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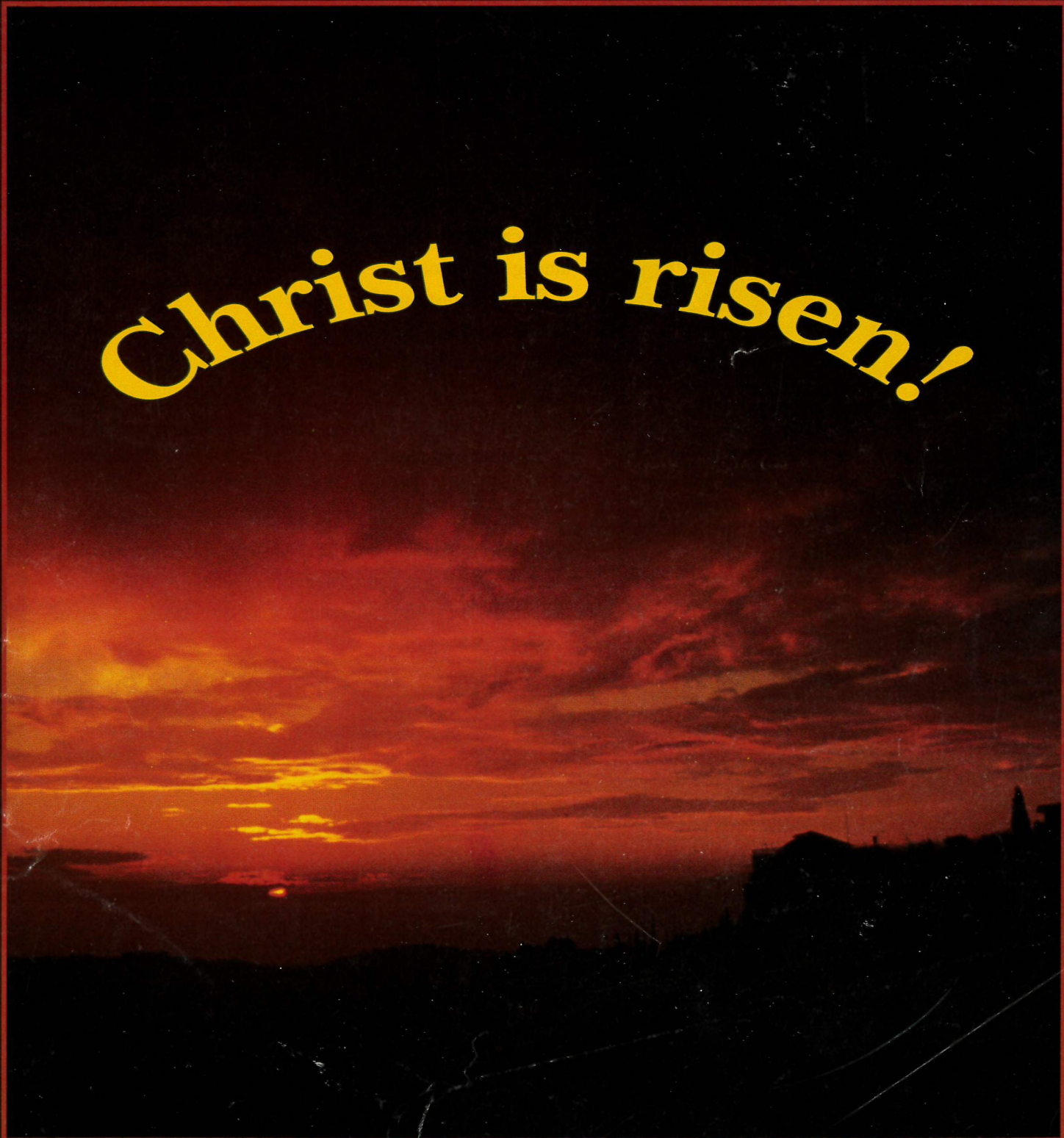
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April 1994

