

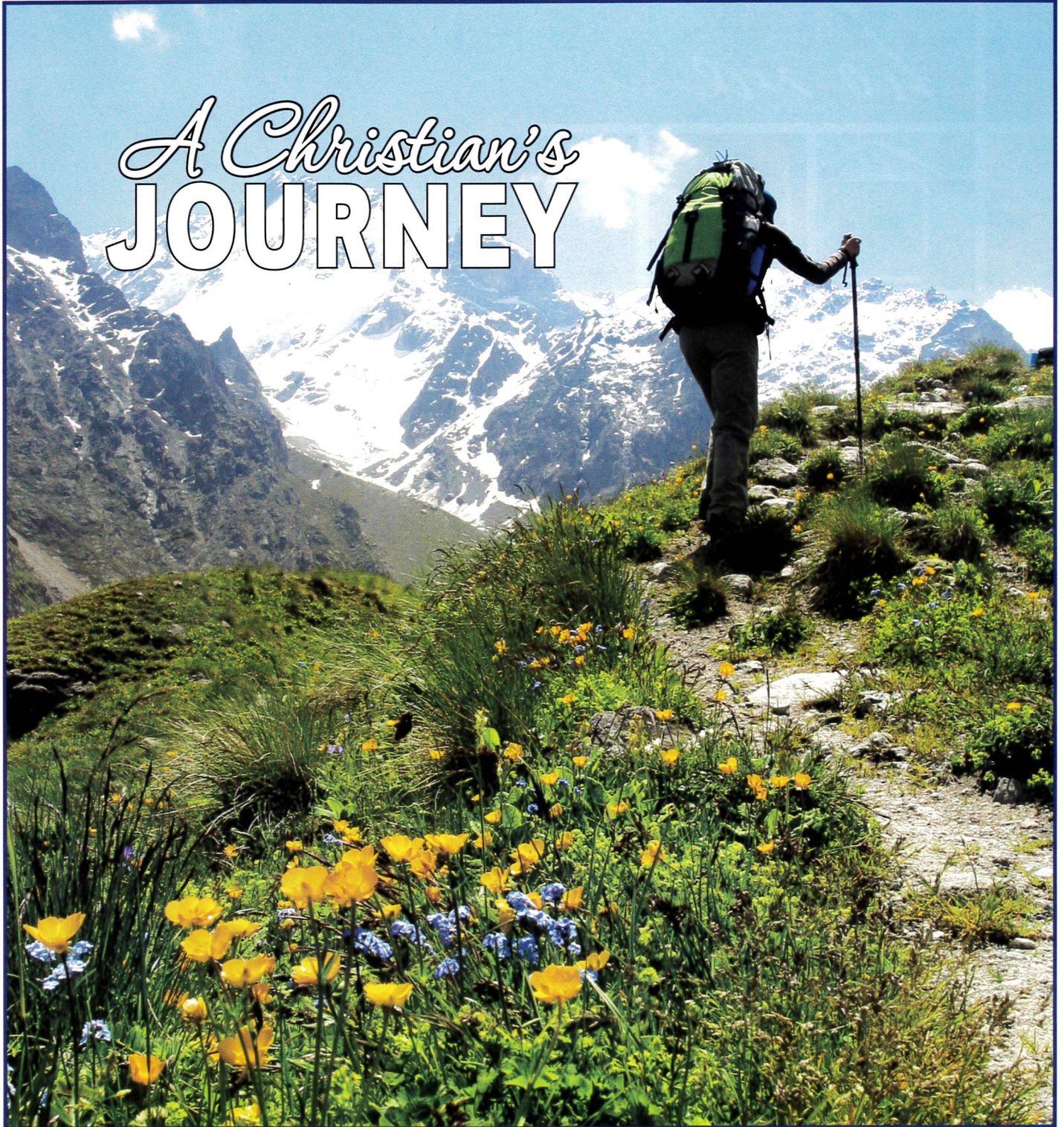
ABORTION • THE VISIBLE CHURCH • DEATH OF A CHILD

JANUARY 2009

# Forward in Christ

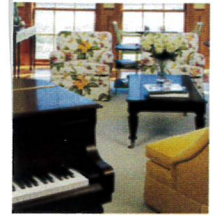
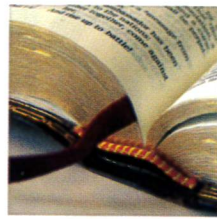
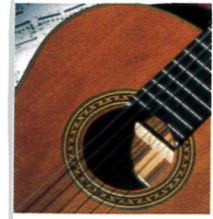
God's wisdom, WELS' witness

*A Christian's*  
**JOURNEY**

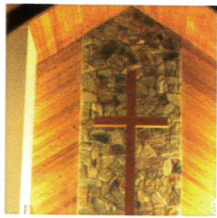
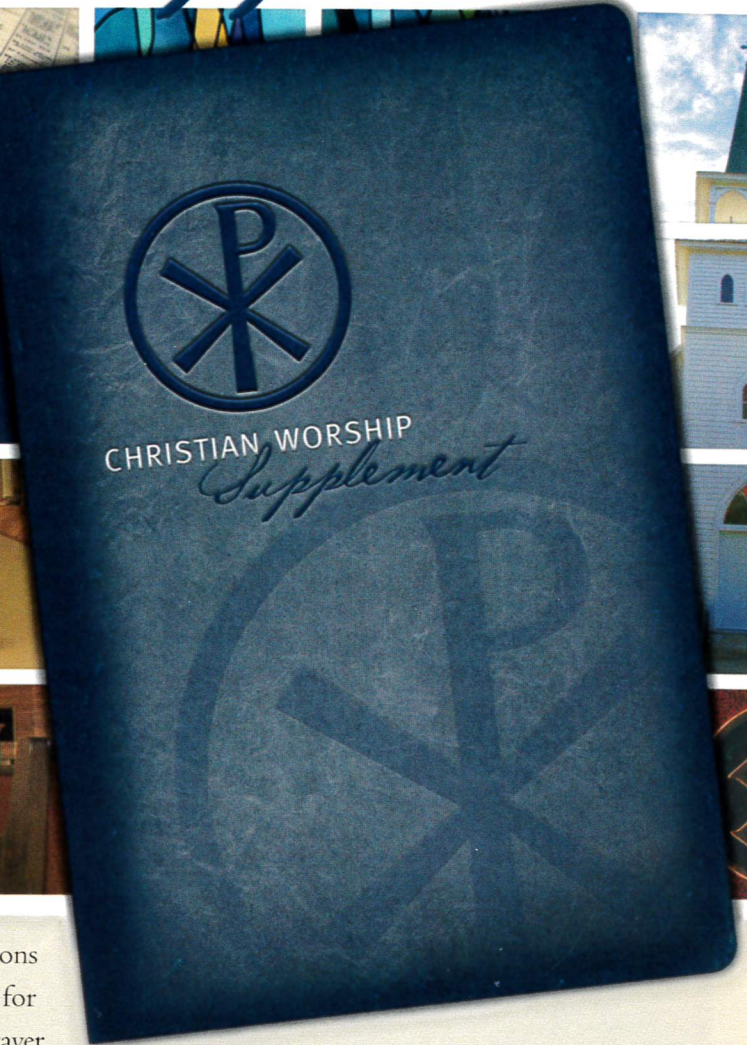




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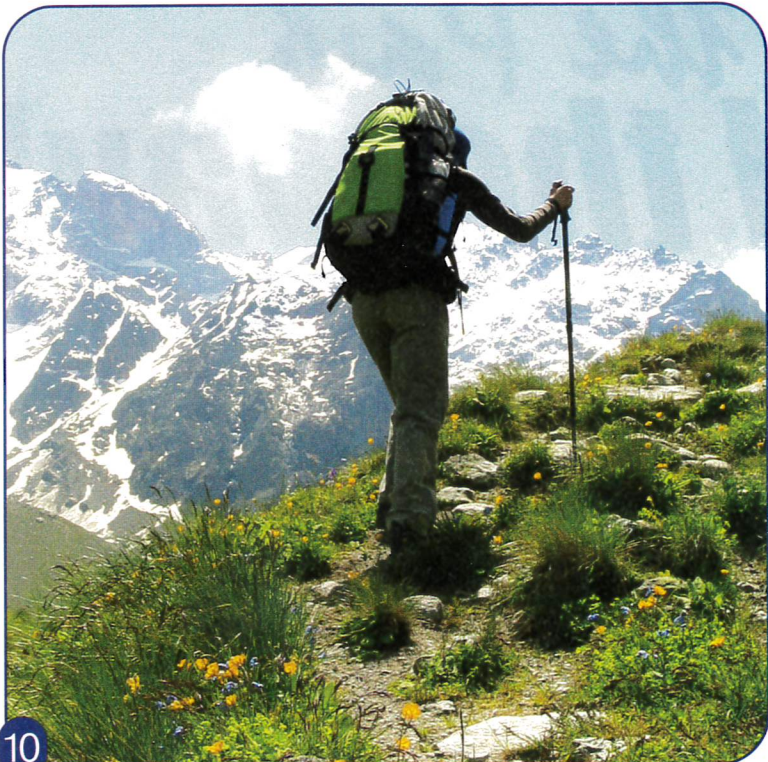


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# “The Christian’s journey through this life shares similarities to the hikers’ striving to reach their goals.”



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## Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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<sup>++</sup> Children of WELS missionaries from Brazil, Taiwan, and Malawi will be attending the rally as special guests of WELS Youth Discipleship and WELS World Missions.



MAY THE LORD OUR GOD  
BE WITH US AS HE WAS  
WITH OUR FATHERS;  
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US  
NOR FORSAKE US.

1 Kings 8:57

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

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

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

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

**MANAGING EDITOR**

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

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

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

**STAFF WRITER**

Laura C. Schaefer  
laura.christine.schaefer@gmail.com

**SEMINARY CONSULTANT**

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

**ART DIRECTOR**

Karen Knutson

**DESIGNER**

Carianne Ciriacks

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JANUARY

**WHAT'S INSIDE** by Julie Wietzke

I don't think that I have ever seen more beautiful scenery than that of the mountains of Colorado. Right when you think you have seen the best view possible, you hike a little farther and the next scene surpasses the first.

In our cover story, Ned Goede compares a hike in the mountains to our journey through this life as Christians (p. 10). The twists and turns, the goals we achieve on the way, the beauty we are privileged to see—all leading toward our ultimate destination of heaven.

The journey often is difficult. Executive Editor John Braun shares a real-life example of this as he tells the story of a family who lost their teenage son along the way (p. 30). But God was with them and comforted them during this devastating part of their lives. And as Pastor James Mattek reminds us, Jesus walks with all of us; we are never alone (p. 7).

As Christians, our journey begins and ends with Jesus—from our baptism to our entry into paradise. May this new year give you many opportunities to share that comfort with those who are trying to journey through this life by themselves.

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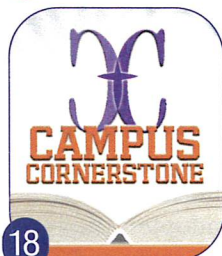
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classes in public schools, is very convincing; plausible; and backed with the credentials of almost all scientists, science teachers, and professors. They present a very convincing and persuasive argument for young minds to deal with. The answer to these persuasive

request that FIC no longer print this image.

Clark Brown  
Traverse City, Michigan

*The flag you mention finds a place in many of our congregations along with the American flag. We confess being in two kingdoms, God's and the civil kingdom of our country. In some congregations a WELS flag is on display either in addition to the one you mentioned or in place of it.*

*Whatever denominational identity may have been attached to this flag has ceased to be important; it has become a symbol for Protestant Christians.*

*By displaying it we do not in any way confess a method to attain salvation. In our congregations, salvation is still taught and confessed as a free gift of God's grace by faith in Jesus, a treasure faithful Lutherans still wish to proclaim to all the world.—ed.*

**DEATHBED COMFORT**

I had to write in and thank Pastor Feuerstahler for his article "Let me die a Lutheran" [Oct.]. It is a wonderful lesson on what we all can say to our Christian brothers and sisters who are dying. In fact, I had the great privilege of sharing Hebrews 12:2 (which was quoted in the article) with my grandma earlier this year before she died of pancreatic cancer. I hope someone quotes that passage to me when I am on my deathbed.

Gregg Batzer  
Winona, Minnesota

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*.

**CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES**

I truly enjoyed the article "Connecting to our communities" by Stuart A. Zak [Sept.]. The article was concise and well written, as it addressed key components, or six ingredients, to furthering the cause of Christ in the ministry. These practical steps are easy to follow and are inspired. . . . Thanks for this great magazine.

John K. Skousen  
Corona, California

**STUDENTS AND EVOLUTION**

Regarding Prof. Geiger's article "New school clothes" [Sept.], I would like to suggest one additional set of "new clothes."

As I understand the article, it is primarily concerned with the younger school children. But the "eternal danger" that Solomon "was concerned about" (paragraph four) is especially true in the lives of older students from confirmation age through high school, college, and beyond. It is during this advanced period in their education that many of these students first become acquainted with science, in particular evolutionary science. It is at this point that the danger of evolutionary science is particularly critical to their eternal lives. . . .

Evolutionary science, as presented in 99 percent of all science

arguments and credentials regarding evolution is as simple as [having students] look into their mirror each morning and noting the design details of their own bodies and the fantastic integration within their bodies that permits them to function.

We need to address this problem of evolution by instructing our students in our WELS high schools, teacher colleges, and in the seminary with solid scientific training regarding our almighty God's intelligent design versus the haphazard chance happenings of the illogical evolution theory.

John Woidke  
Farwell, Michigan

**CHRISTIAN FLAG**

Are we Methodists? Have we no one in WELS with a gift for heraldry; someone gifted in developing our own ensign (that is, apart from the crucified Christ)?

In several issues of FIC, there has been use of the white flag with the blue field and a red cross in that blue. This flag was developed as a standard for Methodist camps. Unless we have adopted their method of salvation through works, shunning salvation by faith (in Christ) alone, why would we choose to rally beneath this heretodox symbol?

I would encourage the LWMS to cease its use and likewise



# Walking through the new year

*Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Psalm 73:23,24*

James A. Mattek

**H**ow many new years have you “notched into your belt”? If you are relatively young, there are just a few. Or maybe you’re looking at most of your life through the rear-view mirror. January isn’t much different than December . . . maybe fewer parties and fewer tax deductions. Just a number to change on your checks. Yet it’s enough of a speed bump on life’s road so that we’re inclined to stop momentarily and do a gut check. As children of God, we should also do a spiritual gut check.

## You’ll never walk alone

Last year a woman lost a son and a daughter when they were struck by a drunk driver. Within the next nine months, her husband died of cancer and both parents were also taken from this life. In a local paper she was quoted as saying, “I know they’re in heaven, but I’m so lonely.” One can hardly blame her. Loneliness, however, is a common plight. If you’ll be celebrating an anniversary alone this year, you can relate.

The songwriter’s words are music to lonely ears. They are words that “shine through the gloom and point [us] to the skies” (*Christian Worship* 588:7). “I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.” The Bible is a “Who’s Who” list of people who were sustained by the promises of a loving God, who would never abandon them. When God’s famous prophet Elijah was alone and tired of it all, the ever-present Lord revealed himself in a whisper. The whisper of God’s Word reminds us again and again that others might leave us, but God never will.

