8229; office@stjohnsburlington.org.  
 Green Bay, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Nov. 2. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; luncheon to follow. RSVP requested. Carla Hoffmann, 920-435-8468; stpaul@new.rr.com.

Louisville, Ky.—Hope (35). Nov. 2. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; potluck to follow. RSVP requested by Oct. 19. 502-423-1211; pastor.lange@insightbb.com. Web site, www.hope.louisville.net.

## COMING EVENTS

Friends of the Seminary Day—Oct. 4. Registration, 8 A.M.; opening service, 9 A.M.; light lunch, noon; campus tours following. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Lori Guse, 262-242-8104; gusel@wls.wels.net.

Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 8. Registration, 9 A.M.; meeting, 9:30 A.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. 507-354-8221. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu.

WELS Historical Institute annual meeting—Oct. 26; 3 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Chapel, Mequon, Wis. Mark Braun, 414-443-8849.

Women's fall retreat—Nov. 1; 8:30 A.M.—3 P.M. Trinity, Minocqua, Wis. Theme: "I do give a care. How can I help you carry your burden?" 715-356-2255; ronald186@centurytel.net

Metro-Milwaukee area Reformation service—Nov. 2. 4 P.M.; meal and ministry presentations to follow. Wisconsin Lutheran High School auditorium, Milwaukee, Wis. Sponsored by Greater Milwaukee Area Chapter of WELS Kingdom Workers. 414-771-6848.

A Dance with the Lord Pastors' Wives' Renewal—Nov. 7–8. Burnsville, Minn. Valerie Johnson, 612-267-3017; coordinator@truenorthwels.org. Web site, www.choicesforyou.org/pwrenewal.

Women's quilting weekend—Nov. 7–9. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. 920-787-3202; office@campphillip.com. Web site, www.campphillip.com.

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries annual meeting and conference—Nov. 8; 8 A.M.—4:30 P.M. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Theme: "Taking the gospel to invisible people." 414-259-8122; wlim@wlim.net. Web site, www.wlim.net/news.

Christian Life Resources national convention—Nov. 15. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Web site, www.CLRevents.com.

Lakeshore Lutheran Choral Christmas concerts—

- Dec. 6, 7:30 P.M., at Calvary, Sheboygan, Wis.
- Dec. 7, 4:30 P.M., at Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.
- Christian Woman Today Retreat—March 27–29, 2009. Olympia Spa & Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Theme: "Love each other as I have loved you." Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.

## NAMES WANTED

Beaumont/Banning, Calif. area—Rick Johnson, 951-734-0923.

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](http://www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard) and a calendar at [www.wels.net/jump/calendar](http://www.wels.net/jump/calendar).

## Picture this

POTLUCK



International children from Honduras, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, China, and the United States sang at worship following a week of International vacation Bible school at Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center, Madison, Wis. Thirty-two children and eighteen adults attended the annual event, under the theme *Soaring high*. The Chapel's international ministry ministers to about 500 international people from 27 countries.

Submitted by Carol Trapp

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.

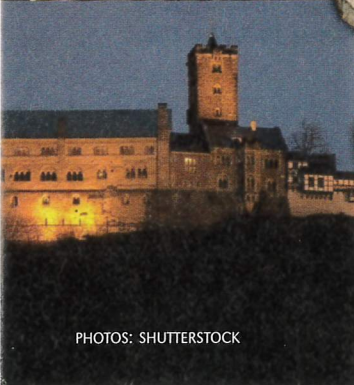
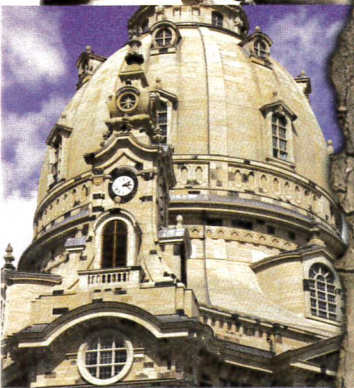
# PLACES OF Martin Luther

How well do you know your Martin Luther history?  
Match the places with the events and see how you do.

Do you know where . . .

- Luther was born and died?
- Luther spent almost a year in hiding and worked on translating the New Testament into German?
- Luther served as a professor and where the 95 Theses were hung?
- Luther attended the university and later the monastery?
- Luther was commanded to retract his books and pamphlets in 1521?
- Luther grew up?
- Luther began attending the parish school of St. George at age 15?
- A summary of the Lutheran faith authored by Phillip Melancthon was presented to Charles V in 1530?