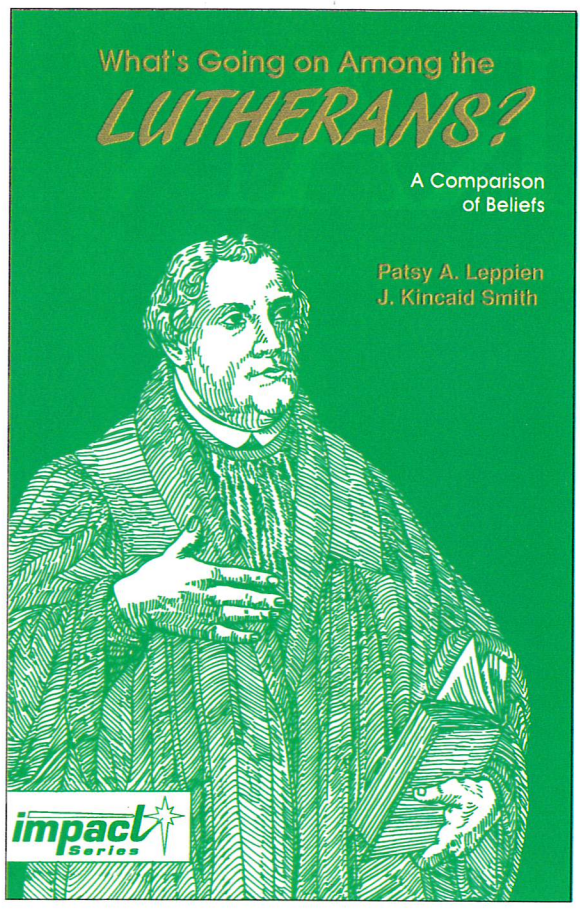
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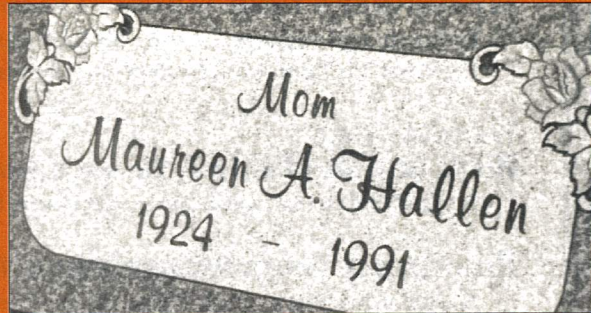
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Life to the full

by Richard E. Lauersdorf



Life seems so brief. The elderly know all about it. Again and again they say, "How fast the years fly," or "Where has it gone?"

We soon learn about life's brevity. In our youth, months often seem like years and years like ages. Waiting for adulthood seems to take forever. But quickly the clock hands revolve and the calendar pages turn. Quickly the steps slow down and the hair turns gray.

Then comes that day when it's all over. A casket, our best clothes, the tears of loved ones, and a gravestone with our name and two dates on it. And between those two dates, only a dash to represent our lifetime, however long or short, sped quickly by.

Is life a cruel joke?

Is that all there is? If so, life's nothing more than a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," as the famous bard once put it. If so, life's nothing more than a cruel joke, some dismal hoax, played on helpless mortals by an unfeeling deity. If so, then better to have it over quickly or never to have lived it at all.

Is that all there is? Easter with its wondrous sight of the emptied tomb and its glorious message of the risen Christ shouts out otherwise!

"He is risen," Easter says. Life never ends, but leads to heaven where a loving Father waits for his children, whose sins have been paid for. Life's first short chapter is written on earth, but heaven's chapter has no closing paragraph or concluding sentence.

*I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.*

John 10:10

"He is risen," Easter says. The grave is only the station where the believer's soul catches the early train while the body waits for the final train on the last day. It's not "good-by" but "see you later" we speak to departing believers, for we know that we will be reunited with them in heaven.