## You’ll never walk without a map

“I never saw that coming.” I heard that said more than once last year. “In this world you will have trouble,” Jesus once said (John 16:33). Life often is like navigating the rough water of trouble. There are finances and friendships, health care and day care, job security and personal insecurity, headaches and heartaches. Pick a day. “Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

How do we know what to think and do? “You guide me with your counsel.” God’s biblical road map charts the attitudes God looks for in the new year. He looks for an attitude of faith that will “call upon [him] in the day of trouble” (Psalm 50:15) and “cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). The whisper of his Word counsels us to have an attitude of humble trust, realizing that it’s “by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves” (Ephesians 2:8).

## You’ll walk with him forever

This year might be your last one . . . on this earth as we know it, that is. With so many troubles and uncertainties in life and with the indignities of aging, how wonderful that glory actually awaits us at life’s end! “Afterward you will take me into glory.”

Stephen saw heaven open just before he died. We might not have



such a vision before we die, but we do know God’s promises. When we get to the other side of this valley of tears, we will see Jesus. We will be happy to see Jesus. It will be the ultimate new year, a glorious and eternal one.

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



# Missions and the gospel: Share and treasure

Paul T. Prange

I really admire congregations that are always asking, “Where can we spread the gospel? What are the places around us where we could plant another congregation?” Such congregations can become “mother churches” in a geographic area that will owe them a debt of gratitude for generations.

I first noticed this attitude in Texas, where one small congregation in Edna supplied a pastor who served all of the large cities in the state until one by one these churches called their own pastors and began their own work of planting more than one additional congregation. I note that such a spirit continues in the South Central District of WELS today.

Way back in the 1830s, the first Lutheran pastor in Michigan, Friedrich Schmid, lived and breathed that spirit. From a home base near Ann Arbor, he founded more than 20 congregations between 1833 and 1883. As congregations like Salem, Ann Arbor, celebrate their 150th anniversaries now, they remember the tireless efforts of Schmid and the blessings God gave to his work.

But not all 20 of Schmid’s congregations exist today. It’s not because of the economy in Michigan, which has taken a nosedive. What Schmid had was church-planting zeal. What he did not always seem to have was the additional zeal to see to it that the pastors who built on his work used the gospel in Word and sacrament. Those pastors did not always remain faithful.

Schmid loved the Basel Mission Society in Germany, but the pastors supplied by the society were not always well-trained Lutherans. It’s interesting to note that the congregations served by those who would rather not be Lutheran have mostly dissolved. The congregations served by confessional Lutherans have mostly survived and prospered.

The long view of church history teaches us a lesson. Church-planting zeal is valuable. But without an accompanying zeal for the truths of the gospel, it can lead to short-lived fruits. But with a zeal for the truth, the roots of good gospel ministry can grow deep, serving many generations.

I suppose it is possible to value the gospel but not to value one of its fruits, the burning desire to pass on the good news of Jesus to the people around us and to the next generation. Such a contradiction may exist in any sinful heart, but it must be called what it is—sin. The forgiveness we have in Jesus moves us to preach the gospel. We believe, therefore we speak. We share and preserve his truth.

How blessed we are as a church body to have so many congregations with so many pastors who are looking beyond their immediate communities to take the everlasting gospel to the next city, town, or village. Encourage them to do the difficult, unselfish work that will bear fruit for generations to come. Support the mission efforts of the synod that coordinate and encourage their work.

How blessed we are as a church body to have reliable, well-trained pastors who appreciate the truths of the gospel and are willing to take a public stand that they will teach it in accord with the Lutheran Confessions. Encourage them to speak the gospel wherever they go. Support the ministerial education schools that produce them.

What are the places around you where you can help to plant another congregation? Speak to your fellow believers and look for ways to establish another outpost for the preaching of the gospel. God bless your efforts!

**Church-planting zeal is valuable. But without an accompanying zeal for the truths of the gospel, it can lead to short-lived fruits.**

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



# QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

Your questions assume that most abortions are murders but also acknowledge the reality of “hard cases” that surface in many abortion discussions. As our society prepares to mark another anniversary (Jan. 22) of the *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion, I appreciate the chance to revisit this issue.

## Mostly murders

From the biblical perspective abortion always involves the taking of a human life, a killing. The strong majority of abortions in our country are “elective,” and, for Christians, the reasons for them do not constitute “justifiable homicides.” About 75 percent of those choosing abortions cite reasons that have little to do with the preservation of life itself and much to do with preserving personal preferences: having a baby is too expensive, creates problems with a spouse or live-in partner, interferes with work or school or reputation in the community, or necessitates being a single parent. Most abortions are murders.

## Exceptions for emotions?

Are abortions justifiable when the pregnancy results from rape, incest, or gives evidence of severe fetal abnormalities? These are emotionally charged questions, and I seek to respond compassionately and sympathetically but truthfully. One sinful act of violence (elective abortion) is not a right response to a prior sinful act of rape or incest. Citing quality of life is not an adequate reason to terminate life. Only about five percent of abortions done in the United States are performed for these kinds of reasons.

So much deserves to be said on this. A brief but helpful article on abortions in emotionally charged circumstances may be accessed at the Web site of Christian Life Resources, a pro-family organization affiliated with WELS: [www.christianliferesources.com/?5077](http://www.christianliferesources.com/?5077).

## Q. Under what circumstances would abortion not be considered a sinful act of murder? It is okay to abort to save the mother?

### To save the mother?

Are there times when the killing of a fetus is not murder but a morally acceptable taking of human life? Yes. To use wording that I found helpful, abortion is allowable “to prevent the death of the mother, while doing everything possible to preserve both mother and child.” To say “prevent the death of the mother” is sometimes seen as preferable to “save her life.” Nevertheless, sometimes terminating fetal life needs to be done to prevent the mother’s death, which

then will also result in the child’s death.

This is the case with an ectopic (out of place) pregnancy in which a fertilized egg implants outside the uterus. About one in 50 pregnancies ends this way. After conception, the fertilized egg travels down the fallopian tube to the uterus. If the tube is damaged, blocked, or fails to propel the egg toward the womb, the egg may plant in the tube and continue to develop there.

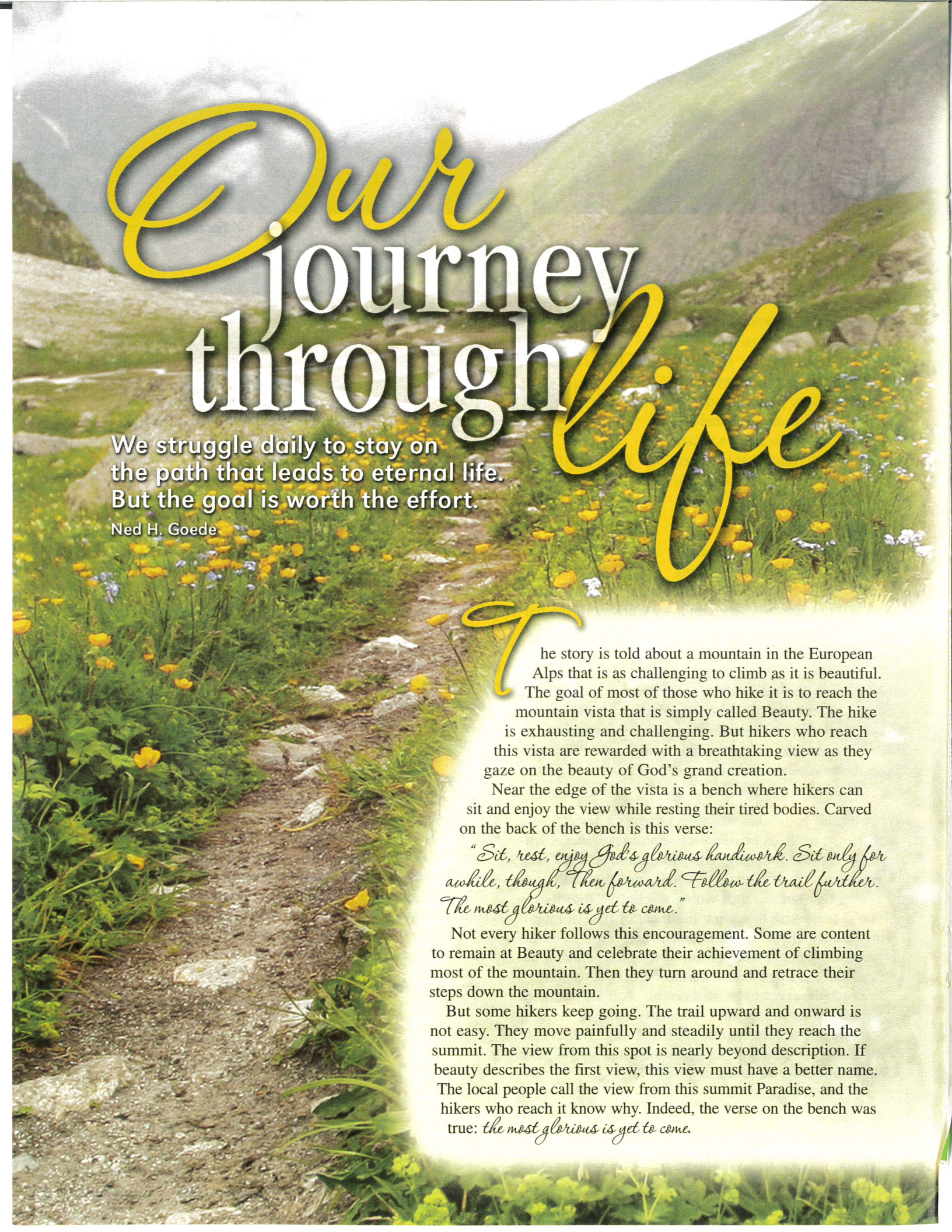
Ectopic pregnancies offer no hope for the development of the child and, unless terminated, will result in rupture, hemorrhage, and the death of mother and child. If the tiny embryo could be surgically transplanted to the uterus, this would be the path to take, but the technology to do this is not yet a reality. Ending the pregnancy is the only viable option.

Another brief yet instructive article on this topic may be viewed at [www.christianliferesources.com/?4757](http://www.christianliferesources.com/?4757).

May this stimulate ongoing study among us to obtain adequate information on these issues. Through the gospel may we also grow in our desire and courage to address these issues in a Christ-centered way.

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





# Our journey through *life*

We struggle daily to stay on  
the path that leads to eternal life.  
But the goal is worth the effort.

Ned H. Goede

The story is told about a mountain in the European Alps that is as challenging to climb as it is beautiful. The goal of most of those who hike it is to reach the mountain vista that is simply called Beauty. The hike is exhausting and challenging. But hikers who reach this vista are rewarded with a breathtaking view as they gaze on the beauty of God's grand creation.

Near the edge of the vista is a bench where hikers can sit and enjoy the view while resting their tired bodies. Carved on the back of the bench is this verse:

*"Sit, rest, enjoy God's glorious handiwork. Sit only for awhile, though. Then forward. Follow the trail further. The most glorious is yet to come."*

Not every hiker follows this encouragement. Some are content to remain at Beauty and celebrate their achievement of climbing most of the mountain. Then they turn around and retrace their steps down the mountain.

But some hikers keep going. The trail upward and onward is not easy. They move painfully and steadily until they reach the summit. The view from this spot is nearly beyond description. If beauty describes the first view, this view must have a better name. The local people call the view from this summit Paradise, and the hikers who reach it know why. Indeed, the verse on the bench was true: *the most glorious is yet to come.*



## Our journey

The Christian's journey through this life shares similarities to the hikers' striving to reach their goals. By God's grace, we are God's dear children. God himself has given us the hope of glory in heaven through Jesus, and he has placed us on a journey through this life to eternity. This journey can be difficult and taxing, but that does not mean we do not have opportunities to stop and look at the view of God's great care of us or of what he has allowed us to accomplish. Think of Jacob returning home after years with his uncle, Laban. He paused to marvel and proclaimed, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant" (Genesis 32:10).

There are also those times when we take time to rest and reflect on the glorious blessings of a loving relationship with the heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ. He gives us so much more. The earthly blessings are many and beautiful—family, friends, Christian fellowship, and many of life's good things. It is the spiritual blessings, though, that profoundly affect us and bring the joy, contentment, and peace that all people desire. Times of rest and reflection bring not only needed solace to our life but inevitably move us to praise God for his abundant grace.

On occasion, we look back at our spiritual or earthly goals to see how God has blessed our efforts. We pause to review the effort to care for family, the struggle to achieve a promotion, the hard work required for a thousand other goals. When goals are reached, we pause for celebration and thanksgiving. We celebrate birthdays, weddings, graduations, and promotions. We know these too come from a loving heavenly Father by his grace. With the achievement of each goal usually come greater feelings of satisfaction and a sense that growth is occurring. But we don't pause too long because new goals arise quickly.

## One greater goal

But one goal always lies ahead. Like those hikers who believed the encouragement on that bench—"the most glorious is yet to come"—the Christian continues the journey toward that ultimate goal: eternal paradise.

We know that this goal is not achieved by our efforts, no matter how diligent. We can never muster enough diligence to earn the heavenly goal. Then again, we don't have to earn it. The heavenly goal already belongs to the Christian through the blood of the Lamb. His resurrection assures our own resurrection from death. The Son's promise to return and take his believers to their ultimate heavenly goal fills each day of our lives with peace, hope, and joy.

Yes, the Christian's journey through life is filled with dangers. Some are physical; many are spiritual. Satan's

intense desire to entice us away from the Leader drives him to tempt us in many devious ways. Such temptations often confront Christian travelers and, sadly, sometimes lure them from their purpose on this earth. The journey to the final goal can seem overwhelming at times.

It is especially at these times that we turn to our Leader for guidance, courage, and strength. Not only does Jesus guide us along the trail with his Word, but he also gives us strength for the journey through the gospel in Word and sacrament.

So we take another step each day. The days turn into years, and we mark their swift passage. Along the way we live as Jesus wants. He told his followers to be witnesses for him. Preach the gospel. Baptize. Make disciples. Be salt and light in a sin-darkened world. Glorify God through words and actions. Watch and pray. Guard one's faith. Pray often. Love God and others. Follow him. Such crucial directives fill the days and years of the Christian's life with purpose and meaning. As faithful Christians, we understand the following:

- Committing ourselves to Jesus is demonstrated in our daily efforts to show Jesus' love in words and actions.
- Submitting to Jesus' will for his followers assures us that our earthly journeys will be filled with blessings.
- Remaining faithful to Jesus to the end, accomplished only by God's grace, assures us that the ultimate goal—eternal paradise—will be achieved.

Indeed, following Jesus, our Leader, means the most glorious is yet to come.

# God gives us strength for the journey through the gospel in Word and sacrament.

## A journey together

To help us along the way God has also surrounded us with fellow travelers. Jesus asks us to encourage one another along the trail. When we see others stumble, we need to reach out to help and exhort them to keep going. When we stumble, they will do the same for us.

Young and old, we follow Jesus' trail. We look upward and focus on Jesus as we journey through this life. The struggle is often difficult and we grow weary, but we just need to look up. Jesus has promised a time of rest with him. Let's remind each other to focus on Jesus and the glorious heavenly goal we will receive through faith.