- |               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| A. Wittenberg | E. Erfurt          |
| B. Worms      | F. Wartburg Castle |
| C. Eisleben   | G. Augsburg        |
| D. Mansfeld   | H. Eisenach        |



# Voices of youth

David D. Sellnow



*This imagined dialogue about engaging youth in the church's work includes active and inactive young adults of St. Barnabas Lutheran Church. The comments are based on the 2005 report, "Why Young People Leave WELS."*

**Gina (active teen member):** Pastor, are we planning anything new in worship? What we're doing is fine, but some of us would like a little more variety.

**Mrs. Bonita (Sunday school teacher), with a smile:** Some of us not-so-young people like variety too!

**Rev. James (St. Barnabas' pastor):** We certainly can talk about new ideas. First, though, let me hear your impressions about how worship has been in our church.

**Jacki (inactive young adult):** As a kid, my parents kept shushing me and telling me to sit still . . . but if I didn't move I was going to fall asleep! The whole atmosphere seemed stuffy and lifeless.

**Steven (college student, attends occasionally):** I still struggle to get motivated to come to church. So much of the music moves slower than a funeral dirge, and I can't sing half of it.

**Nate (inactive teen):** Nothing ever seems to change in our services; they're always the same.

**Tim (active teen):** But is change really what we want in a church? I appreciate that our worship traditions are just that—traditional and stable. Worship shouldn't merely cater to current opinions or tastes.

**Mrs. Schnitt (ladies' association president):** Like at my daughter's church—they sing along to recorded soundtracks. I think it cheapens worship. Let worship resemble a choir of angels, not a karaoke bar.

**Mr. Newsome (council member):** Personally I like traditional services. But we need to reach people with all sorts of tastes. Can we blend the best of the old with the best of the new?

**Abby (college student, attends when home on weekends):** Maybe we could have some really upbeat choir numbers like in the movie *Sister Act*!

**Nate:** Or a Christian rock band! Did God say that church music has to be played on a pipe organ?

**Rev. James:** Actually, Psalm 150 mentions all kinds of instruments, from trumpets and flutes to tambourines and cymbals.

**Mr. Newsome:** The truth and beauty of the songs matter more than which instruments are used to play them.

**Rev. James:** So, what makes a song true and beautiful?

**Mrs. Schnitt:** The lyrics need to be consistent with Scripture. That's where we find truth.

**Abby:** Jesus is truth and life! Everything in church needs to stay centered on Jesus.

**Tim:** And what's cute or catchy isn't necessarily beautiful. Beauty is deep and enduring. It's about worshiping God, not whether we can dance to it.

**Riley (recently confirmed youth):** The whole service needs to connect us to God—not only the music but sermons too.

**Mr. Newsome:** Our opinions differ about styles, but substance is what matters most. Services need to be edifying for the whole congregation.

**Gina:** Edifying means faith-building, right? That would mean pointing us to Christ, because faith comes from the gospel of Christ.

**Rev. James:** We've made a good beginning here. I'd welcome a committee of various church members to help me plan worship. Any volunteers?

*The conversation is just beginning. Come back and listen to more conversations from St. Barnabas in future issues of Forward in Christ. Meanwhile, start your own conversations in your congregation! See resources at [www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy](http://www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy).*

*David Sellnow, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm.*

## we all have a voice in worship

Next month: **faith and the universal church**

# Involving teens IN WORSHIP

Glorifying God in worship is an opportunity for all people, no matter what their age.

Julie K. Wietzke

*From a young age, Jim Marose can remember wanting to play for church.* “When I was in the range of [age] five to eight, I used to watch our trumpets play and I always thought to myself, ‘That would be so cool if I could do that,’ ” says Marose, a sophomore at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, and member at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.

## Important for all ages

Now he has that opportunity. For more than three years, he has been part of a multigenerational brass group—consisting of musicians from teens to senior citizens.

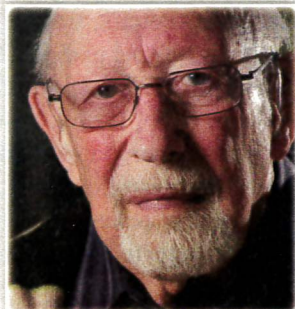
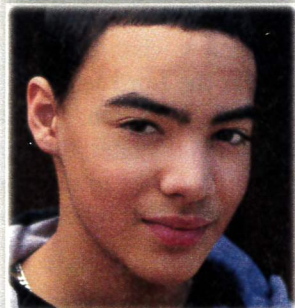
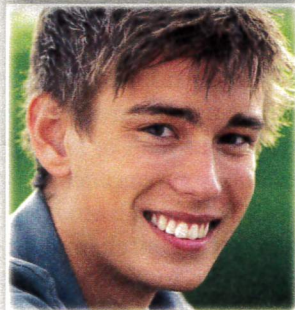
Being one of the youngest in the group is no problem for Marose. “At times when I’m having trouble with a part, it is nice to have someone who has been playing longer than I have jump in and help me play my part so I know exactly how it should sound,” he says.