Life has a purpose

"He is risen," Easter says. Now life on earth is full of purpose. It's God's time given to each of us so that we might be brought to faith in the risen and only Savior. It's the interval his grace has measured during which he wants to engrave his Son's filled cross and emptied tomb firmly on our hearts so that we are ready for eternity.

"He is risen," Easter says. Now while he leaves us on earth, it's not just that we might earn and eat, entertain and enjoy ourselves. Our daily and joyful mission is to live for him in all we think or say or do. Our aim is to shine with the light of Easter that others might stand in it also.

Life on earth may be brief, but not the life in heaven. For us as believers the question is not, "Where has life gone?" but rather, "What's it all about?" and "Where will it take us?"

Thank God we know the answer. Thank God for showing us the full life in the risen Savior.



Richard Lauersdorf is pastor of St. John, Jefferson, Wisconsin, and the synod's first vice-president.

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

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 Is it any wonder Jesus called for a childlike faith?

- To start a new church, you find a building, get a preacher, post a sign announcing the time of services, and wait for people to show up, right? You know, of course, that it's not that easy. Two articles, "Becoming friends" (p. 16) and "We plan, God provides" (p. 18), describe the careful planning necessary to begin a mission.
- Nor does planning end once a congregation is established. To see how a 100-year-old congregation got help in planning for effective ministry, see "A new plan in New London" (p. 14); and for information on how your parish can get help in planning its ministry, see "Open Doors" on p. 21.
- We welcome new district correspondents—Martin Spriggs for South Atlantic, and George Ferch for Southeastern Wisconsin—and a new editorial writer, Pastor Walter Beckmann.
- A new series, "Parables of judgment," by Mark Braun begins with this issue on p. 30.

Dorothy Sonntag

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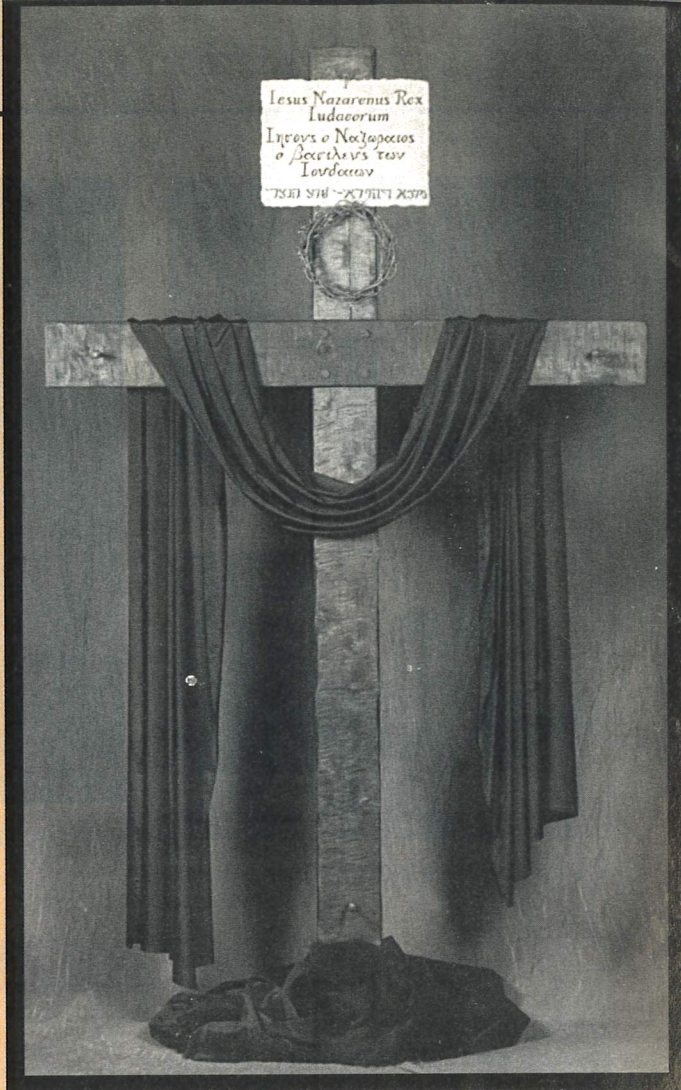
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Many spend their lives in ashes and half-kept fasts, never being able to rejoice that sin was overcome, never absolutely sure there will be a brighter side to eternity.