May the Lord bless our efforts to encourage one another to faithfully follow Jesus on life's journey. One day at a time. One year at a time.

*Ned Goede, principal at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a member at Atonement, Milwaukee.*



# The LUTHER

Public speaking ranks high on most lists of people's fears. Add to that the daunting responsibility for pastors called as spokesmen for God, and the fear factor shoots off the charts. When the Almighty appointed them as his mouthpieces Isaiah cried, Jeremiah claimed childish ability, and Jonah ran. Teens encouraged to consider the pastoral ministry often cite preaching as the reason they're not interested.

Yet your pastor steps into the pulpit every Sunday overjoyed and unafraid. How?

Listening to a talking head is becoming an outdated mode of communication in today's visual world. Dynamic graphics attract our interest. News anchors don't speak longer than a minute before the screen flashes to new footage. Surround sound and high definition define the new living-room experience.

Yet congregation members sit still and listen to a sermon for 20 minutes every Sunday without supplemental entertainment or commercial breaks. Why?

## The importance of the sermon

Lutheran pastors believe that when "Christ is preached" (Philippians 1:18), they are building for their listeners a strong and eternal foundation of faith. Lutherans believe that the gospel is the means of grace through which God strengthens faith and nourishes his people. Therefore, in their worship planning, Lutherans refer regularly to a pericope, or list of Scripture lessons historically arranged for the purpose of proclaiming the words and works of Jesus Christ. Lutheran preaching is liturgical preaching because it finds its primary direction in the Christian church year.

Thematic sermon series based on a book of the Bible or a doctrine, or topical sermons based on a special ministry or event, have their moment, like special meals add variety into a healthy diet. However, the goal of a well-balanced diet for physical health reflects the goal of a well-balanced

spiritual diet feasting on God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. On a normal Sunday, the Lutheran sermon is based on one of the three Scripture lessons appointed in the pericope for that Sunday of the church year.

The preacher makes his selection and then battles the forces that seek to prevent the proclamation of God's truth. He will, through Bible study and prayer, struggle with his own fears, shortcomings, and sins. He will face the fiery arrows of Satan and the pervasive principles of the world. By the power of the Spirit he will, for another week, stand as the victor holding "weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left" (2 Corinthians 6:7), and he will share the message of God with saints under his charge.

## Sermon preparation takes research

To enhance his understanding of God's Word, the Lutheran pastor researches the original language of the selected portion of Scripture, either Hebrew or Greek. While the priceless treasure of God's Word can sparkle brilliantly in a language other than the original, the Hebrew or Greek can uncover hidden gems for the preacher to display or simply to increase the value of his sermon preparation.

Study continues after researching the original language. The pastor searches the Scriptures elsewhere for their treatment of similar passages or truths. He will usually check one or more Bible commentaries for expanded insight and may crack open the Lutheran Confessions. He considers the main thrust of law and gospel in that portion of God's Word and how to communicate each with the clarity it deserves.

## Sermon writing takes thought

Just as Jesus often utilized a story or word picture in his messages, preachers wisely tap into stories and word pictures to illustrate divine truths to human ears. Sermon preparation notes expand by the page as the preacher enters all kinds of possible illustrations onto his laptop or on a legal pad.

The sermon theme finally takes shape. Thoughts organize into a structure. The preacher determines what kind of style to employ. For example, he can choose



# AN WAY of worship

a narrative style that tells a story, or a verse-by-verse treatment of the text, or a sermon spoken from a first-person or third-person perspective. He outlines main points and subpoints, inserts proof passages, formats transitions, selects appropriate illustrations, designs an introduction and conclusion, and includes relevant life applications. Through it all he ensures that he will preach the specific law and gospel presented in that Scripture section for that day. His goal is that if anyone leaves worship with only one thing, he or she leaves clinging to the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). The gospel dominates Lutheran sermons, even as it permeates the entire worship service.

As the saying goes, "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." So our preachers are instructed at the seminary to write their sermons into manuscript form. During the writing and editing process, abstract concepts become concrete terms and lazy word usage awakens to vibrant expression. A few gifted men may be capable of preaching well without writing out their sermons; however, time spent writing a sermon manuscript will benefit most preachers.

Since sermons are not meant to be read—as if sharing an essay written by another—but spoken, the final step for the preacher before delivery is memorizing the sermon. Some preachers can memorize a sermon in one or two sittings of 40 minutes, while others need at least four hours. But the goal is the same: being prepared to speak directly to the congregation without an outline or manuscript getting in the way.

## **Sermon development takes time**

On Sunday, your pastor stands in front of you and delivers his sermon for 20 minutes. Usually that 20 minutes means much more work. Your pastor has spent 15 minutes for Scripture selection, two hours for original language study, three hours for searching the Scriptures and researching commentaries, an hour for exploring illustrations and defining

Where do good sermons come from?

Daron J. Lindemann

specific law and gospel, 30 minutes for title development, 30 minutes or more for outlining, two and a half hours for writing and editing, and three hours for memorizing and rehearsing. Time requirements for each preacher and each week may vary, but one rule of thumb suggests an hour of preparation for every minute of delivery!

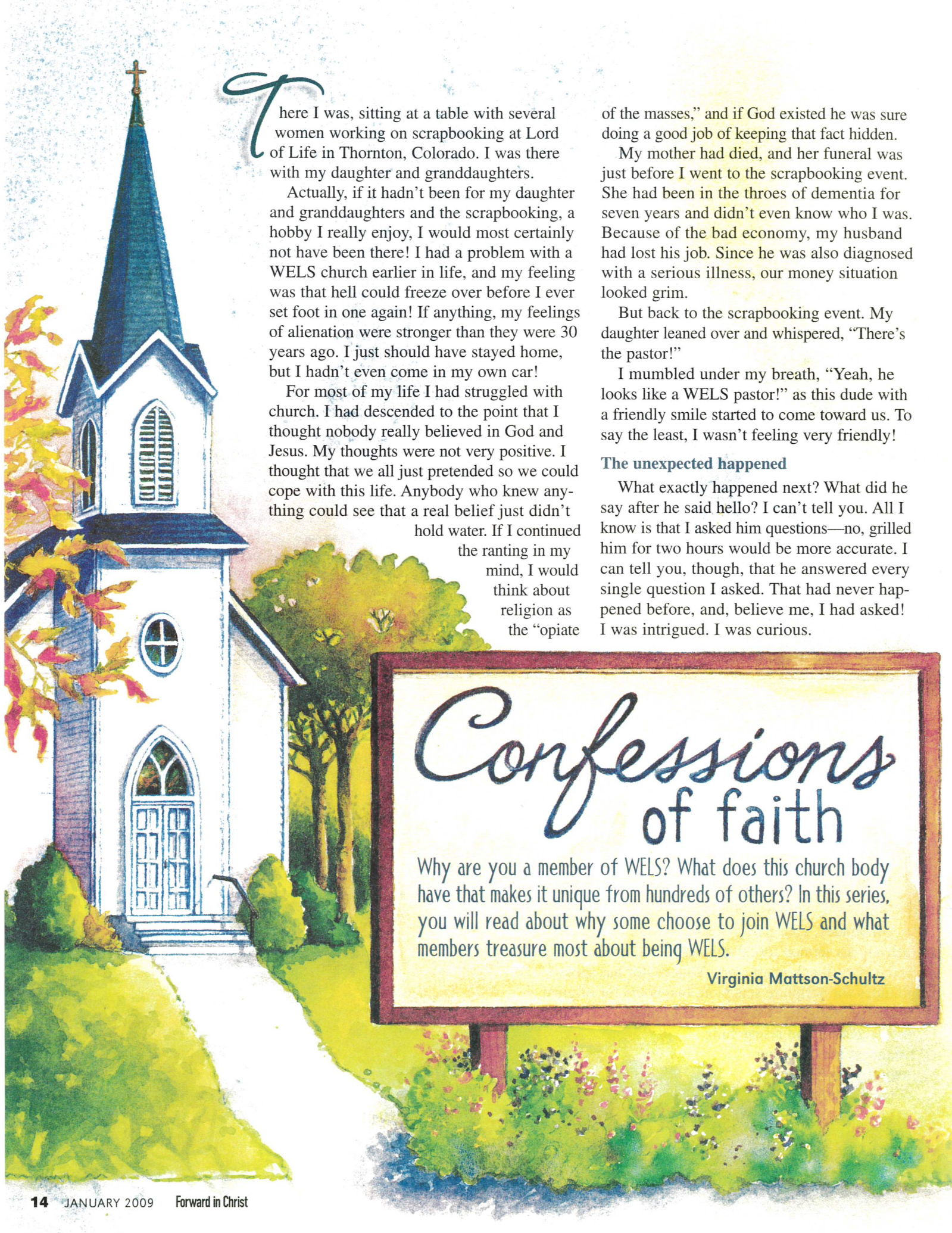
For the last week or so your pastor's desk has been his altar. There, in sermon preparation, he has prayed fervently for the Spirit's enlightenment, guidance, and power. He has poured out his soul to his Savior, confessing sins and finding refreshment in the forgiving blood of Jesus. He has opened the Scriptures to hear the voice of God, and his flesh trembles while his spirit rejoices. He has wondered if he is up for the task of speaking on behalf of God, if his choice of words is too bland or too bold, if his preaching of the law is both severe and sincere, and if his preaching of the gospel clearly portrays Jesus Christ.

His conscience burns with Christ's saving righteousness and also with a pledge to say what his God wants him to say. Then your pastor offers his sermon to you because he offers himself "to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

*Daron Lindemann is pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

*This is the ninth article in a ten-part series on Lutheran worship.*



An illustration of a church with a tall, dark blue steeple topped with a cross. The church has white walls and a large arched window above the entrance. To the right, a sign on two wooden posts reads "Confessions of faith" in a cursive font, followed by a paragraph of text and the author's name. The scene is set in a lush, green landscape with trees and flowers.

Here I was, sitting at a table with several women working on scrapbooking at Lord of Life in Thornton, Colorado. I was there with my daughter and granddaughters.

Actually, if it hadn't been for my daughter and granddaughters and the scrapbooking, a hobby I really enjoy, I would most certainly not have been there! I had a problem with a WELS church earlier in life, and my feeling was that hell could freeze over before I ever set foot in one again! If anything, my feelings of alienation were stronger than they were 30 years ago. I just should have stayed home, but I hadn't even come in my own car!

For most of my life I had struggled with church. I had descended to the point that I thought nobody really believed in God and Jesus. My thoughts were not very positive. I thought that we all just pretended so we could cope with this life. Anybody who knew anything could see that a real belief just didn't

hold water. If I continued the ranting in my mind, I would think about religion as the "opiate

of the masses," and if God existed he was sure doing a good job of keeping that fact hidden.

My mother had died, and her funeral was just before I went to the scrapbooking event. She had been in the throes of dementia for seven years and didn't even know who I was. Because of the bad economy, my husband had lost his job. Since he was also diagnosed with a serious illness, our money situation looked grim.

But back to the scrapbooking event. My daughter leaned over and whispered, "There's the pastor!"

I mumbled under my breath, "Yeah, he looks like a WELS pastor!" as this dude with a friendly smile started to come toward us. To say the least, I wasn't feeling very friendly!

### The unexpected happened

What exactly happened next? What did he say after he said hello? I can't tell you. All I know is that I asked him questions—no, grilled him for two hours would be more accurate. I can tell you, though, that he answered every single question I asked. That had never happened before, and, believe me, I had asked! I was intrigued. I was curious.

# 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.

Virginia Mattson-Schultz



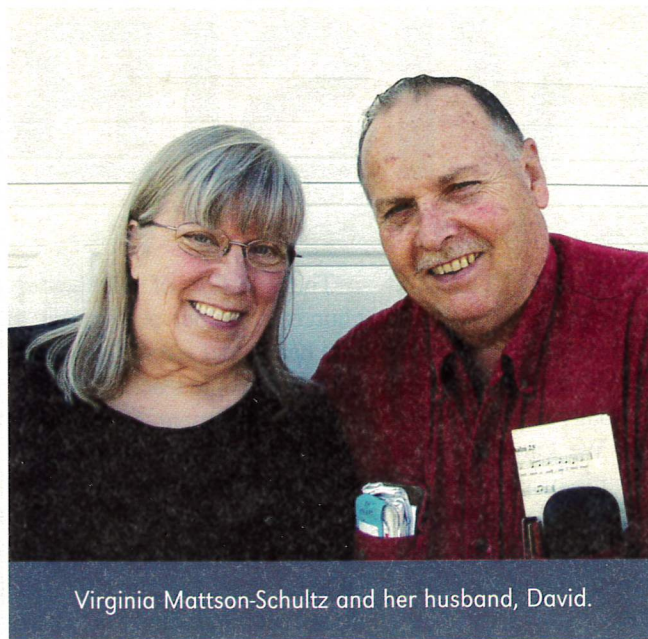
My daughter, who had been too young to remember the problem I had experienced with the previous WELS church, was attending a few services at the church. She was interested in attending the membership classes. And, by the way, the grandchildren were singing at a service on Sunday. Would I like to go hear them sing? NO . . . well, yes.

So I walked through the doors of the church on Sunday and sat in the very back, hunched over my bulletin and a copy of *Forward in Christ*. I am Finnish and quite attached to my family in Finland, a fact that I would never expect to be relevant in a church body I had viewed as German. But surprisingly, there were two articles in *Forward in Christ* about Finland, and the first hymn was to a melody written by Jean Sibelius, a Finnish composer and my favorite.

So I made the leap. I went to the information classes in my own car, giving me an avenue of escape when I needed it. In the first class, we went around the group introducing ourselves, and I said, "I have no intention of joining the church. I just want to learn more about the Bible."

The second week I was going to ask the most difficult questions I could think of. I thought that there has got to be something this man can't answer! But he answered all the questions and backed them up with Scripture, which still was a dubious source for me. I was intrigued.

About midway through the information classes, I could see clearly that the whole Bible fit together and was obviously planned by God. Every week I struggled with the lesson. Remember, I was in the habit of struggling. I came



Virginia Mattson-Schultz and her husband, David.

to each class with questions written down. And they were answered.

Yes, I finished the information series and joined the church, along with my husband, David, who is, by the way, doing pretty well and is now employed in his field.

But then we needed to move to West Virginia.

### New beginnings

It was a long trip! My husband and I were still worn out, both physically and emotionally, after a 3,000-mile move and having to leave our children and grandchildren back in Colorado. Not only that, but we're rather shy people.

We found a WELS church nearby, but I felt uncomfortable about making the initial call because there was nothing but a phone number.

The pastor was friendly and encouraging. He came to meet us and talk about the church. It is hard to walk into a new group in a new part of the country. But when we arrived at the church, the people were friendly. It was clear that the same teaching was going on here as was going on in the church we had just left. We joined a week later. That may sound very fast to make a big decision, but think about it: where else would we go to have our

spiritual needs met? We had finally, after many years, found a church where the true Word of God was read and studied. It was not the time to go "shopping" for a church.

The week after we joined the church, there was a big ice storm. As we were leaving the house to go to church, I slipped on our icy steps, pinning one leg underneath me and cracking it against all the stairs as I fell. Instead of going to church, I was taken by ambulance to the local hospital.