He also feels that this experience will be beneficial in the long run: “Hopefully we all will be involved in church services at some point in time, so I think it’s good to get your experience in while you’re young so that you are more confident when you are older.”

He even hopes to be an inspiration for those younger than him: “I think that having teens involved in services will open the eyes of younger children so that hopefully they will have the same thoughts that I had.”

Jackie Gerlach, music coordinator at Christ the Lord, didn’t plan to include people of all ages in that brass group. Instead she went looking to fill a need and didn’t worry about an age requirement.

“I don’t think of the teens as a separate group that I need to incorporate,” says Gerlach. “I think of the call I have as music coordinator and of the members who have musical gifts that they can and want to use to serve the church, edify worship, and to express their love for their Savior.



The members of Christ the Lord with those gifts happen to be of all different ages.”

## Important for teenagers

Yet Gerlach sees the importance of involving teens: “It’s beneficial because it’s giving them examples of how to serve and helping them to feel useful within the church.”

According to Luann Kolander, director of a young adult choir at Christ the Lord, providing these types of musical opportunities for teens also keeps them involved. “This gives them a chance to continue using their musical gifts rather than stopping once they’re not in grade school,” she says.

Working with teens has its challenges, says Kolander, including choosing the right music and finding time to practice. But the rewards are far reaching. “It’s amazing the spiritual enrichment they get in rehearsing these hymns and anthems for worship,” she says. “The music is all scripturally based and can drive home a spiritual message in the unique way that music does. It’s a neat way for them to be taking in the Word of God but also express it in worship.”

She stressed how this involvement helps with leadership training, shows teens the time and effort it takes to put together a worship service, and develops their God-given gifts.

“Many of them are blessed with talents in music,” says Kolander, “so it’s fun to give them the opportunity to use it.”

She continues, “We need them. They are members of the church family and can contribute to it.”

Marose agrees. “I have learned . . . that we are all united for the same purpose. The purpose is for us to do all we can to glorify God.”

*Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.*

*This is the second article in a five-part series on keeping youth involved in the church.*

*Learn more about incorporating youth in worship at [www.wels.net/jump/childrenmusic](http://www.wels.net/jump/childrenmusic).*

How one church is serving the people in their congregation—and community—who are suffering from the pain of divorce.

Linda R. Buxa

# Broken hearts,

**B**ob Johnson did not plan to get divorced. But then it happened.

Though it was more than 20 years ago, he remembers the pain. “I felt isolated, alone, rejected,” he explains. “You get isolated by friends, your ally becomes your adversary, your in-laws stay with their side of the family. You feel like a huge failure—whether the divorce is your fault or not.”

And, Johnson concedes, he didn’t cope well with his divorce. He wasn’t a member of a church, and he didn’t know where to turn, so he began volunteering for a 24-hour crisis phone line. He learned how to communicate better, but he admits, “I felt like there was a hole in the middle of me, and I didn’t know why. I stuffed it with the world, but that did not satisfy my need.”

Then he began dating his future wife—also a divorcée—who was a member at St. Peter’s, Sturgeon Bay, Wis. She took him to church. “The first time we sang hymns and I listened to a sermon, I knew what that need was. I knew it was the Lord Jesus Christ.”

He joined the church; got married; and now, 18 years later, the church is using his experience to care for others who have been hurt by divorce.

## Serving the congregation

Eight years ago, Larry Zessin, pastor at St. Peter’s, wanted to reach out with the gospel to those hurting from divorce. “He approached me and said, ‘Bob, I think you’d be the perfect person to lead this.’ That’s because I can say that I know the hopelessness, the pain. I’ve been there,” says Johnson.

Using a 13-week video series called DivorceCare, Johnson helps participants tackle tough issues—anger, frustration, guilt, finances, children, dating, intimacy, and reconciliation. “Where else do you go with these topics?” he asks. “These are not easily accessible in polite conversation but are the very issues every person goes through—whether you have faith or not.”