When we know the power of the resurrected Christ, then we're

Living on the bright side of Easter

by Wayne A. Laitinen



When I attended Towpath Elementary School in Avon, Connecticut, each Ash Wednesday half of the classroom population greeted us with smudged faces and shy smiles. On their way to school, they had stopped at St. Anne Catholic Church to have the priest make the sign of the cross on their foreheads with the ashes from last year's palm branches. My Roman Catholic classmates would whisper to each other, "I gave up candy for Lent. What did you give up?"

On Ash Wednesdays I was especially glad to be a Lutheran.

Although I didn't know exactly the meaning of the ashes and the abstinence, I could see that the song of life was being played in a minor key.

Living in Lent

Tom, for example, was offered a piece of candy on Ash Wednesday afternoon. Before he gave it a second thought, he popped it into his mouth. There went his Lenten fast. Do you think if he gave up candy and Coke for the next six weeks the priest would understand?

Larry gave up gum. But he secretly admitted to us Protestant kids that he really didn't like gum anyhow. (We suggested peas and lima beans as substitutes and wondered out loud if it were possible to be Catholic only at mealtimes.) Larry's approach didn't seem to capture the spirit of his church's intention.

Marsha's mom didn't stop by St. Anne at all on Ash Wednesday. To a good Catholic that was like entering Lent without being fully dressed, or missing the "Lenten Bus" altogether. And it was a whole year until the next Ash Wednesday when she could make it right again. But confession was Saturday and everyone knew what Marsha and her mom would say to the priest.

I couldn't put my finger on it at the time, but it seemed to me that many of my Catholic friends lived in Lent all year long: always confession, never the certainty of complete absolution. There was always the faint hope that twelve "Hail Marys" and six "Our Fathers" would offset the perpetual threat of purgatory.

Ashes and abstinence

As I grew older I saw that living on the wrong side



What shall I do with my sin?

- *I can try to ignore it. But sooner or later I'll have to 'fess up.*
- *I can make my own rules—easy rules—but that won't satisfy God's justice.*
- *I can try to make up for my constant failure. But how can I be sure I've done enough? An eternity is a long time to be wrong.*
- *Or I can trust the risen Christ for forgiveness and life.*

of Easter was not Catholic. It is the natural state of the human creature.

Whether a person admits it or not, the burning question is: What shall I do with my sin? my guilt? God's eternal justice?

Like Marsha's mom, I can try to ignore it. But sooner or later I'll have to 'fess up.

Like Larry, I can make my own rules—easy rules—but that won't satisfy God's justice.

Like Tom, I can try to make up for my constant failure. But how can I be sure I've done enough? An eternity is a long time to be wrong.

Yet, many spend their lives in ashes and half-kept fasts, never being able to rejoice that sin was overcome, never celebrating that the wages of sin have been paid, never finding the power to say a confident "no" to sin and a joyful "yes" to holy living, never absolutely sure there will be a brighter side to eternity.

Wherever the power of the resurrected Christ is missing, people are living on the wrong side of Easter.

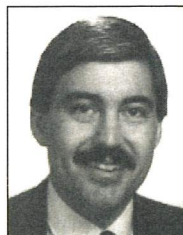
Rejoicing in resurrection

Here's the good news: In the mystery of baptism we

are assured that Jesus' death is also our death. When he died on Calvary, we died to sin as well. Through baptism, our sins and guilt are buried with Jesus' body. One thing is certain: we are no longer liable for eternal punishment.