Between wearing an almost full-length cast on my leg and missing my family back home, I was depressed. Self-pity took over, and I was, well, to tell you the truth, grumpy. But as I sat there amidst the boxes, I started getting phone calls from members of our new church. We had dinner fixed for us and some companionship every night for almost two weeks. One new friend even helped unload a couple of the boxes in the kitchen. It's hard to be grumpy when you're being treated so well! I am so blessed to be part of this group. This is home now, and I love my church here.

The pastor who talked to me at the scrapbooking class and taught the adult information classes was God's faithful servant and a man God knew I needed. He was probably the only one I would have listened to at that time! God knows what he's doing.

Thank you, heavenly Father! Thank you for saving my soul. Thank you for giving me peace.

*Virginia Mattson-Schultz is a member at Shepherd of the Hills, Winchester, Virginia.*

*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.*



# The **VISIBLE**

There is only one holy Christian church. We cannot see it, but this assembly brings together everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

That raises a question, doesn't it? If there is only one true church, then why are there so many *churches*? We know that there is only one God. We know that the Lord has revealed himself to us in his inspired Word, the Bible. Yet as we look around our neighborhoods, our country, and our world, we see so many different religious organizations and so many different churches. And they all claim to use the Bible.

The Bible speaks of the church "throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria" (Acts 9:31). We hear of churches in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2) and Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). These passages refer to Christians who were in a specific place and were joined together in a fellowship. The local congregation is a visible organization. Such a gathering is the natural product of obeying God's command to come together. The purpose of such a visible assembly is to hear the Word and to receive the sacraments.

Once again we are reminded that the word *church* is used in two different ways. God knows all the members of his invisible church, no matter where they are. But we only know what we can see. We see people gathered together in the visible organizations that we call churches. The visible churches are united into many denominations that we again call churches. Yet these denominations often differ from one another in what they teach. Truth is uncompromising. It has nothing to do with error. A teaching is either true or false. It cannot be both. Churches whose teachings do not agree cannot all be true churches.

## **Not a personal judgment**

To further complicate matters we know people from these other churches. We know that they are committed to their churches. They live lives that from all outward appearances may even put us to shame. Then how can we say that they belong to a false church? How can we say that what their church teaches is wrong? How can we suggest that such people don't belong to a true church? People might consider us to be arrogant for even asking such questions. We might find ourselves asking with Martin Luther, "How can I be right and the rest of the world wrong?"

The question of whether or not a church is a true church is not our personal judgment. We cannot look into hearts and see what is there. We can only evaluate what people teach. If what a church teaches is in total agreement with Scripture, then it is a true church. If some people in a church agree with the Bible, but the church tolerates members who promote false teachings, then all the members of that organization must be held responsible for those false teachings. Truth and falsehood do not mix. Falsehood is like yeast and infects and distorts the truth, as both Jesus and Paul suggest (Matthew 16:5-12; Galatians 5:9). A little bit of yeast will work through an entire lump of dough. If error is not identified, if it is left unchallenged, it will soon spread into new areas.

But what about all those seemingly good people who belong to churches whose teachings do not agree with Scripture? Are they outside the true church? Remember, membership in the holy Christian church

**A teaching is either true or false. It cannot be both. Churches whose teachings do not agree cannot all be true churches.**



# church

A true visible church is one that not only knows the truth but also proclaims the truth of God's Word in its entirety. James F. Korthals

is not determined by visible associations but by faith in the Savior. When a person joins a church, he or she is publicly confessing agreement with what that church teaches. It is possible that an individual does not understand what his or her church teaches.

People may be in agreement with what the Bible teaches in spite of what their church teaches. Thankfully, we don't make the final judgment of whether a person has the truth. God alone knows the answer. We can do nothing more than examine what someone's church teaches and compare it to the truths of God's Word.

A true visible church is one that not only knows the truth but also proclaims the truth of God's Word in its entirety. Jesus' command is clear: teach them "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Today many churches want to pick and choose what they teach. They want to teach something that agrees with human reason or public opinion or modern scientific theory.

They want to ignore parts of what the Bible teaches and add some of their own ideas. Such an attitude is contrary to the will of the Lord who demands that we do not teach any false doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3).

### **Believers wherever the gospel is proclaimed**

When we say that a church is a false church, we are not saying that there are no Christians in it. We are

not passing judgment on the personal faith of its members. We are only commenting on the public expressions of what that church believes. We give thanks whenever anyone has faith in Jesus as the only Savior from sin. At the same time we are saddened when any teaching of Scripture is ignored or rejected.

Every Christian is responsible for examining whether the teachings of his or her church agree with Scripture. We dare not just take someone else's word for it. Even though we may have the highest personal regard for our pastors, teachers, and professors, we accept a doctrine only because the Lord teaches it in his Word. Luther put it well when he wrote in the Smalcald Articles, "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel" (II, ii, 15).

The apostle Paul writes, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Where the gospel is proclaimed, there you will find faith. Where there is faith, there you will find the church. Gospel proclamation is a sign that the church is present. Preaching, teaching, sharing our faith with others—these are all part of gospel proclamation. But God gives us even more. He gives us the gospel in things that we can touch and taste and see, such as the water of Baptism and the wheat and wine of the Lord's Supper.

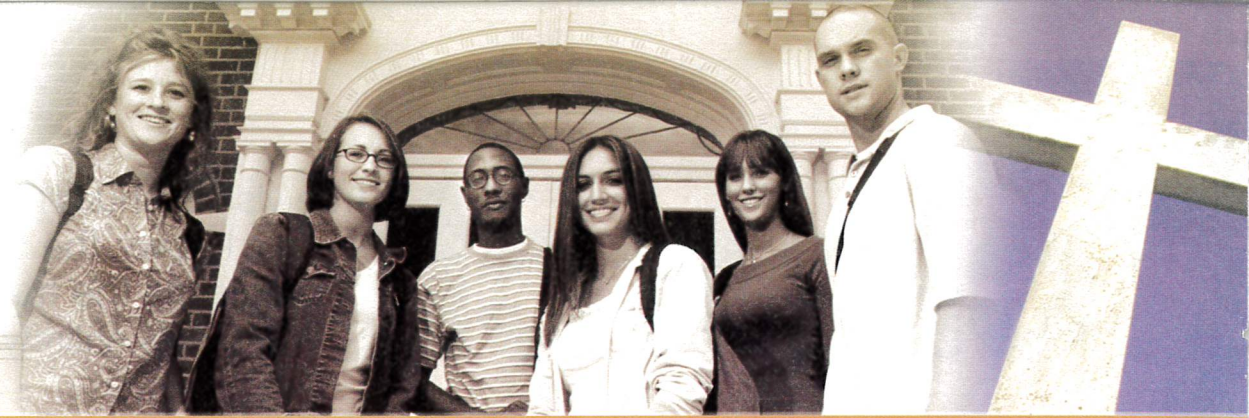
The gospel in Word and sacraments announces that the church is present. But does that mean all the members of such a church are automatically true believers? Sadly, it is possible for people to be something other than what they appear to be. It is possible for someone to be a member of a church that proclaims the truth but not really to believe that truth. We have no promise that where the truth exists, there will be *only* believers. We must differentiate between what we can see and what we cannot see. We can only hear public confessions of faith, but we cannot see what is in a person's heart. That is God's job. He knows those who belong to him.

We look forward to the Lord revealing what we cannot yet see. In the meantime we find joy in the truth that we hear and share in our congregation, our visible church.

*James Korthals, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at David's Star, Jackson.*

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





Ben Cherney

# Resolutions for every day

We as Christians are blessed to be able to experience that fresh start of the new year on each and every day.

What do New Year's Eve and New Year's Day mean to you? For many people, it's about staying up until the clock strikes 12:00. Whether young or old, it usually means parties and get-togethers of all kinds. For the sports fans, it's the long list of college bowl games on New Year's Day. Most of all, perhaps, New Year brings to mind resolutions.

For some churches, ringing in the new year also includes church services. New Year Eve holds an awkward position on the church calendar. It might seem that New Year's and church services are not a compatible duo. After all, New Year's isn't really a religious holiday; Jesus and other biblical figures were never around to watch the ball drop or to watch a Rose Bowl. It seems a little bizarre to go to church on a day that has become all about partying and misusing alcohol. Law and gospel are not in the schedule for the night.

But if you really think about it, maybe there is a place for God on New Year after all. One of the most popular New Year's traditions is the age-old practice of making resolutions. There's just something about turning the calendar to the next year that makes us want to make some changes for the better. In reality, there's not much of a difference between Dec. 31 and Jan. 1, but it feels like a fresh start, an opportunity to work with a blank slate and make ourselves better. Resolutions usually start off with the best intentions, but there's a big problem with them: after a few weeks or months or maybe even

after a couple of days, many resolutions are long forgotten. We have a tendency to go back to our old bad habits—the temptation is just too strong for most people.

Some resolutions may be planned out in line with our morals as Christians. God loves to see us living a better life, whether it's by taking better care of our bodies and finances or by doing more for others or for our churches. Unfortunately, as in so many other parts of a Christian's life, the sinful nature steps in and throws even the best plans aside. That blank slate that was once so clean quickly becomes tarnished with sin. Thankfully, this is exactly where God steps in and plays a huge role in New Year.

Thanks to what Jesus did on the cross, we as Christians are blessed to be able to experience that fresh start of the new year on each and every day. We read in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." Although most of the world only experiences renewal as the ball drops in Times Square, Christians are constantly renewed.

So this year, go ahead and make some resolutions. Even if your resolutions fade and become distant memories, don't feel bad. The same thing happens to so many other people out there too. More important, don't forget that you have a new chance every single day. As Christians, we can start over and make new resolutions on Feb. 5, April 16, Aug. 3, Nov. 21, or any other day of the year. In God's eyes, our sins are completely forgiven, and we renew our hold on his free forgiveness each day.

Enjoy the new year and the opportunities it offers, but don't forget to include Jesus in your plans for 2009.

*Ben Cherney, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a member at St. Paul, Appleton, Wisconsin.*

*Campus Cornerstone, a new department in Forward in Christ, explores issues that college-aged students are experiencing.*



## Obituaries

### Ronald Leroy Stelter 1937-2008

Ronald Stelter was born Jan. 29, 1937, in Clyman, Wis. He died July 25, 2008, in Watertown, Wis.

He taught for 34 years at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.

He is preceded in death by an infant son and four brothers. He is survived by his wife, Rosalyn; one son; three daughters; five grandchildren; one brother; and two sisters.

### Gerald Robert Cudworth 1927-2008

Gerald Cudworth was born Aug. 12, 1927, in Fond du Lac, Wis. He died Oct. 2, 2008, in Appleton, Wis.

He taught at Mt. Olive, Bay City, Mich.; St. John, Westland, Mich.; and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

He is preceded in death by two sisters. He is survived by his wife, Irene; one son; one daughter; two grandsons; one granddaughter; one brother; and one sister.

### Roger William Fleming 1934-2008

Roger Fleming was born Aug. 16, 1934, in Burlington, Wis. He died Oct. 2, 2008.

A 1960 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at St. John, Town Gibson/Two Creeks, Wis.; Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.; Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.; and Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Janice; one son; two daughters; five grandsons; four granddaughters; two brothers; and one sister.

### Norbert Arthur Walter Gieschen 1930-2008

Norbert Gieschen was born Aug. 30, 1930, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Oct. 3, 2008, in De Soto, Wis.

A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Trinity, Hillrose, Colo.; Grace, Pueblo, Colo.; St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.; St. John's, Wood Lake, Minn.; Salem, Loretto, Minn.; St. John, Fremont, Wis.; and St. John, De Soto, Wis.

He is preceded in death by two brothers. He is survived by his wife, Caroline; two sons; two daughters; two grandsons; one granddaughter; one brother; and one sister.

### Marjorie Emelie Toepel 1945-2008


Marjorie Toepel was born July 26, 1945, in Sheboygan, Wis. She died Oct. 8, 2008, in Howards Grove, Wis.

A 1967 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Our Savior, Wausau, Wis., and Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.

She is survived by one brother.

*Through my Bible*

IN 3 YEARS



02/2009

1. Leviticus 8	15. Lev. 26
2. Lev. 9, 10	16. Lev. 27
3. Lev. 11	17. Hebrews 1
4. Lev. 12:1-13:46	18. Heb. 2
5. Lev. 13:47-14:32	19. Heb. 3:1-6
6. Lev. 14:33-15:33	20. Heb. 3:7-4:13
7. Lev. 16	21. Heb. 4:14-5:10
8. Lev. 17	22. Heb. 5:11-6:8
9. Lev. 18	23. Heb. 6:9-20
10. Lev. 19, 20	24. Heb. 7:1-14
11. Lev. 21, 22	25. Heb. 7:15-28
12. Lev. 23	26. Heb. 8
13. Lev. 24	27. Heb. 9:1-15
14. Lev. 25	28. Heb. 9:16-28



*The Internet has become a vast maze of information.*

*Knowing where to look for*

*Christian content can make the journey easier.*

Going on vacation? Relocating because of your job? Visiting out-of-town relatives? Find a WELS or Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) church in the vicinity at <http://wels.locatorsearch.com>. Just insert the city and state to find service times, driving directions, and contact information of local ministries. You can also refer a relative or friend through the locator. The information you provide will be automatically forwarded to an area WELS/ELS ministry for follow-up.

What if you can't make it to church at all? You can download audio and video services and sermons from WELS churches around the country. Some even offer live streaming worship opportunities. Find it at [www.wels.net/jump/onlineworship](http://www.wels.net/jump/onlineworship).



## New financial challenge for synod

After a year of positive synod financial reports, WELS received news in mid-November that because of the country's current economic situation, two major donors will have to suspend or reduce contributions to support synod operations by an estimated \$4 million. Although exact numbers will not be available until the end of January, WELS leadership is examining how this decrease will affect current and future ministry.

According to Todd Poppe, WELS chief financial officer, a buffer fund that was created by a surplus in 2007-08 should be able to cover shortages in the current fiscal year (July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009); beyond that, there may be significant shortfalls.

Factors that will impact the synod in the short- and long-term include the performance of the economy and results of the Year of Jubilee, a special debt-elimination offering held in November and December 2008. By the end of January, WELS will also have numbers tallied from the 2008 Congregation Mission Offerings, as well as mission offering

commitments for 2009.

WELS president Mark Schroeder says that faced with these new challenges, we as a synod need to continue to trust in our unfailing God. "As we look back over the last year and a half, we just saw one blessing after another from God," he says. "Nothing has really changed. God is still blessing us but now in a different way. Instead of a surplus, we are faced with a real financial challenge. This is serious, but God is giving us time to prepare, respond, and to make contingency plans—all the while, confident in God's promises."

The Synodical Council—WELS' leadership group charged with maintaining ministry direction, overseeing the work of the synod, and balancing the synod budget—is currently looking at ways to reduce expenditures. In the remaining months of this fiscal year, every area of ministry is being asked to review all activities, including existing ministry programs, travel, and meetings, and to carry out only absolutely necessary functions. With only a few vital exceptions, current vacancies in called

and hired positions will not be filled, and no new positions will be added.

Schroeder says the areas of ministry have also been asked to review the budget estimates they submitted in October and consider reducing or eliminating programs and positions, keeping in mind the priorities established by the last convention. They will also be asked to consider a greater use of the special funds that they have on hand to maintain or transition ministry programs.