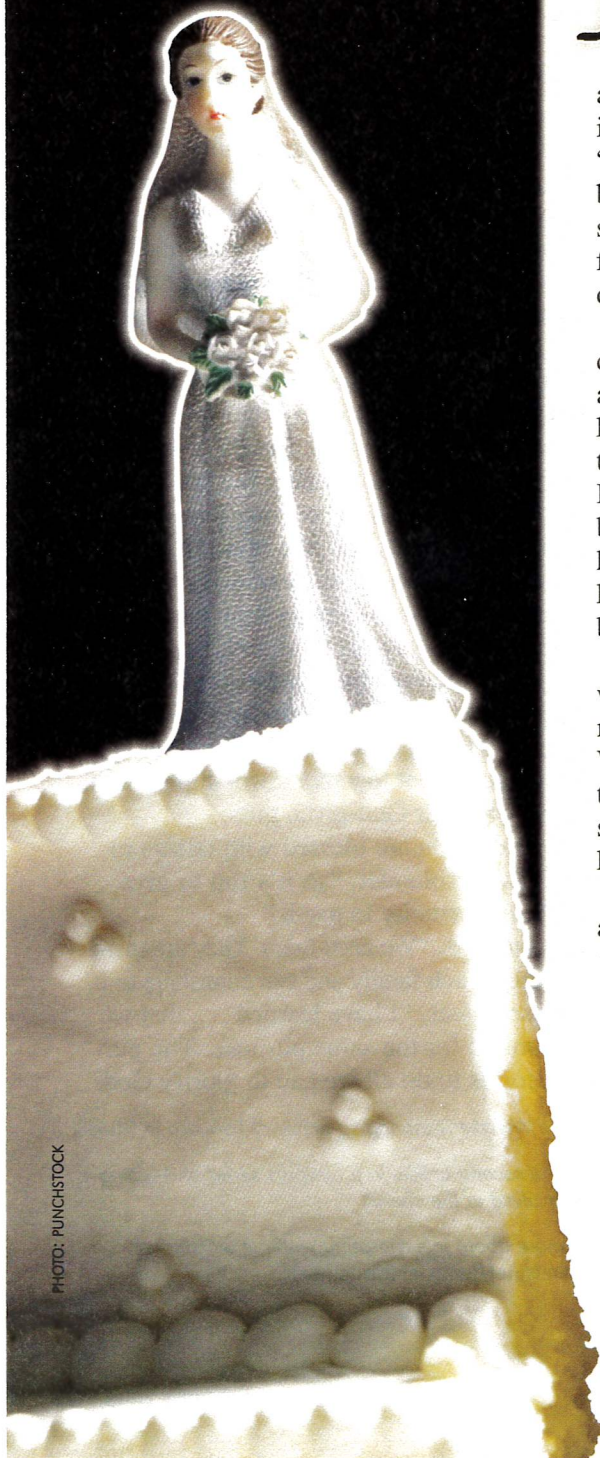
By covering these issues, Johnson not only helps others understand their past, but also prepares them for their future. “If we do not help them heal and grow through the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ, they go back into relationships carrying the same baggage and making the same dumb mistakes, and then they get divorced again.”

While the focus is on reconnecting people to their Savior, Johnson doesn’t gloss over the law. “We always cover what the Owner’s Manual [God’s Word] says. God hates divorce. God did not want them to get divorced. But we always tell them, ‘Here’s what God has done for you.’”

And it’s at moments like this when people need the gospel most. “We can’t ignore divorced people,” says Johnson. “We can’t let them feel ostracized as though the church doesn’t know what to do with them. It hurts that they may feel abandoned. Let’s bring them back into the fold and turn them back into active members.”

## Serving the community

Johnson doesn’t only reconnect members to their Savior; he reaches out to the community as well. Of those who attend DivorceCare, 90 percent are not members. They are Methodists,



# Broken homes

Presbyterians, Catholics, Lutherans, and atheists who have no other place to go.

"We talk about God's Word and forgiveness, which gives us an opportunity to offer them a home church," says Johnson. "But our ministry is not a way to take other people from their church; it's a way to take them back to the Lord."

That's exactly what happens to many people like Sarah, who cried through the entire first session. After she cried through the second and third session too, Johnson had to ask, "What is so deeply troubling that makes you cry all of the time?"

She said that a pastor—"Fortunately not a WELS pastor," he says—told her that because she had gotten a divorce, she was doomed to spend eternity in hell. "I was a little speechless," says Johnson, "but as he so often does, the Lord reminded me of the truths of his Word."

So he asked her, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross and rose again for the sins of the world?"

"Yes!" she answered.

"Well, the world includes you," he reassured her. "Let's take this to the foot of the cross and pray to the Father for forgiveness."

They did. She never cried through another meeting.

This kind of reconciliation is what makes the members recommend St. Peter's to their friends who are getting divorced. "It puts St. Peter's in a very good light because we are there," says Johnson. "It doesn't look like we're pro-divorce; it looks like we have a ministry to the hurting."