By baptism we participate in Jesus' resurrection to life everlasting on Easter morning. Jesus arose from the grave with a glorified body—never to die again. Through the water of baptism we arose with him. Even now we share in that very same holiness and immortality. The freedom to live with him is the power to say a bold "no" to temptation and a vibrant "yes" to holy living—even on this side of the grave. The ultimate certainty is we will live forever in heaven with our living Savior.

Our Lenten observation is not a preparation for Good Friday. The minor key of Lent will not rest until it is resolved in the major key of Christ's resurrection—and ours.



Wayne Laitinen is pastor of Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

My brother's faith

In his struggle against cancer, his faith sustained him.
He knew his Lord would never forsake him.

by William Charlton

A few months before my brother Chris died of lung cancer, I encouraged him to write a book. He got excited. "If I could just get to feeling a little bit better—I'd do it," he said. But his health failed quickly and he died Easter week, 1993. He was 36 years old.

Even so, he did write that book—not on paper, but in the eternal pages of history of a man who lived his life in faith.

The diagnosis: terminal cancer

My brother's diagnosis of terminal cancer couldn't have come at a more unexpected time. He was in the prime of his life—he had a wonderful wife, a beautiful child, another child soon to be born, a full partnership with a prestigious law firm.

Then suddenly the news. After he received the news of his cancer, he went back to his office, closed the door, and quietly wept.

It was on Good Friday that he found out. He immediately consulted with his doctors about treatment. He opted for the most potent one in the faint hope that it would put the cancer into remission. It wasn't an unreasonable hope, since many cancer patients are able to survive for years. At one point during treatment some of his tumors were actually shrinking.

Eventually, though, because his immune system had been so heavily taxed by chemotherapy and radiation,

he developed pneumonia and died.

He died in faith

It broke my heart. Yet I was not grief-stricken for long. A sense of peace comes over a Christian whose loved one dies in faith. And I had no doubt that Chris had died in faith. His life was a hallmark to a profile of faith found only in the heart of a man with an extraordinary capacity to love.

The day his doctors told him he had only about a week or two to live, he summoned the pastor of his church, Pastor Sternhagen, and told him what he wanted spoken at his funeral. Chris said, "Tell them it is by faith they are saved."

He insisted that no eulogy be read at his funeral because he deemed it inconsequential.

As the pastor so aptly put it during the service, "Chris knew this day would not be for him, but for us."

"My greatest joy is worshipping"

About an hour before my brother died, he asked a nurse if he had gone to church that day. The man replied, "Sir, yesterday was Easter."

Chris responded, "Yes, I know—but we worship our resurrected Lord every day."

Tears welled up in all our eyes. This was not the mumbling of a man in the throes of death making a desperate plea for salvation. Those words were the convictions of his heart throughout all his life.

*Chris was a special sperson.
What distinguished him was
not his intellect, nor his social
standing, not even his kindness.
What distinguished him
was his faith.*



Merilyn and Chris Charlton with daughter Sarah Victoria.

Several years before, Chris had told me, “You know, Billy, the greatest joy in my life is worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ—isn’t it wonderful?”

That is the same thing he was saying just an hour before he died. He was in excruciating pain, suffocating for lack of breath, fading away before our eyes. Yet he managed to gather a precious breath to let this stranger know that “we worship our resurrected Lord every day!”

His last words were to his wife, Merilyn—“I love you.” He kissed her good-by, and a few minutes later he was in heaven.

Distinguished by his faith

Chris was a special person. What distinguished him was not his intellect, though it was profound; nor his social standing, though it was prominent; not even his

kindness, though his generosity and thoughtfulness were great.

No, it was none of these, nor many of the other beautiful qualities he had. Rather, what distinguished him was the magnitude of his faith. His faith was like a strong oak. He knew his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ would never forsake him.