"There's still a lot we don't know, so we certainly need to plan for the worst-case scenario," says Schroeder. "There might be some changes in store and there might be some new and different ways of doing things that require prayer, creativity, and using all the judgment that God gives us. But finally it's going to rest in him blessing our efforts."

To view WELS' latest financial reports, visit [www.wels.net/jump/finance](http://www.wels.net/jump/finance). Stay up-to-date with synod news by subscribing to the "Together" e-newsletter, sent out the first and third Monday of each month, at <http://together.wels.net/subscribe>.

## WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod leaders meet

The Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum, a biennial meeting of leaders from WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, met in October 2008 at Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minn., to share information and discuss joint concerns.

The Forum began in 1967 after the Synodical Conference, a fellowship organization between WELS, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), dissolved due to doctrinal differences with the LCMS.

"Leaders of WELS and the ELS felt they needed something to replace the Synodical Conference—as a gathering where our synods

could interact and communicate with each other," says Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman of the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations and current chairman of the Forum.

According to Nass, 12 leaders from each synod attend the Forum, where they update one another on happenings in the synods and then participate in small group discus-

sions between leaders with similar interests. This year they discussed overseas churches where both synods have a connection and an interest—places like Scandinavia, Latvia, and India.

"The Forum does a good job of keeping the lines of communication open between the synods and discussing matters of common interest,"

says Nass. "Also if there are concerns, they can be presented and discussed."

He continues, "There always has been a wonderful spirit of Christian fellowship and love. It's a joy to see the leaders of our sister synods interact in such a positive and Christian way."



Leaders from WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod met in October to share information and discuss joint concerns.



# Let your light shine



In September 2008, Hurricane Ike delivered tragedy, debris, suffering, and loss to the Gulf Coast region of the United States. But the delivery also included blessings . . . by the truckload!

At Abiding Word in Houston, we were keenly aware of our being spared much of what was delivered to others. When the winds and rain finally let up, our church family started pulling together to make contacts with members, share meals, and help with clean-up and repairs.

“Did you have major damage? Do you need help?”

“Do you have electricity yet? Ours came on yesterday. Would you like to use my generator? Can you use some ice?”

Our congregational president, Juan Garcia, said he and his wife could use just one bag of ice. They were fine, keeping some cheese and milk in a cooler. One bag was enough.

Then we received a call from Pastor Tim Soukop from Our Savior in San Antonio. One of his members worked for a regional grocery outlet and could set up an ice distribution center at any location in the Houston area. The only requirement was to provide manpower to offload the ice. It seemed like a great opportunity to reach out into the community since so many were still without power. Abiding Word’s pastor,

Steve Valleskey, called Juan to see if this could be coordinated. Juan was glad to reach out into the community like this. He had no other thoughts but to do it.

The next day we had a new visual image of God’s grace—a semi-trailer truckload of 4,000 bags of ice (20 tons!) parked on our church property. There to offload the first of many bags of ice and to manage the day’s activity was Juan Garcia.

So many neighbors were so thankful and replied with expressions of faith in their Savior and heartfelt thank-yous to us and the grocer. They came in vehicles hardly able to make it through the parking lot, and they came in Jaguars and Mercedes. The need for ice was a great leveler that day.

In the midst of all this, one visual image made a lasting impression on us: Juan had asked for just one bag of ice.

What an amazing picture of God’s grace beyond what we could have imagined—a picture of God’s grace by the truckload!

*Sally Valleskey*



Juan Garcia helped coordinate an ice distribution center at Abiding Word, Houston, Texas, after Hurricane Ike hit the Gulf Coast in September 2008.

## Another door opens for prison ministry

Through a cooperative effort between WELS Prison Ministry and Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries (WLIM)—an organization affiliated with WELS that brings the gospel to institutionalized people in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, and treatment centers—WELS is now able to expand efforts to bring the gospel to Milwaukee’s House of Correction, a co-ed county jail that releases approximately 24,000 inmates each year. “It is a tremendous opportunity,” says Pastor Robert Pasbrig, WLIM’s director of ministry advancement.

It all started when The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod approached WELS last September. For years, the Missouri Synod had a full-time chaplain at the facility, which has a long waiting list of religious organizations asking for hours each week to minister to inmates. But when it could no longer support the chaplain position, it offered 20 hours of chapel time to WELS in hopes of maintaining a strong Lutheran presence at the facility.

Now, a WELS layman and two WLIM chaplains spend 20 hours each week at the House of Correction, providing one-on-one counseling, Bible studies, and classes for inmates. In just the first month, Pasbrig says that the Bible classes almost tripled in size and many inmates requested personal counseling. As a result, Martin Rosewicz, the lay evangelist who spends 12 hours each week at the facility, is now enrolled in the synod’s Congregational Assistant Program to hone his counseling skills.

Currently only male inmates at the House of Correction are being served, but Pasbrig says that WLIM and WELS Prison Ministry hope to recruit more female volunteers to get involved with ministry to women at the facility, especially in the area of counseling. “The potential for one-on-one counseling is unlimited,” says Pasbrig. “The facility is set up with a number of private counseling rooms. With our additional 20 hours each week, and with the rights and privileges the authorities have given us, ministry by lay volunteers could be increased. We may also be able to get additional time during evening and weekend hours.”

These two groups also have plans to provide follow-up for inmates after they are released. Although details of the program are still being worked out, Pasbrig says he’d like to get ex-offenders into classes on readjusting to free living, practicing good citizenship, and growing in faith.

“I pray that the Holy Spirit would richly bless this opportunity to serve a large number of people with the pure Word of God,” says Pasbrig.



## Expanded committee gears up for women's ministry

It all began with a brainstorming session in 2002. A group of pastors, professors, and women from across the synod gathered to review and reaffirm the relationships between men and women in the church and generate ideas to enhance WELS' ministry to women and by women. Now six years later the Women's Ministry Committee, part of WELS Adult Discipleship, has grown to 19 members who are ready to implement projects that equip women to use their God-given talents for encouragement and service.



At its October meeting, the Women's Ministry Committee expanded from 5 to 19 members.

"This is exciting because now we have so many more people who can get the message out that God has gifted women to do many wonderful things inside and outside of our churches," says executive committee member Nicole Balza. "It's a blessing to see talented women who the Lord has blessed come together to do his work."

Formed in 2003, the original five-member committee has been working to foster and encourage the personal and corporate ministry of women. Its most notable projects to date include

the "Heirs Together" Bible study to encourage and educate both men and women about serving together ([www.wels.net/jump/womenstudy](http://www.wels.net/jump/womenstudy)) and WELS' first national women's ministry conference, held in July 2007 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

With its recent expansion, Balza says that the committee can begin work on some bigger projects like planning a second leadership conference, producing a women's

magazine, and creating a Web site that acts as an online community for women.

New committee member Linda Buxa is excited about the prospects and about the women she will be working with on the committee. "These women are amazing," she says. "They really love Jesus and are so devoted to serving him and reaching out to others. They see how God has called men and women to serve him together."

Buxa says she hopes many more women will get involved in this ministry. "The more godly women, the better!" she says. "I think the Ecclesiastes passage is so true: 'If one falls down, his friend can help him up' (4:10). As with anything in life, people can get overwhelmed or tired. With more people on the committee, we can pick up, encourage each other, and keep the ministry moving forward."

*The committee is currently looking for Bible studies, devotions, retreat packages, and any other resources produced for or by women. Materials can be e-mailed to [womenministry@wels.net](mailto:womenministry@wels.net). For more information about the Women's Ministry Committee, visit [www.wels.net/jump/women](http://www.wels.net/jump/women).*

## Congregation finds new way to share the gospel

One leadership, one vision, one plan for ministry, and one staff—but two church buildings. This is the new approach that St. Andrew, which now has sites in both Middleton and Waunakee, Wis., is trying to reach out to more people.

"[This multi-site approach] grew out of a vision that we gathered about three years ago now," says Randy Hunter, pastor at St. Andrew. "We said, 'We're blessed with a new, beautiful facility, but we just know there are people that would never come here. So let's get out of the building, go into the communities, and see if we can reach them in other ways.'"

After a two-year study, the congregation decided a satellite ministry

might work. They also thought about different ways in which to present the gospel and came up with an approach that Hunter refers to as "casual about church; serious about God."

"We studied our culture: its movement away from church and its movement toward community and the desire to get together at a café or a Starbucks," says Hunter. "Our goal was to recreate that atmosphere and bring the gospel to it."

St. Andrew looked at possibilities for its new satellite location, such as storefronts in area strip malls, but instead was able to acquire an existing church building.

The only problem was the interior

didn't match their "casual about church" approach. So the congregation hired a popular coffeehouse designer—coincidentally someone who didn't attend church—and asked him to design the kind of place where he'd feel comfortable coming to hear about Jesus.

Hunter says the result looks and feels like a café, complete with chairs, couches, coffee tables, and coffee machines in the back. In the front of the room is a simple altar and a screen where Hunter's prerecorded sermons are projected.

"After the sermon, the worship leader invites everyone to take a break, refresh their coffee, and get settled down in their chair or couch



## Wisconsin Lutheran High School calls first campus pastor

In an English classroom at Wisconsin Lutheran High School (WLHS), Milwaukee, the teacher is discussing demonstrative sentences. As a simple example, she quotes the Bible verse, “Jesus wept.” A student raises his hand and inquires why Jesus wept. “Well, because Lazarus died,” the teacher answers. The student’s hand goes up again. “Who is Lazarus?” he asks. Realizing an opportunity to share Jesus with an unchurched student, the teacher asks the class to tell the story of Jesus’ loving miracle.

The number of students without a church home that attend WLHS (and the 33 WELS elementary schools that feed into it) has steadily grown over the last several years. This is due in part to the Milwaukee Parental Choice program that gives parents vouchers to send their children to any participating school. Sixteen Lutheran elementary schools and two WELS high schools in Milwaukee—including WLHS—participate in the program. As WLHS’s superintendent Pastor Jim Kleist explains, “Our purpose is to help nurture students who already believe, but it is also to reach out to those that do not yet know Jesus.”

As the number of unchurched students

at WLHS grew, the school needed “a much more deliberate plan than simply requiring all students to attend religion classes,” Kleist shares.

In response to this need and others, WLHS called Pastor Brandon Wigley to serve as its first campus pastor. “My ultimate goal in this position is to share the gospel with the unchurched who join the WLHS family,” Wigley explains.

Wigley spends only about 20 percent of his time in a classroom, teaching two freshmen religion classes. This allows him to get to know the students and spend more time doing evangelism work—one on one—with the more than 50 students (and their families) who do not have a church home. “It was taught to me a long time ago that the first step in sharing the gospel is to establish a relationship—to build mutual trust and respect,” Wigley reflects. “And so my duties as campus pastor allow for many relationships to be built with the students in the classroom, the sports field, the hallways, chapel, or the cafeteria.”

Although this is only Wigley’s first semester with the students, the Lord has already blessed these relationships. Three students have inquired about



Pastor Brandon Wigley (left), recently called as the campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, builds relationships with students by assisting with basketball coaching.

being baptized. “By God’s grace, one young man—a senior—who comes from a Jehovah’s Witnesses family confessed his faith in Jesus,” Wigley shares. “I baptized him in a private setting among the same teachers that were his spiritual mentors and friends.”

The WELS Commission on Parish Schools sees Wigley’s work as an important step toward strengthening the outreach ministry of WELS schools. “We are eager to gain new insights and ideas from Pastor Wigley’s work that can be shared with outreach leaders in other schools,” administrator Jim Brandt says. “We are confident God will richly bless his work at WLHS and beyond.”

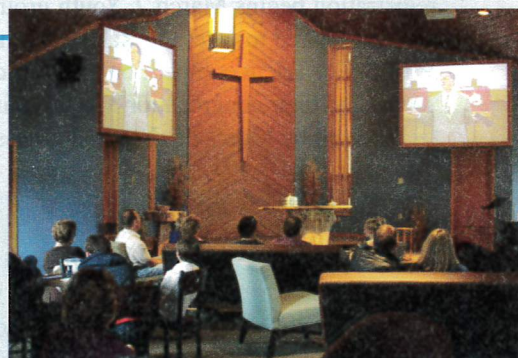
for a Bible study on the sermon text,” says Hunter. “If you think about what it would be like to have some people over to worship Jesus in your living room—that’s the atmosphere.”

Hunter says that approximately 50 to 60 people attend each week, many of whom had not been attending any church. “Several families are very interested in growing in the faith with us and partnering with us,” says Hunter. “We’re trying to keep it from becoming the thing that turned a lot of people away from church. We’re trying to provide a casual atmosphere where you’re free to talk about what this means to you and how it applies to your life. We get the chance to give

the same teaching that we do in any church, but just in a different setting.”

Hunter says this new venture is a great addition to St. Andrew’s services in Middleton, which features a more traditional liturgical style. The congregation has a thriving music ministry—more than 150 musicians and soloists perform throughout the year. The congregation also reaches out to Middleton and surrounding communities through its school, where more than 60 percent of the students are nonmembers.

“The most important thing is determining what it is going to take to reach people that aren’t coming to us,” says Hunter. “Anything that isn’t unbiblical is fair game. Let’s just try it! It’s up to



Pastor Randy Hunter delivers his sermon via video to worshippers at St. Andrew, Waunakee. This satellite location is just one way the congregation is getting out of its own building and into the community.

our churches to step up and see what we can do to get the gospel out there.”

For more information, visit [www.st-andrew-online.org](http://www.st-andrew-online.org).



## WELS news briefs

### Board for Parish Services

414-256-3228; [bruce.becker@sab.wels.net](mailto:bruce.becker@sab.wels.net)

The Board for Parish Services hosted a **national leadership forum** in November 2008 in which leaders from 30 congregations across the country that have been blessed with significant growth in worship attendance over the past ten years discussed ministry trends, identified opportunities and challenges, and shared ideas. "Our ultimate goal is to learn from these congregations: what they are doing and how God is blessing those efforts," says Pastor Bruce Becker, administrator for Parish Services. Information and ideas from this forum will be reviewed for common themes and shared with synod leaders. The forum was funded by special gifts and a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. For the first time since August 2006, WELS Parish Assistance—which offers fee-based consulting services to help congregations analyze and improve their ministries—has **three full-time consultants**. Pastor Paul Kelm accepted the call to be the third consultant in October 2008. Kelm, whose most recent call was serving as pastor at St. Mark, De Pere/Green Bay, Wis., already has served as a parish consultant from 1998 to 2004. "This call is something that I think matches my gifts and my personality," says Kelm. "And my years here at St. Mark, in a large parish, have helped to shape some of the ways in which I can help congregations as well."