## How you can serve

"As we near the end times there will be more broken families. We need

to be ministering to them," says Johnson. He admits he doesn't have all the answers, but he knows where to find the answers. "The church is an influence in making a difference in people's lives because we have an infinite power source."

He also encourages individuals to reach out—for the long haul. "We do a very good job through the immediate need, but what happens after?" he asks. "We need not let them hurt in private but allow the Lord to shine through us."

While he would like to see more congregations with this kind of ministry, his real goal is to get rid of the need for it. "We need to train our young people well enough before they get married. If we do a better job, we can help people be better spouses," he says. "I am proof that you can be in a new relationship that works because God is in the center of it."

Though there may not be many congregations with a specific ministry to people hurting from divorce, St. Peter's ministry isn't all that unusual. After all, every congregation exists to lead as many sinners as possible back to Christ so that as many saints as possible can celebrate the eternal wedding feast.

*For more information, contact Bob Johnson at St. Peter's, 108 W Maple St, Sturgeon Bay WI 54235; [www.stpeterslutheran.net](http://www.stpeterslutheran.net); 920-743-4431.*

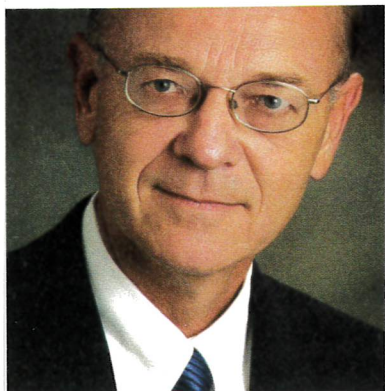
*Linda Buxa is a member at St. Mark's, Citrus Heights, California.*

How can you and your congregation reach out to people affected by divorce? Try holding a brainstorming session to explore ideas. Here are starters for the discussion:

- Through personal ministration on the part of the pastor.
- Through the school and teachers.
- Through worship.
- Through Bible classes.
- Through congregation members.
- Through congregational programs.

*Taken from Pastor David Valleskey's essay "Dealing with Divorce in the Parish." For an in-depth study, go to [www.wlsessays.net/files/ValleskeyDealing.pdf](http://www.wlsessays.net/files/ValleskeyDealing.pdf).*





Mark Schweden

## A synod that is joyful and optimistic

What changed Martin Luther from a man filled with gloom and despair to a man filled with unceasing joy? This monk had been a sad man who was terrified of death, a desperate man who retreated to a monastery to escape his feelings of guilt, a hopeless man who saw Jesus as an angry judge ready to exact eternal punishment. What changed him?

What changed Luther was nothing less than the power of the gospel. The Holy Spirit led Martin Luther to discover in the pages of Scripture one simple yet profound truth that he had failed to find in a lifetime of searching elsewhere. The righteousness before God that he had worked so hard to achieve by his own effort was not something that could be gained by trying or doing. Righteousness before God, the Scriptures assured him, was something that comes only as a free gift from God's grace as a result of the saving work of Jesus Christ, through simple faith and trust worked by the Holy Spirit.

For the first time in his life, Martin Luther knew the joy of sins forgiven, death defeated, and eternal life secured. He knew the kind of joy that no trouble, no threat, and no enemy could ever take from him. He learned the joy that saw him through the deaths of loved ones, the threats to his own life, and the treachery of trusted friends. And once he had learned true joy in Christ, he could look forward to the future with unshakable hope and optimism rooted in the power and promises of God.

By God's grace, we are heirs of the Lutheran Reformation. This means that we have the very same reasons as Luther did to be people filled with joy for today and optimism for the future.

Being joyful does not mean always being happy. We know from experience that life in a sinful world will bring days of sorrow and frustration. Our plans fail. Our bodies get sick. Our loved ones die. But underneath the sadness and sorrow that we experience is a joy that never fades. Even when happiness comes and goes, our joy in Christ, in his salvation, in his resurrection, and in his promises, never fades.