His faith sustained him in his struggle against cancer. While all those around him were frantically trying to dispense aid, he was calm. His only request was that someone be in the room with him as he passed from this world to heaven.

He was never alone.



William Charlton is a member of Good Shepherd, Deltona, Florida.

Birth and the Bible

A computer word search helps a family find what the Bible says about birth

by Thomas B. Franzmann

“You treat me like a baby,” Jamie whined. “I’m almost four. Why can’t I slide down the hill by myself?”

The family was headed for a few hours of fun in the snow. Jim, at the wheel, was feeling relieved. He had been promising his family this outing. Now, thanks to the late spring snowstorm, a thick white blanket of snow was waiting for them.

Rebecca snuggled closer to her pouting boy and said, “Of course, Jamie, you are getting to be a big boy. But that hill is so steep, and it has trees and rocks. When I think of you getting hurt, or even killed, my heart breaks. Why, it seems just yesterday when you were born. I held you in my arms in the hospital, and said, ‘What a miracle!’ You’re so precious to me. I want you to be with one of us when you slide down the hill.”

Jamie’s thoughts turned from sledding to his birth. He liked to think about being born. His parents always spoke of the event in such warm tones. Even brother Kevin, usually preoccupied with his own teenage thoughts, and sister Jennifer, full of life and energy at 12, remembered his birth as a happy time. Jamie wished he could have been there. Well, he was, but he didn’t remember it. He asked, “Can we have another baby, Mom?”

The whole family laughed. Rebecca gave Jamie another hug. Kevin turned in the passenger seat and grinned at him. From the back seat Jennifer added: “We’d want another baby just like you.”

A computer word search

The brief conversation had made Jim’s thoughts race almost as fast as the van was moving. “I was thinking,” he mused. “Wouldn’t the subject of birth make a good topic for discussion? Kevin, while we’re getting dinner on tonight, why don’t you boot up the com-

puter and bring up that Bible search program we gave you for Christmas. Faster than you can say ‘IBM,’ you could do a word search on birth or baby.” He knew Kevin would not miss a chance to show how clever he was at the computer.

Before Kevin could answer, they came around a turn in the road. Ahead was the hill, and no one had broken the fresh snow yet. With a whoop the whole family turned its attention to the thrills they were about to experience.

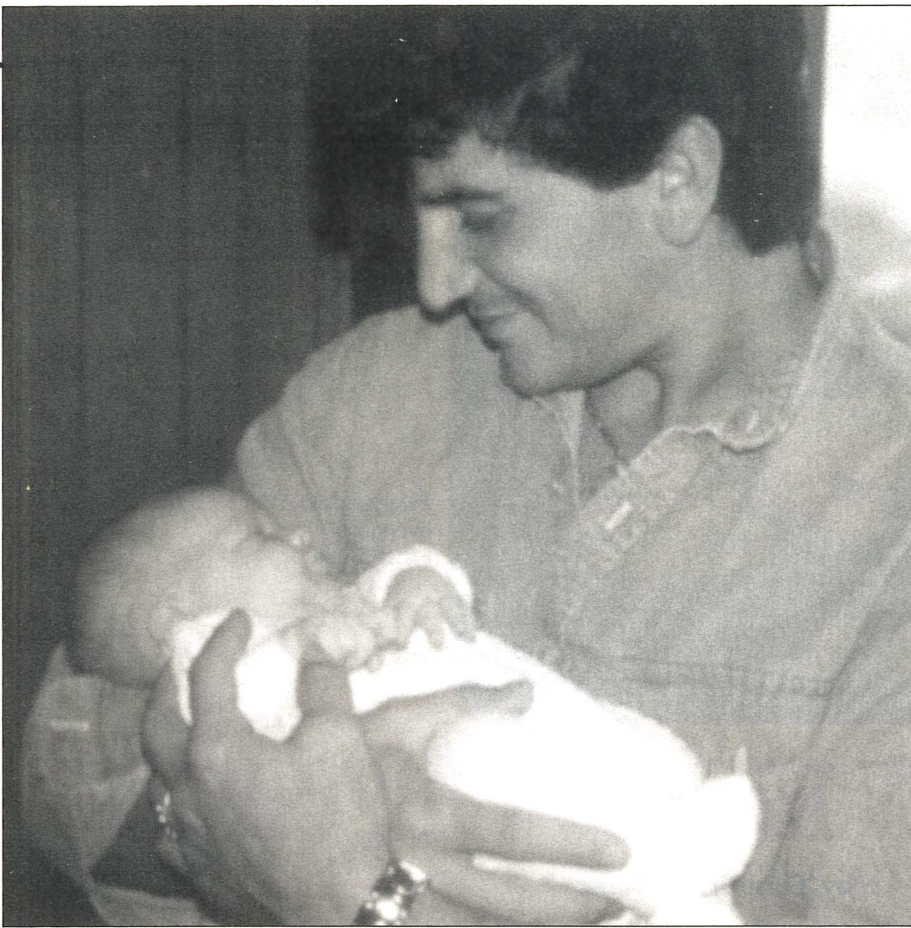
At home, relaxed and happy, they changed into warm, dry clothes. Rebecca and Jim went to the kitchen to make dinner. Jenn was looking over homework assignments. Jamie had gotten out drawing materials and was creating hills and snow and sleds and people. Kevin was at the computer.