### Commission on Youth Discipleship

414-256-3274; [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net)

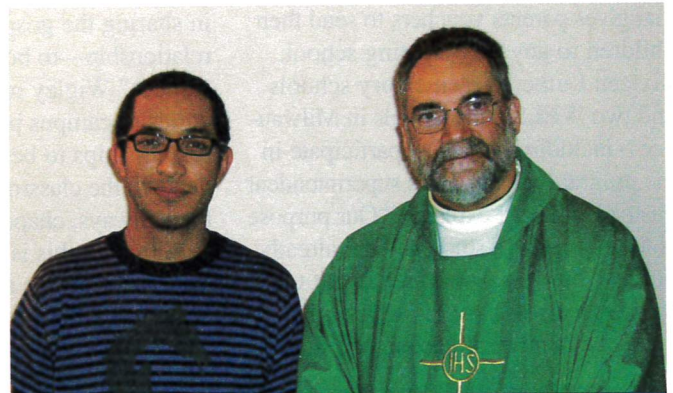
Registration information has been mailed to all congregations for the **2009 WELS International Youth Rally**, which will be held July 8-11 at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Actual registration begins March 2. Youth groups and individuals are also invited to enter the Rally Commercial Contest or the WELS Got Talent competition to win a cash prize for themselves and their congregation's youth ministry. Entries must be received by March 15. You can access information about

the rally and the rally competitions as well as register online at [www.welsyouthrally.net](http://www.welsyouthrally.net).

### Board for World Missions

414-256-3233; [dan.koelpin@sab.wels.net](mailto:dan.koelpin@sab.wels.net)

With the help of its sister synod the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi, WELS is now able to **finish the lengthy registration process required to start a mission in Mozambique**, Africa. Missionaries Bill Meier and Jeff Enderle, who currently are finishing their language training in Portugal, traveled to the Mozambican city of Nampula in October 2008 to work on registration and to find housing, schools, and transportation. "After our trip, we have readjusted our goal for residing in Nampula to late spring of 2009, hopefully April or May," says Meier. "In the meantime, we will continue to work to improve our Portuguese . . . and make real contributions to the ministry of the Lutheran Church of Portugal by becoming more involved in leading worship services and teaching Bible studies."



In November, Pastor Artur Villares (right) of the Lutheran Church of Portugal baptized Paulo César Arimatéa in Vila Nova de Gaia. The entire Lutheran Church of Portugal consists of fewer than 20 souls, worshipping in three congregations across the country.

I was helping the kindergartners bundle up for the walk to church for our weekly chapel service.

From behind me sweet little Isabella says, "Mrs. Westendorf, Ella didn't have any mission money so I shared mine."

As I turned around she held up one half of her dollar bill.

*Chris Westendorf, Okauchee, Wisconsin*

On the bright side



One who maintains that all of the prophecies in the book of Revelation have been fulfilled in the past or were being fulfilled when the book was written.



## District news

### Arizona-California

WELS Committee on Relief sent \$7,500 to **Grace, Yorba Linda, Calif.**, after fires passed through southern California in mid-November 2008. No members were injured, and the church building was not damaged; however, one family's home was destroyed. The funds helped the member family and provided immediate assistance to affected community members. Read more about the fires on page 27.

### Minnesota

An alumni association has been formed to connect the more than 7,000 alumni of **Martin Luther College (MLC)** and WELS' two previous training colleges—Dr. Martin Luther College and Northwestern College. The main goal is to unite alumni in prayer and support for their college. The initial alumni board met on MLC's campus in October 2008 to set goals, develop priorities, plan events, and formally adopt a constitution.

In September 2008, **St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn.**, dedicated its updated facilities, which include a new fellowship hall,

church entryway, bell tower and steeple, choir loft, and covered drive-up at the church entrance. Other updates include a new classroom for the school and a restored parsonage. "The essence of God's grace is that he treats us better than what we deserve, and this is just another example of that grace," says Pastor Lon Kuether. "It is now our goal and challenge not just to thank God, but to faithfully use this as a place for Christian worship and service to his glory alone."

### Happy anniversary!

SEW—**Bryan Gerlach**, administrator for WELS Commission on Worship, celebrated 25 years in the ministry on Nov. 10, 2008.

WW—Two professors at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., celebrated anniversaries in the ministry on Oct. 12, 2008: **Alan Jeffers (40)** and **Peter Kiecker (25)**.

MN—**St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn.**, celebrated 35 years of ministry on Sept. 14, 2008.

**West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.**, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this school year.

**Lois Dammann**, organist and choir director at Zion, Sanborn, Minn., is celebrating 70 years of musical service this year.

District reporters for this month: CA—Hermann John; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Tim Kemnitz; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

### South Atlantic



Five youth group members of a WELS home mission in the Caribbean—Trinity in St. Lucia, West Indies—were "wowed" when they traveled to Canada last summer to help Cross of Life in Mississauga, Ontario, distribute 15,000 flyers and canvass new homes in the area. This is the first time members of Trinity have left the Caribbean on a mission trip. "This experience has taught me that talking about God and what he has done for me is not as difficult as I used to think," says Conroy Edward, student in the Caribbean Christian Training Institute, a program that trains church leaders in WELS' Caribbean missions. Erik Landwehr, staff minister at Trinity, also went on the trip. "[The students] simply understand mission work better now," he says. "They have put their blood, sweat, and tears into hard mission work, and they have seen God bless it—by increasing their faith and zeal and also by bringing in a few visitors to Cross of Life."

### Nebraska



Pictured is the baptism of Chinese student Yitong "Ethan" Sui, the first international student to receive a diploma from Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco. Four other boys from China, Korea, and Thailand also attended last year. This year, Yitong and one of the others are continuing their education at Bethany Lutheran College, an Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) school in Mankato, Minn.



**CHANGES IN MINISTRY**

**Pastors**

- Backus, John D.**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
**Kelm, Paul E.**, to Parish Assistance Consultant, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Kiecker, Matthew J.**, to Shepherd of Peace, Norfolk, Neb.  
**Luchterhand, Lyle L.**, to retirement  
**Mahnke, Jeffrey P.**, to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.  
**Main, Donald G.**, to St. Paul, Morris, Minn.  
**Spiegelberg, Timothy**, to Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
**Straseske, Anthony L.**, to Grace, Dakota/Trinity, Wilson Township, Minn.  
**Uhlhorn, Ronald W.**, to retirement  
**Zindler, Ronald F.**, to Grace, Powers/St. Paul, Hyde, Mich.

**Teachers**

- Ewald, Cheryl L.**, to Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.  
**Lai, Laura J.**, to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.  
**Reede, Amy A.**, to King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.  
**Schmitz, Susan D.**, to retirement  
**Staab, John T.**, to retirement  
**Vanderheyden, Patricia**, to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.

**Staff ministers**

- Lambrecht, Adam D.**, to Shepherd of the Mesa, Battlement Mesa, Colo.  
**Liebner, Carl**, to Christian Giving Counselor, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Schubring, Tad R.**, to St. Mark, De Pere, Wis.  
**Staide, Pastor Steven O.**, to Christian Giving Counselor, Milwaukee, Wis.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Synodical Council invites all voting members of WELS to nominate a qualified

- layman to serve as a member on the WELS VEBA Commission
- layman and active pastor to serve as members on the WELS Pension Commission
- layman to serve as a member on the WELS Investment Funds, Inc.
- layman to serve as a member on the WELS Church Extension Fund
- layman to serve as a member on the WELS Foundation

Position descriptions can be accessed at [www.wels.net/jump/sc](http://www.wels.net/jump/sc). Nominations must be received by Jan. 16. Access the nomination form at [www.wels.net/jump/nomform](http://www.wels.net/jump/nomform) or call the President's Office, 414-256-3202. The list of candidates will be published in late January at [www.wels.net/jump/nomalert](http://www.wels.net/jump/nomalert).

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**Weslaco, Texas**—Abiding Savior (35). Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; dinner to follow.

RSVP requested by Jan. 25. Joel Sauer, 956-968-5228.

**COMING EVENTS**

**Marriage retreats**—Looking for an anniversary gift idea for you and your spouse? Consider a marriage retreat near you. Web site, [www.welsmarriageretreat.org](http://www.welsmarriageretreat.org).

- Jan. 23–25. Orlando, Fla.
- Jan. 30–Feb. 1. Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Feb. 6–8. Galena, Ill.
- Feb. 13–15. Neenah, Wis.
- Feb. 27–Mar. 1. Minneapolis, Minn.

**Martin Luther College Wind Symphony tour schedule**—507-354-8221.

- Feb. 7–7 P.M., Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Feb. 8—TBD, Woodwind ensemble at Bethel and brass ensemble at Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, S.D.; 4:30 P.M., Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
- Feb. 9—1:30 P.M., West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.
- Feb. 10—1:30 P.M., Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.
- Feb. 11—7:30 P.M., Martin Luther College auditorium, New Ulm, Minn.

**Evangelism workshop**—Mar. 7, 9 A.M.-3 P.M. Site, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Theme: "Be prepared to answer." Speaker: Prof. Mark Paustian. 414-771-2530; [church.secretary@FairviewLutheran.com](mailto:church.secretary@FairviewLutheran.com). Web site, [www.ShareGrace.net](http://www.ShareGrace.net).

**Prep Singers Spring concert tour**—920-261-4352.

- Mar. 11–7 P.M., Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.
- Mar. 12–7 P.M., Shepherd of Peace, Powell, Ohio.
- Mar. 13–7:30 P.M., Bethlehem, Manassas, Va.
- Mar. 15–8, 9:30, & 11 A.M., Grace, Falls Church, Va.; 7 P.M., Resurrection, Chesapeake, Va.
- Mar. 16–7 P.M., Living Hope, Midlothian, Va.
- Mar. 17–7 P.M., Grace, Charlotte, N.C.
- Mar. 18–7 P.M., Living Word, Gray, Tenn.
- Mar. 19–7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn.
- Mar. 20–7 P.M., Victory, Lexington, Ky.
- Mar. 21–7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Mar. 22–10:15 A.M., Bethlehem, Carmel, Ind.; 7 P.M., Peace, Wilmot, Wis.
- Mar. 23–7 P.M., St. John, Watertown, Wis.

**Today's Christian Women Retreat**—Mar. 13-15. Sheraton Lansing Hotel, Lansing, Mich. Theme: "Lord, you have the words of eternal life." Web site, [www.tcwr.org](http://www.tcwr.org).

**Pathways to Christ Retreat**—Mar. 20-22. LaSures Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. 920-233-1069. Web site, [www.martinlutheroshkosh.com](http://www.martinlutheroshkosh.com).

**WELS Church Librarians Organization meeting**—Mar. 21, 8:15 A.M. St. John, Lannon, Wis. Marilyn Lemke, 262-251-4145; [m-elemke@wi.rr.com](mailto:m-elemke@wi.rr.com).

**Christian Woman Today Retreat**—Mar. 27-29. Olympia Spa & Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Theme: "Love each other as I have loved you." Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.

**2009 WELS Regional Handbell Festivals**—Web site, [www.wellsbells.com](http://www.wellsbells.com).

- Apr. 18-19. Concert, 2 P.M., Apr. 19. Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
- Apr. 18-19. Concert, 2 P.M., Apr. 19. St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
- Apr. 25-26. Concert, 2 P.M., Apr. 26. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

**China study trip**—May 17–June 2. Hosts, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Tour sites include Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Beijing, Xi'an, Guilin and Hong Kong. Earl Heidtke, 507-354-8224 ext. 244; Glen Thompson, 414-443-8945. Web site, [www.wlc.edu/academics/his/](http://www.wlc.edu/academics/his/).

**National Campus Ministry Retreat**—May 18-21. Metropolis Hotel, Action City, and Florian Gardens, Eau Claire, Wis. Hosted by UW–Eau Claire. Theme: "Walk THIS Way." Web site, [www.campusministryrally.com](http://www.campusministryrally.com).

**46th annual LWMS convention**—June 25-28. Sheraton Denver Hotel, Denver, Colo. Hosts, Rocky Mountain Circuit. Theme: "Mission with an altitude." Web site, [www.lwms.org](http://www.lwms.org).

**Prayer conference**—Aug. 14-15. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Hosted by WELS Prayer Institute. Steve Witte, 920-499-740; Reg Draheim, 920-497-1000.

**NAMES WANTED**

**Young professionals/students on north side of Chicago**—Mike Borgwardt, Crossroads Church, 773-772-0400; [info@crossroadschicago.org](mailto:info@crossroadschicago.org).

**Camp Shiloh Lutheran Retreat, Pittsburg, Texas**—Volunteer opportunity for maintenance couples. Wayne Fischer, 903-855-1800; [director@campshilohretreat.org](mailto:director@campshilohretreat.org).

**Granville Neighborhood Health Center, Milwaukee, Wis.**—Volunteer opportunity for health care workers and others, Ken Fisher, 414-354-7320; [Pastor@RisenSavior-Luth.org](mailto:Pastor@RisenSavior-Luth.org).

**Williston, N.D.**—Dave Ruddat, 406-635-2180.

**Sparks/Spanish Springs, Nev.**—Steve Hillmer, 775-354-2800.

**WELS members living in Hong Kong**—c/o Asia Lutheran Seminary English Language Fellowship, [jcl@als.org.hk](mailto:jcl@als.org.hk).

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; [bulletinboard@sab.wels.net](mailto: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**



Copper the beagle was just one of the evacuees who ended up at Grace, Yorba Linda, Calif., as wildfires spread through the area in November 2008. One WELS family lost its home, and many others were forced to evacuate.

Pastor Daniel Wagenknecht, who also had to evacuate, likens the church to a refugee camp as people brought important documents, bags of clothes, and of course, family pets. "We pretty much had a zoo in the upstairs classrooms," he says. "We had nine people, five dogs, and seven cats at the church on Saturday."

There had also been a wedding at the church earlier that day. "By the time the wedding started, the smoke was getting pretty thick and the fire was on the edge of Yorba Linda," says Wagenknecht. Afterward the wedding party was able to move their reception last minute—food and all—to the church's fellowship hall. Once the party was in full swing, Wagenknecht says almost 30 "refugees" starting wandering in and the wedding party invited everyone to help themselves to the food.

"It was an interesting juxtaposition, having the fellowship hall filled with well-dressed wedding attendees having a great time eating cake, and refugees coming in and grabbing sandwiches," says Wagenknecht. "It was just a great expression of Christian love and charity for the family to say, 'Come on in and have all the food you want.'"

And the congregation showed that same Christian love in its community following the fires. Wagenknecht says 118 homes in Yorba Linda were destroyed. Grace used part of the \$7,500 it received from WELS Committee on Relief to provide immediate assistance to affected community members.

One woman in particular was moved after Grace helped her brother-in-law, whose home had been completely destroyed by the fire. "You were the first person to make contact with him and offer assistance," she wrote. "You offered him whatever he felt he needed. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your church's kind generosity. You came to him even before his own church did. . . . I have told everyone that I have come across about your church's act of kindness. It will not be forgotten and was so much appreciated. This is what makes us the community that we are—thank you!"

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.

# FIRE

## IN THE BIBLE

In the Old Testament, fire was often used for rituals and sacrifices, but fire played a different role in some well-known Bible stories as well. See if you can remember the men who were part of each fiery story below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ went to heaven in a chariot of fire.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ burned the fields of the Philistines by attaching torches to foxes' tails.
3. \_\_\_\_\_'s sheep and servants were destroyed by fire.
4. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ were thrown in a fiery furnace but were not harmed.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ and his family fled from Sodom as burning sulfur rained on the city.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ spoke with God, who appeared to him in a burning bush.
7. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ had tongues of fire rest on their heads.

## ANSWERS

1. Elijah (2 Kings 2).
2. Samson (Judges 15).
3. Job (Job 1).
4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3).
5. Lot (Genesis 19).
6. Moses (Exodus 3).
7. Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Matthias (Acts 2).