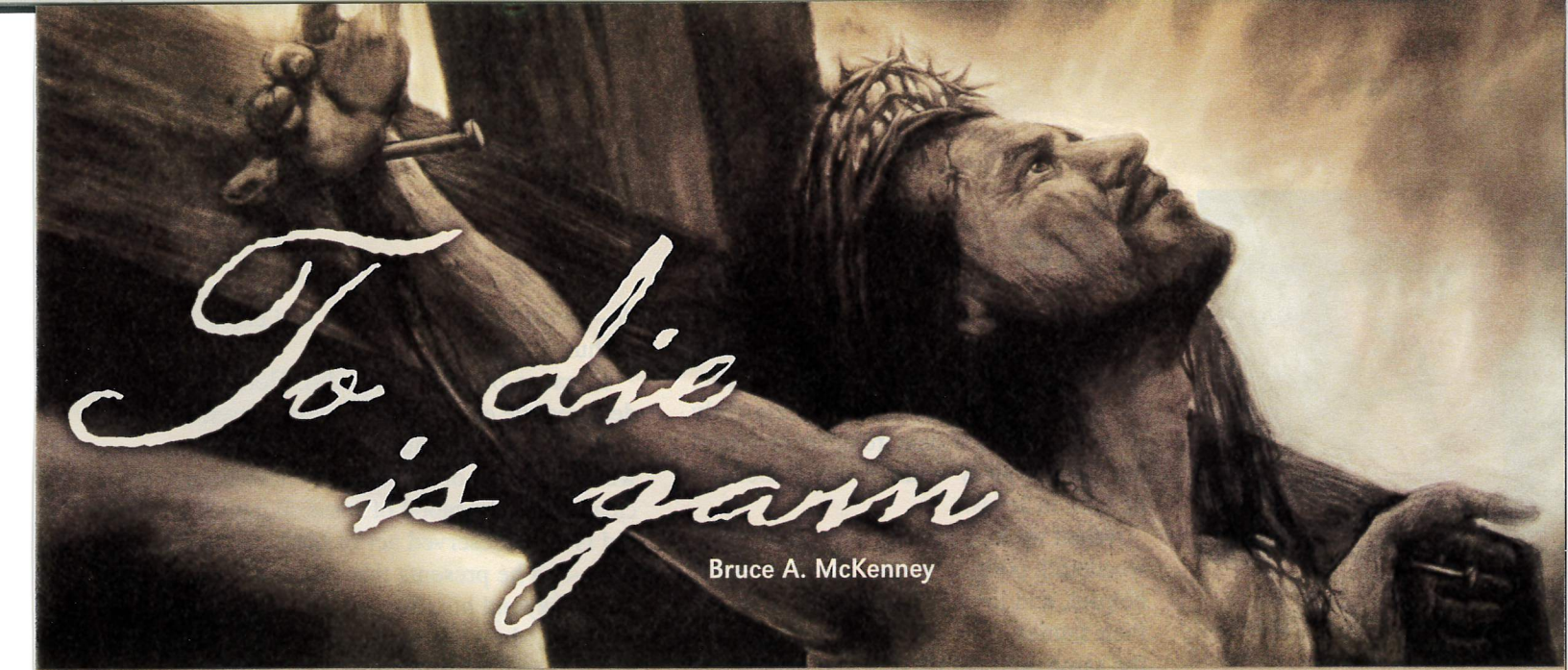
With that Christian joy comes Christian optimism. If today we have the joy of knowing that we are God's people in Christ, then we also can look ahead to tomorrow with a confident hope that our lives, our times, and our future—and that of our synod—lies completely in the hands of the same gracious God who has adopted us as his children.

This Christian optimism is not a head-in-the-sand attitude that fails to recognize difficulties and challenges. Instead it enables us to look honestly and realistically at the difficulties ahead. Then we trust that our lives and our futures are in the hands of a God who has promised us that all things do work together for the good of those who love him. With that kind of optimism, we work and we plan and we strive. But we confidently leave the results to God and his grace.

We live today in the unshakable joy of what God has done for us in Christ, and we look ahead to tomorrow with the kind of hope and optimism that rests on the promises of our gracious God. That's true for us as individuals. And it's true for our synod.

*Next: We are a synod that takes a stand on biblical values.*





# To die is gain

Bruce A. McKenney

Do you know what an “out-of-the-body” or “near-death” experience is? People who claim to have experienced this phenomenon describe themselves either floating above the room watching doctors work on their bodies or seeing a bright light shining at the end of what seemed like a long hall.

The question that comes to mind is: Can people really die and come back to tell about it? We can’t answer that for sure, but it does raise another question: What will the Christian see in death?

## The Lord will be with us

We certainly wouldn’t call it an out-of-body experience, but the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the young pastor Timothy when the hour of death was near for him. In that letter, Paul describes some of the things he was experiencing. What he writes helps us understand what every Christian will see in the hour of death. Paul wrote, “I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. . . . But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. . . . The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:6-8; 16-18).

Paul wrote these words while in prison facing death. Many of his friends and coworkers had deserted him. But he was not alone. The Lord was with him. That’s exactly

what every Christian will experience in the hour of death too—the Lord’s abiding presence. So when death comes, don’t be afraid of being alone. Don’t be upset if you were not at a loved one’s side when he or she died. For no Christian will ever die alone. The Lord will be there.

## We can tell others about Jesus

Facing his own death Paul also saw an opportunity to share God’s Word. Apparently, while on trial, Paul had opportunity to give witness to the good news about Jesus being the only way to heaven. When he realized his time was short, he used his final moments to write this beautiful letter to Timothy and share the gospel truth.

Death is never an easy subject, especially when it touches family. But the hour of death does afford an opportunity to share God’s Word just as Paul did. So when you face death, look upon it as a time to share your faith with loved ones, doctors, nurses, visitors, and yes, even in your last will and testament.

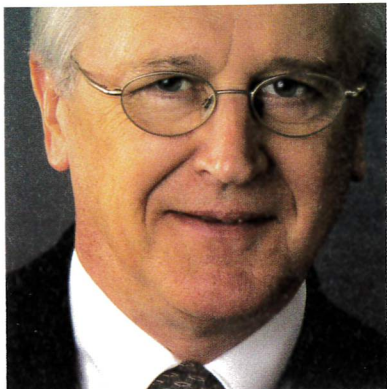
To the human eye, death looks like the end—the end of life on earth, the end of a marriage, the end of a career, the end of it all. But that’s not the way Paul saw death. He knew better. Through Christ he saw death as the beginning of a better life in heaven where Christ would give him the crown of everlasting righteousness. For all Christians this is what they see in death too!

So what will the Christian see in death? Exactly what Paul saw: the Lord’s presence, an opportunity to share the truth about Jesus, and the goal of faith—the crown of righteousness.

*Contributing editor Bruce McKenney is pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.*

This is the third article in a ten-part series on death and dying.

*What will Christians see in death?* Christians will see the Lord’s presence, an opportunity to share the truth about Jesus, and the crown of righteousness.



*John T. Bran*

## The gift

Many times I've been asked why people are condemned to spend eternity barred from God's heaven and from eternal life. It's a troubling question. Most frequently it comes when a dear relative or friend has passed away without any indication of faith in Jesus.

When we look around, we see so many wonderful, positive people. They are happy, helpful, and loving. They sacrifice for their families, their countries, sometimes the same political parties, and even their non-Christian churches or religions. They are not the stereotypical unbelievers we often imagine—arrogant, immoral, and crude. Perhaps we characterize unbelievers in those exaggerated ways so we don't have to confront the tough question of why God would allow positive and happy people to spend eternity without him.

I remember the question once coming from a Christian who had a dear Jewish friend. He was troubled by God's judgmental and exclusive attitude. Why should this friend, who loved the same things and always was ready with a smile and a helping hand, be excluded from heaven?

The answer I have found to be the clearest and most compelling is a Lutheran one. God loved the world—all of it, all people of all time, the arrogant and immoral as well as the happy and helpful. He looked through all of history and saw every human but also saw one unalterable fact. No one in all of history could alter death or erase human failure and sin. God had to act or the whole of humanity would always be excluded from his heaven.

Out of deep love for all humanity, God entered our world and participated in our history. You know the passage: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16). He came from above to do what no one on earth could

do—substitute life for death and erase all human sin.

Because of what Jesus did, God declared the entire world—past, present, and future—righteous. He justified the world. The sins of all humanity have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. What God did is an undeserved act of his love—a gift—and he presents this gift to all. No one is beyond his love; his gift is for all humanity. In addition, God's gift transforms whoever opens it so that, carried by waves of gratitude, he or she longs to do what God desires and anguishes over his or her failures.

When the time comes for a soul to leave this world, God will be looking to see whether or not the individual has opened God's gift and made it his or her own by faith in Jesus. Remember, "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God's judgment is based on whether or not a person has taken possession of his free gift.

What should God do with those who have decided his gift is unimportant? What should he do with those who turn away from the bloody sacrifice of God's own Son on the cross? God has said that he will turn away from those who leave his gift unopened and stand before him without it.

We are justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus. That may be a Lutheran formulation of the gift, but Peter, Paul, and millions of believers through the centuries have received God's gift by faith and are now in the presence of the God who so loved them. Although we might celebrate the gift at Reformation time, the idea is not so much Lutheran as it is biblical. Our hands now grasp this gift by the power of the Holy Spirit, and our task is to give God's gift to others.



# GOD'S tool belt for unity

Donald W. Patterson

## What needs to be fixed? Our neglect of the Word of God

Imagine an elementary classroom full of noisy kids. Everyone's out of their seats. One is bullying another. Two are writing on the board. Another is throwing paper. Still another is texting. What is your first thought? Mine is, "Where's the teacher?" That's what happens when the teacher is out of the room for too long. Mayhem! But in walks the teacher and order is restored. Everyone moves to his or her seat. All get quiet.