# 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."*

**Nate (inactive teen):** Pastor, there's something I'm a little worried about.

**Rev. James (St. Barnabas' pastor):** What's that, Nate?

**Nate:** We have been given a wonderful opportunity to express ourselves here at this retreat . . . but what's going to happen back in the congregation?

**Abby (college student, attends when home on weekends):** Yeah, it seems like everything is focused either on grade school kids

or on adults. Young people sort of get lost in the middle.

**Steven (college student, attends occasionally):** I'm sure the church could do more . . . but if young people aren't active in the church, we have to accept much of the blame for that ourselves. High schoolers and college students have so much else going on. We're not always motivated to be involved in the church as much as we could be.

**Jacki (inactive member, in her 20s):** That's also true for us 20-somethings who didn't go to college.

**Riley (recently confirmed youth):** I started going to youth group, but I punted because it seemed mostly an excuse to go bowling and eat pizza. I do that with my friends from school already. Get-togethers in church were kind of lame.

**Gina (active teen):** If the church is going to have programs for youth, they should be ministry programs. Challenge us with deeper spiritual issues than pizza. Have confidence in us and give us something important to do. We don't want to be treated like we're still fourth-graders.

**Mrs. Bonita (Sunday school teacher):** That's a great thought. God entrusted some young people with vital roles in his

work. David was barely more than a boy, and he stood up to Goliath when none of the men of Israel would.

**Erin (college student, training to be a Lutheran school teacher):** And Mary was likely still a teenager when God chose her to be the mother of the Savior.

**Rev. James:** We do need to recognize that young people are as much a part of the church as are their parents and other adults. No persons in the congregation can be told that their involvement doesn't matter. That would be like one

part of your body not wanting participation by other parts of your body—like your eyes telling your hands, "I don't need you!"

**Tim (active teen):** I saw a survey online, showing that more than 90 percent of

teens said they would like to help in more meaningful ways in their congregations—including everything from service projects to assisting with teaching and with evangelism.

**Nate:** Teenagers may not give the impression of being crazy religious, but we do have Christ in our hearts, and it hurts when the church ignores us or doesn't seem to want our input.

**Mr. Newsome (church council member):** Sounds like we're all agreed on getting the youth more involved. Now we just need to brainstorm various ways of making that happen in our congregation.

**Gina:** I've got a list started—half a page already! Let me read it to you, and you'll all be able to add plenty more ideas for sure!

*The St. Barnabas forum is concluding . . . but the conversations in your congregation may be just beginning! Go to [www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy](http://www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy) to find resources, including a study series entitled "Creating Youth-full Churches."*

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

**we are**  
part of the church too!

Find more resources at [www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy](http://www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy).



# Helping youth stay on the **RIGHT PATH**

Young people look for guidance from leaders.

John A. Braun

*John Roth was just like any other kid. He had a*

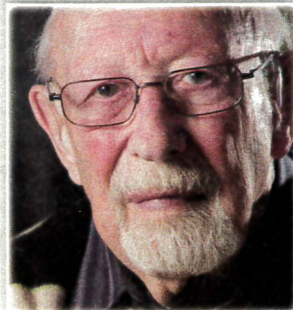
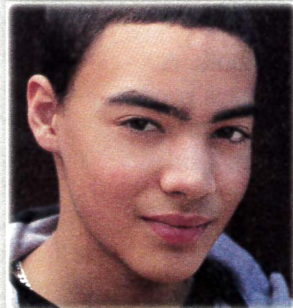
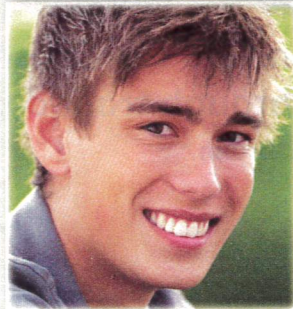
great family, went to the Lutheran elementary school his congregation supported, and even attended the Lutheran high school nearby. He married and had a family. He and his wife, Vicki, celebrated their 34th wedding anniversary by giving a special check for the youth organization of their congregation. He wanted to give back something for the direction he had received when he was young.

It's not fair to say that the check was the only thing he did to give back. He has served on the church council and been a part-time coach for cross country and basketball as well as a volleyball official. He loves his role as mentor for young people. He says, "I wanted to help them use the talents they have and be the best they can be." That sounds familiar, but John adds, "I want to support kids and help bring them up in the Christian faith. I want to give them confidence and be there for them."

## *Receiving encouragement*

Part of the reason for giving back lies in his own past. John lived in a Christian home with many advantages, but the neighborhood had its attractions that were different. "Where I lived, some of the neighbors got into trouble, and I could have gone the wrong way," he says. As the youngest of five, he was running with a bad crowd.

As he looks back, he remembers the influence of a youth leader that helped him turn the corner. He doesn't remember one single event that made the difference; the leader simply went out of his way to encourage him. "He gave me confidence to be what I could be," John says. "He told me that I was better than following the path away from my faith." That leader took John under his wing and nurtured him.



Now John thanks God every day for the opportunities he has to talk with and encourage young people. Parents have come to recognize his influence, and, after their kids have grown up, they greet him with a warm smile and chat about the days he was a friend and role model for their children. John counts those moments as a special blessing from God. He knows how the grace of God has made him what he is, and now he wants to help kids today find their way down the right path.

## *Giving encouragement*

But how did he get started helping kids? He was asked to help coach. At first he was reluctant: "I didn't think I could do it," he admits. "I was scared—all those kids waiting for me and expecting something from me." But he decided to give it a try. He overcame the fear and discovered how much he enjoyed it. It's been 15 years since.

Seeing these young people attend church and grow up as believers brings a deep sense of humility and gratitude to John. "They need leaders. The most rewarding thing is that you can have an impact on someone else," he says.

He hopes others will get involved as well. "Don't be afraid to get involved. Help the young people make use of the talents God has given them."

One young believer touched by the love and care of an older believer can continue on the right path. Perhaps there is someone whom John touched that will also want to give back and touch the lives of another generation. Perhaps someone you touched can do the same.

*John Braun is the executive editor of Forward in Christ.*

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



# TAKEN HOME

A family leans on God's promises to help them through tragedy.

John A. Braun

Ben and his high school friend had been downstairs watching TV, but it was time for his friend to go home. Ben told his mom he'd be home by his curfew in a half hour. He and his friend were just going to take a quick drive around. Ben's friend had worked with his dad to fix up the car. A car is important to every teen, and driving is a special new privilege.

Darice, Ben's mom, remembers that she and her husband, David, went to bed and fell asleep before Ben would have come home. "His door always made a little squeak. When I heard that, I knew he was home, but I fell asleep before I heard it [that night]," says Darice. Jessica, Ben's 15-year-old sister, was still up.

A little before midnight, Jessica woke them both. A policeman was at the front door, and he did not have good news. Ben was dead. On that late evening summer drive, his friend had missed a turn and hit a tree on Ben's side of the car. The driver walked away with scratches, but Ben was pronounced dead at the scene. "It was a shock. Words can't express," says Darice.

## COMFORT FROM GOD'S PROMISES

The next morning they began calling Ben's friends and family members. It was Monday morning so they also had to call his employers and tell them what had happened. Everyone was shocked and terribly sorry.

Darice also made a point of calling the young man who was driving that night. She invited him to the house

before the funeral. "I needed to tell him that he was merely an instrument in carrying out God's plan," she says. "Just as God forgave us through his Son, I could do nothing else but forgive him. It gave me an opportunity to share God's love and forgiveness with him, which he needed to hear because he was very distraught over losing his friend and was dealing with overwhelming feelings of guilt."

The funeral was moved from the church to the high school gym to accommodate the large crowd and give some relief from the July heat. Their pastor had prepared them for the funeral. "He said that there would be many people at the funeral and that we needed to be a rock for them," says Darice.

She continues, "Somehow we made it through. As I look back I don't know how I made it through. But you find the will to do it. I tried to be the rock Pastor said. The whole time I just knew that Ben was happy, and I was happy for him. He's in heaven, and he's waiting for us."

While he was alive, Ben did show his faith in Jesus. "Teens can be very uncommunicative, and I found myself at times worrying about my son's faith life," says Darice. "What a tremendous comfort I received when his religion teacher came up to us and told us how our son enjoyed sharing his faith in the classroom. Many of his friends, some of them unchurched, came up to me and mentioned how he always told them how important it was for them to go to church. Ben was someone whose Savior was very important to him. He told others about his Savior."



## HEALING TAKES TIME

But after five years, Darice and David still think about their son every day. “There is no bigger heartache than waking up every morning and the first thing that hits you square in the stomach is knowing he did not sleep in his bed last night. You won’t hear his voice that day. Small things, like you won’t wash his socks anymore, are especially hard to bear,” says Darice. “Yet, you know that he is singing with the angels at that moment, even as the tears roll down your cheeks.”

It affected Ben’s sister too. For a year after Ben’s death, Jessica didn’t want to talk about her brother. They had been close. But that first night, she reminded her mother that Ben was in heaven and happy. Jessica has grown closer to her parents, and she is such a blessing to them. Darice and David treasure their relationship with their daughter. “She hasn’t taken Ben’s place, but she has filled the void. I thank God every day for her,” says Darice.

Ben was his father’s little boy. David even chose his name before he was born. Like any parent, after the accident David felt guilty about the times he spoke harsh words to his son. But David too finds comfort in the Lord’s promises. His son is with the Lord. Time has a way of softening the blows. “Knowing that with God’s help you prepared your child for his eternal home gives you the strength to face another day without him,” says Darice.

It’s been a roller-coaster ride for the family—an emotional one with sudden ups and downs. Over the past five years, they have come to accept the unalterable reality that Ben is not with them. Grieving has brought sorrow and guilt. But it’s a natural process. And after those early days of disbelief and pain God has brought comfort. Darice explains, “I’ve talked with others who have lost children. You are numb at first, but in time you come to know the wonderful comfort that they are in heaven to carry you through the difficult days—perhaps for the rest of your life. I’m just so grateful that the Lord has been in my life. Knowing that we have a Savior who died on the cross for us has gotten me



*“I know that we are going to heaven and that we will see Ben again.”*

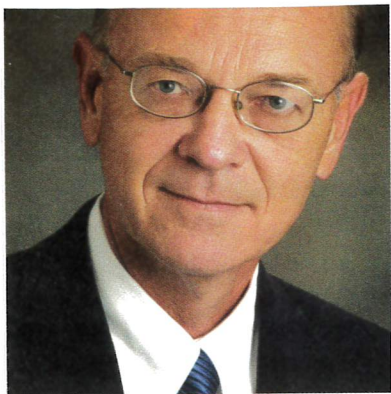
through. I know that we are going to heaven and that we will see Ben again.”

Family and friends must go on with life, even though they have been changed by the tragedy. Darice works in the extended-learning center as a teacher aide where Ben went to school. She sees a little of Ben in the students she encounters every day. And each day brings an opportunity for her to talk to teens about the importance of having a good relationship with their parents and especially the importance of the Lord Jesus and his great promises. “I think that working with teens has brought me great satisfaction,” she says.

Does this mother have some advice for other parents? Yes. “When I looked at the miracles I held for the first time after my children were born, I reminded myself that God had given this little one to me as a gift. I now had the privilege of teaching this child about God’s love,” says Darice. “I also reminded myself that at any time God can call this child back to him. What an honor then that God has entrusted me with one of his little lambs. Children are indeed a gift from God, and for a short time we as parents have the joy of instilling in them God’s Word. What better comfort to know that through Baptism the Holy Spirit worked faith in the heart of that tiny soul, so that if God does call that child back to himself, we as parents can face each day knowing that our child lives in the arms of God in heaven. That precious truth has helped carry my family and me through everything we faced.”

*John Braun is the executive editor of Forward in Christ*





Mark Schweden

## Reflections on a farewell

For almost six years, Americans have watched the emotional scenes of families saying good-bye to their sons and daughters, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers as they headed off to war. You could see concern, fear, and uncertainty in the faces of family members. But you could also see how proud they were of their loved ones and their willingness to serve their country and to defend the cause of freedom.

As I've watched those scenes play out, I've tried to put myself in the place of those fathers who were watching their sons and daughters depart. If that were my son, how would I react? What would be going through my mind? How would I deal with the fact that my little boy, now a young man, would soon step off that plane and into harm's way?

If I were that father, I imagine that I would be asking myself if I had been faithful as a Christian father in those precious years that my son was in my home. Did I show him by my example what it means to trust in Jesus, to be sure of God's forgiveness in Christ, and to know the joy and certainty of salvation by faith alone? Did I help him to know that no matter where he goes, what he does, or what danger he faces, he is always accompanied by the protective hand of a gracious God?

Soon, I will not have the luxury of only imagining that scene.

Three years ago, my son Zachary headed off to college. But shortly before that, he also had joined the National Guard. After taking the required tests, he was told he could choose any training he wanted.

Zach's simple answer was, "That's what college is for; I want to be a soldier." So he joined the infantry, ready to serve his country in a time of war.

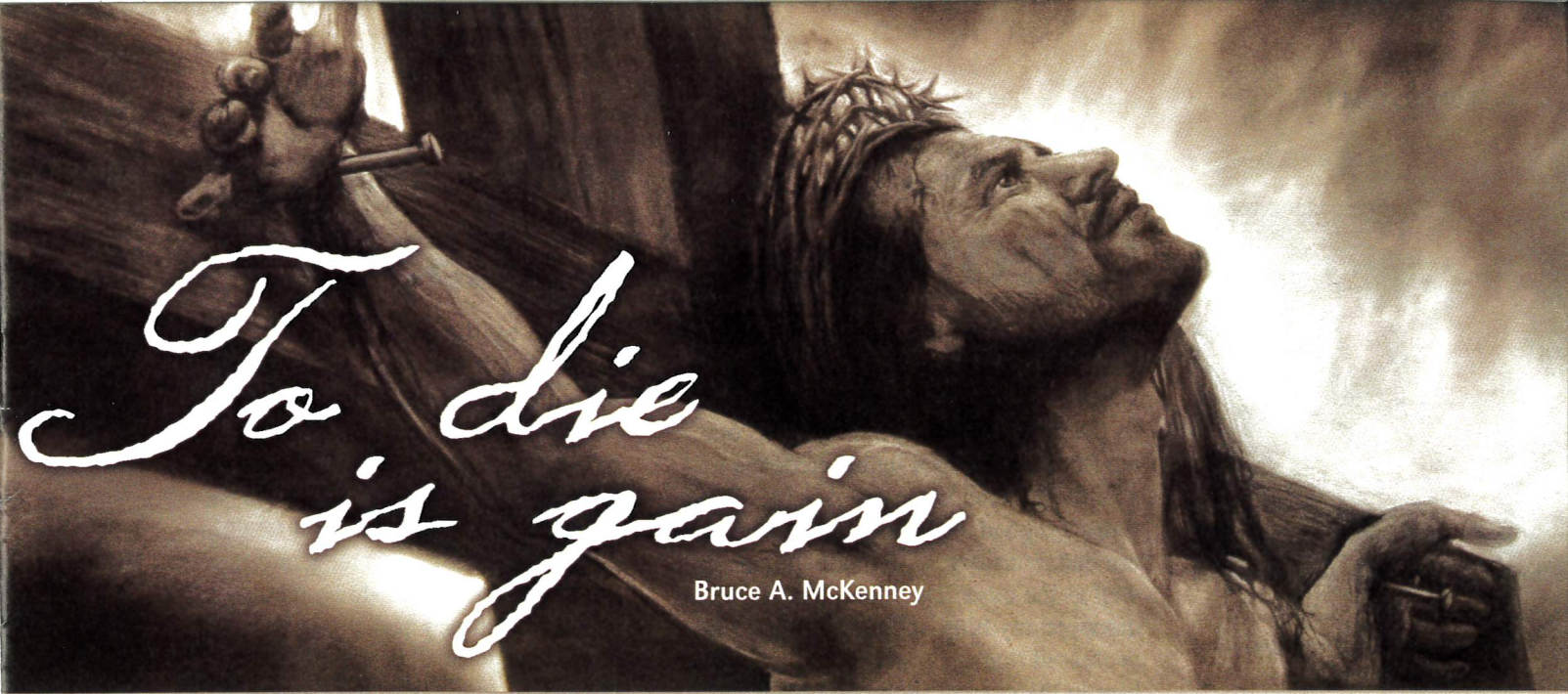
Next month, Zach will be heading for Iraq after a few months of training in Texas. And those questions I had only imagined before have now become real.