Learning begins again.

God intended that his Word will do the same for his church. The Word of God changes us, unites us, and settles us into a peaceful and powerful body. On the other hand, a church where the Word of God does not have a clear presence will be rife with disunity as folks lose focus of their God-given mission. Worst of all, fewer people will be saved as the church loses its grip on the gospel. The good news is that no matter how far a church has fallen away from growing in the Word of God, it can always be restored. It just needs to get back into God's Word.

On the night before Jesus died, he spoke a long prayer. In that prayer Jesus revealed the power his Word has for creating unity. Read through his words below. You will see that the Word of God is the most powerful tool we have for recovering unity in our churches.

**<sup>15</sup>My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.**

**<sup>18</sup>As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.**

**<sup>20</sup>My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup>that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:15-23).**

## Familiarize yourself with the tool

- How does the church get sanctified by God's Word (v. 17)?
- Why did Jesus leave us in the world with his Word instead of taking us to heaven?
- Where in his prayer does Jesus specifically pray for you and me?
- According to Jesus, what important work does church unity accomplish?

## Use the tool

- Why is regular Bible study attendance powerful for building church unity?
- Ask your pastor if he will help you host a small group Bible study.
- If you are feeling disconnected from your brothers and sisters in Christ, increase the time you spend in God's Word and watch it change your perspective.
- If there is a concern dividing your church, make it a topic of personal study. Find out what the Bible says and then voice it to your leaders and others who are concerned.
- Think of three ways your church can increase the way it offers God's Word to the flock.

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

*This is the final article in a ten-part series on Christian unity. Find this article and answers online after Oct. 5 at [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net)*

# GO SHEEP!

Eric S. Hartzell

## I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THE ANSWER THE LADY GAVE SURPRISED ME.

I asked her what animal she would become if she had to be any animal.

"A Bengal tiger," she said. "I saw one on television not long ago. It was strong and powerful, and, if you looked into its eyes, you knew you had seen something!"

I asked some other people the same question. I was surprised too at what they said. One said an eagle. One said a cat. One said a dog. One said an otter because otters are so graceful in the water. With the exception of the cat, I thought these animals all sounded fine too.

Certain Cincinnati athletes call themselves the Bengals. How about the other "animal" teams besides the Bengals? Colts, Bears, Wildcats, Razorbacks, Diamondbacks, Bulls, Jaguars, Lions, Bruins, Eagles, Hawks, Broncos? In Texas we even have the Hutto Hippos!

Those are all animals that people admire in some way, so they call their sports teams by these names. If people had to be animals, I suppose they would choose to be these kinds of animals.

**No one has aspired to having their sports heroes bear the name sheep.** Sheep are not strong, not swift, not certain of their own ways, not smart, and not safe by themselves. Sheep are just . . . well, they are sheep.

You maybe have never heard about it, but there is a team that is called the Sheep. Jesus happens to be the manager of this team. The Christian church is this team. You are supposed to be on this team. The team is winning again this year. They actually always win, and it is always a big surprise when it happens.

Sheep!

I don't like what my dictionary says about sheep. A third meaning for sheep (besides mutton and cud-chewing animal) is "a person who is meek, stupid, or shy." I guess I would really rather be a Bengal tiger. My ego would fare better with that.

But there it is. We Christians admit it every time we say the 23rd psalm: "The LORD is my shepherd." The sheep is the animal we choose to be. When it comes down to it, we are like sheep. Even a warrior and musician and king like David said he was a sheep. "The LORD is my shepherd," David said.

Jesus tells us we are sheep when he says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life

for the sheep" (John 10:11). He says about his flock, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14). His flock is his team.

**Of all the teams out there, this is by far the best one.** It is the only one that wins. It is the only one God himself cheers for and applauds. In every contest, he works hard to save it. In every conflict, he leads it to and gives it the victory.

And the team follows him. Jesus says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). He's not ashamed to be associated with us sheep. He carries us in his arms. And don't forget the best part: the Shepherd became the Savior by dying for his sheep.

Sheep are not by nature survivors. As cattlemen will say, "The difference between a sheep and a goat is that a goat is always looking for a way out and a sheep is always looking for a way to die." But Jesus sees it differently. He knows sheep are not survivors, but he makes them victors.

He sets up the victory banquet for them in the presence of their enemies. Good things happen to them. Mercy follows them. And they live in God's house forever.

Welcome to his team!  
**GO SHEEP!**

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