My wife, Andrea, and I know that we are certainly not the only parents who have faced this situation; thousands of other families have been there and done that. But it is a first for us. We will be asking ourselves if we have done enough to prepare our son spiritually for the days ahead. An honest answer will always be, "We could have done more."

At the same time, we find true comfort in the fact that Zach knows his Savior. From the time that God brought him into his family through Baptism, the Word of God has been a part of Zach's life. It is the Word of God that gives him the comfort of knowing his sins are forgiven. It is the Word of God that reminds him that his God will never leave him or forsake him. It is the Word of God that will enable him to carry out his mission, fully confident that his strength lies in God and in God's unbreakable promises.

Saying that good-bye next month will not be easy for me, for Zach's mom, or for his brothers and sister. But facing that farewell will be something we can do with the same confidence that we've tried to instill in our son. He goes shielded by the love of his Savior. That is our comfort. That is our confidence. That is our prayer. For Zach and for all those other families just like us.





It was the kind of phone call a pastor dreads. A member had been in an industrial accident, and he was not expected to live. Somehow his clothes got entangled in a machine, and his body had been pulled through it. The wounds were massive and fatal.

When I got to the hospital, it was total chaos. The chaos wasn't the nurses running around or the doctors shouting orders. They were doing their jobs in a professional and efficient way. The chaos was in the family waiting room. Family members were all at different stages of grief: shock, denial, despair, anger, and a sense of hopelessness. As I sat with them, the question on everybody's mind was voiced: "Pastor, how could God let this happen and why?"

### God's hidden will

Even when death comes after a longtime illness, there is always a sense of loss and grief for the survivors. Such grief seems even more intense when death comes unexpectedly or tragically.

We know death is a consequence of sin. We also know that God determines the length of our days. But what God has not told us is when, why, and how he chooses that day for each of us. And he doesn't tell us the way death will come either. That's part of what we call God's "hidden will." Isaiah put it this way, "Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel" (Isaiah 45:15).

### Where God makes himself known

But death is not a game, and God isn't trying to play hide-and-seek with us when we have questions. Although we can't answer all of the questions, God does not hide from us. He wants us to find him. The only sure place to find him and some answers is in the Bible.

That's where our God has made himself known. From his revealed will in the Bible, we know that he is our Savior who determined that at just the right time the Son of God would be born under the law to redeem those under law. He has also made it clear that those who believe in Jesus will live even after they die. God has not hidden these truths from us. He wants us to know and believe them.

But there is more. Our Savior will not hide from us when we grieve the death of a loved one, no matter how unexpected or tragic that death may be. It is our Savior God who tells his grieving people, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). Isaiah also says, "On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth" (Isaiah 25:7,8).

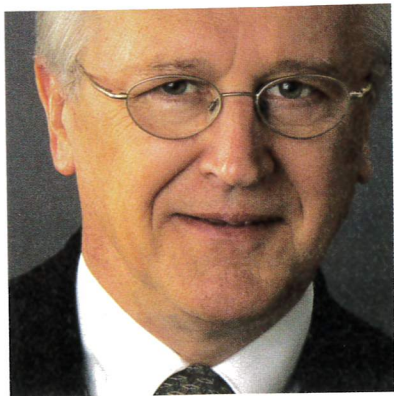
These are just a few of the things God has told us, and they do help and strengthen us in our grief. We might still have questions, especially in tragedy, but we cannot penetrate the "hidden things" God has not told us. Rather, look for him where he wants to be found, where he has made himself known. In that way you can say with our Savior who faced the most gruesome death of all, "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

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

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

*How can God allow a tragic death?* We cannot penetrate the "hidden things" God has not told us about his will. But our Savior will not hide from us when we grieve the death of a loved one.





*John A. Braun*

## Cleaning our glasses

With all the financial turmoil around the world, my wife and I thought it was time to talk to our financial advisor. In the course of our conversation, our advisor reached back on his credenza for a Bible. He read Ecclesiastes 7:14: “When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.” He professed that the passage had helped him in the current financial chaos.

I think the thought of Solomon can help us all see a little more clearly. I’d say it can help “clean our glasses” so we might see better.

First, the passage wipes away the illusion that humans control events. God is in control. The talking heads on TV and all the other sources of news and opinion leave the impression that we are in control. But these events came and were not prevented by human ingenuity.

God has reasons of his own for sending good and bad times. We can’t always understand or even see things coming. As his children by faith in Jesus, we expect God to care for us and cause even the worst of times to serve our good (Romans 8:28). That doesn’t mean we will never experience pain, loss, or challenging difficulties. It only means we have the confidence that we are dear to him and he has us close to his heart when he controls events.

Not only does that thought give comfort, but it should also breed humility. A humble spirit comes from knowing the greatness of God’s power and from knowing how flawed we are as sinful human creatures of such a great God. The events unfolding before us were, in fact, fed by human greed. Our desire for more, more, and more has contributed to our anguish. Yes, executives and power brokers claim a large part of the blame, but each of us is

infected by the virus of greed. Sadly, we don’t think we are sick until what we want—and even what we have—disappears or is threatened. One part of clearing up our vision is to repent, seeking God’s forgiveness in Christ.

Interestingly the financial trouble does not only affect the rich and powerful; it also has seeped down into the lives of many ordinary people. How many of them will be shaken enough to consider their own flaws and seek a different course in the God of grace? Only God knows. I pray many will.

One more thought. Part of our repentance might be to reassess the compromise we have made with the god of money. Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters—God and Money (Luke 16:13). We sometimes think that we can make a compromise, but money—as we have recently seen—bites cruelly and without mercy. God gives us money as a tool but not as a replacement for devotion to him and his Son, Jesus.

In the months—and perhaps the years—ahead, the one thing needful will require greater devotion from ordinary Christians with diminished resources. All of us will be challenged to consider our gifts to spread the gospel. God does not ask us to sacrifice our families, health, or life’s necessities for the spread of the gospel. But I think he might be asking us to think about what is important and redirect our financial resources away from the wants suggested by the god of money. I think that’s part of cleaning our glasses too. Our churches, schools, and synod can benefit from clearer vision so that the gospel will be shared with those who need to know Jesus.



# THE APOSTLES

## St. James the Elder: Prepared to witness

**M**ore than one person in the New Testament has the name James. Two of them appear in the list of the apostles, and one is identified as part of Jesus family—"his brother James" (Matthew 13:55). James the Elder was part of a family fishing business in Galilee with his father, Zebedee, and his brother John. Jesus asked James to follow him, and he would make James a fisher of men. At the invitation of Jesus, James left his fishing business to follow the man he believed was the Messiah.

Among the 12 disciples, James quickly became part of Jesus' inner circle of three: Peter and the brothers James and John. Christ let James witness amazing things because Christ had plans for James to be a glorious witness for others. But James needed to be prepared for this great work of witnessing.

### WHAT PREPARATION DID JAMES NEED?

Look up these passages to build a character profile of James. Consider how the passages do not paint only the positive characteristics of his special disciple. What kind of man was he? What were his personal strengths and weaknesses? In each passage, what spiritual lesson did he need to learn?

- Matthew 4:18-22
- Luke 9:51-56
- Mark 10:35-45

### WHAT PREPARATION DID JESUS GIVE?

Jesus pulled James into his inner circle of three disciples and gave these men special training for their positions of leadership within the early church. Look at each instance where Jesus separated the inner circle from the rest of the disciples. How did God use each of these opportunities to prepare James to witness? How did each occasion answer one of the necessary areas of James' spiritual formation that you listed above?

- Mark 5:21-43
- Matthew 17:1-13
- Matthew 26:36-46

### HOW DID JAMES USE THAT PREPARATION TO WITNESS?

Jesus called him; Jesus prepared him; and, finally, Jesus sent him into the world. One of the characteristics of the apostles was that they were all witnesses of the Lord's resurrection. Look at some places where you see James witness to the world. How did James use his preparation to share Jesus with the world? How could he have the courage and strength to make such a witness?

- Acts 1:12-26
- Acts 2:42-47
- Acts 12:1-5

### MY LIFE

- What spiritual issues keep me from being the witness that God wants me to be?
- What are some ways that God has prepared me to witness to the world?
- What is something I can do this week to fulfill my calling as a witness prepared by God?

### MORE ABOUT JAMES

James was the first martyr among the apostles. *Martyr* is a Greek word that means "witness." When James sat in prison waiting for the sword that would take his life, he rested secure, prepared by his Savior for that very moment. After seeing Christ's life and death and resurrection, James was prepared to witness with his life and even with his death. The church celebrates the Feast of St. James the Elder, Apostle, each year on July 25. The gospel lesson for that festival is Mark 10:35-45.

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

*This is the third article in a 12-part series on Jesus' apostles. Find this study and answers online after Jan. 5 at [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net)*





# LEAVE YOUR MESS BEHIND

If we look at ourselves according to our sins, we will forever be the guy who spilled his drink. Instead, we need to leave our mess at the cross of Jesus.

Donald W. Patterson

new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:16,17).

Who are we, really?

If we look at ourselves according to our sins or our blundering mistakes, we will forever be the guy who spilled his drink. If we look to ourselves according to the evaluations

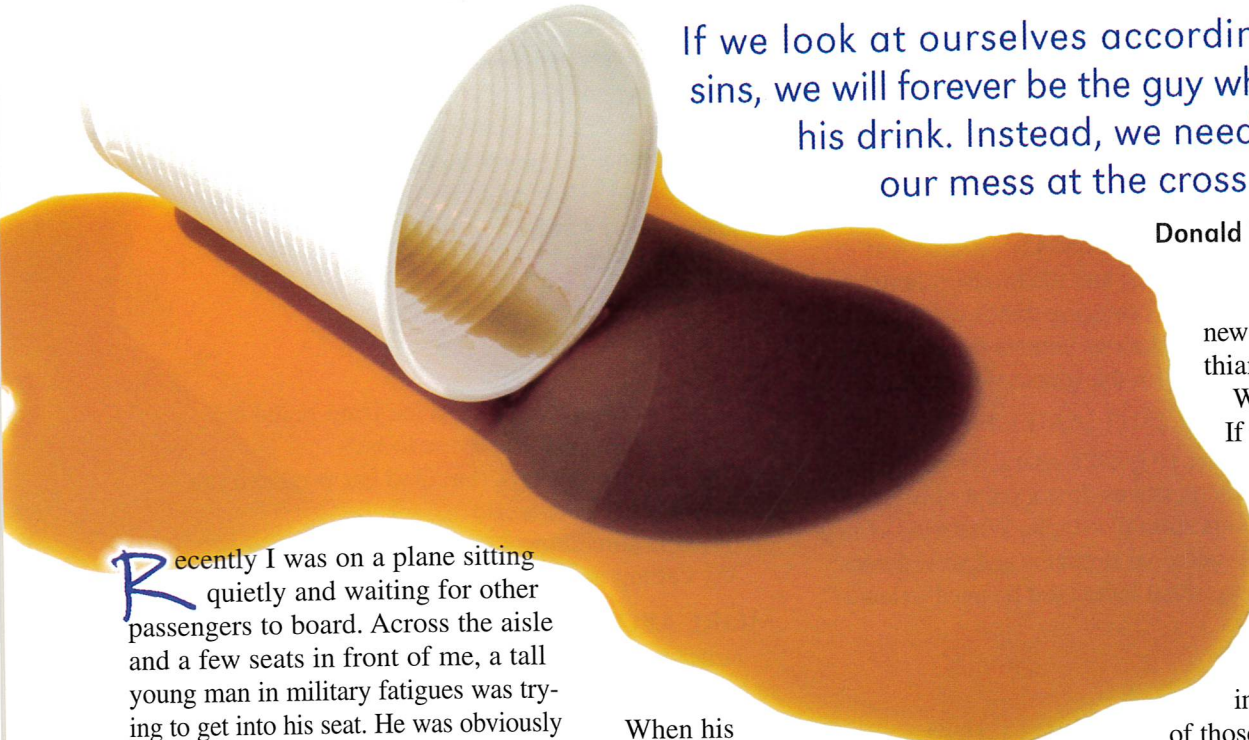
of those who criticize us,

we will always be paralyzed by their nitpicking.

In fact, we are forgiven children of God. That's who we are! We are deeply loved sons and daughters for whom God is waiting in heaven. He forgave our blundering sins a very long time ago when he put Jesus on the cross! Now we are traveling slowly to that day when we will walk up the tunnel to our heavenly family that is waiting for us with love and tears in their eyes.

How do you look at yourself? Is it possible that you are still living back on the plane where you made the mess, while God is standing right in front of you with a whole different point of view? Leave your mess at the cross of Jesus. You are a new creation in God's eyes.

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



Recently I was on a plane sitting quietly and waiting for other passengers to board. Across the aisle and a few seats in front of me, a tall young man in military fatigues was trying to get into his seat. He was obviously coming home from Iraq. In one hand he had a backpack. In the other he had a soft drink in a cup, which he put precariously above the seat on the edge of the luggage storage shelf.

*You know what happened.* The cup fell and spilled all over his seat and the lady behind him. Some people groaned. Others laughed. A few rolled their eyes. The lady smiled empathetically at him as the flight attendant scrambled for napkins. After cleaning it up, he sat down flustered.

I forgot about the spill until the end of the flight. The G.I. deplaned ahead of me. As I was walking up the tunnel from the plane I could see that his family members (who surprisingly were able to come all the way to the gate to wait) were watching for him. I knew they were his family because they had "Welcome Home" signs and were gasping with excitement. There was a sister, a brother, and his father and mother.

When his mother saw him she jumped up and down with tears in her eyes. He walked straight toward her and gave her a huge bear hug. Just then a little boy walking out beside me said, "Hey, that's the guy who spilled his drink, isn't it." I leaned down and said to him, "I don't think that's who his family thinks he is. Do you?"

*As I walked toward baggage claim I started to think about the two different snapshots I had of that G.I.* On the one hand he was a clumsy man who made a mess on the plane. On the other, he was a precious son who was safely home from battle. A verse from Scripture started to settle in my mind. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the