Just before they sat down to eat, Kevin showed his dad a sheet of paper. “I limited the search to the New Testament, and I still got over 30 passages just on the word birth,” he said. With a teasing smile he added, “Good thing I limited it, or you’d go on till midnight.” Jim gave him a playful punch on the shoulder as the family sat down.

The birth of Jesus

As they were finishing Jim said, “Kevin found some interesting verses on birth. The first ones, of course, are in Matthew and Luke. They tell about the birth of Jesus. For us they’re the most important ones. If he hadn’t been born, we wouldn’t have a Savior. I think it’s safe to say this family wouldn’t be together right now, if it weren’t for Jesus.” Everyone nodded agreement.

“I bet the passages from Revelation are on the list,” broke in Rebecca, “the ones about the pregnant woman about to give birth, and the great dragon crouching in front of her. I remember when the pas-



*"It seems just yesterday
when you were born.
I held you in my arms and
said, 'What a miracle!'"*

er. And look at you now! Why, you're the most beautiful girl God ever created!" Jennifer beamed, even though she had heard it a thousand times.

Spiritual birth

Kevin said, "While the passages were printing out—you know how slow our old dot matrix is; we really

need a new one—I saw some that used the word birth in a different way. Do you see those, Dad?"

"Yes, I saw those too," said Jim. "Jesus spoke about flesh giving birth to flesh and Spirit giving birth to spirit. Paul speaks about God giving us birth through the word of truth, and giving us new birth into a living hope."

Jennifer quickly inserted, "Oh, we're learning about that in confirmation classes right now. When Mom gave birth to us, you were only able to give us your sinful nature. The Holy Spirit gave us new birth through baptism. We got physical life from you. We get spiritual life from the Holy Spirit. I'm glad you are Christians who brought us to baptism. I'm glad you take us to learn God's Word, too—most of the time, anyway."

The meal ended. Each member of the family went to the activities of the evening, enriched by the Word of God and enabled for living a Christian life.



Wellspring, a family devotional magazine, is available from Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113th St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

In this series, we want to cover topics that might be discussed at your family table. Please send your suggestions to *FAMILY TABLE*, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

*Tom Franzmann is pastor
of Our Redeemer, Santa Barbara, California.*

tor preached on that text. He said the woman was the Church, laboring to bring the Savior into the world. The idea of the dragon crouching, ready to pounce on her child when he was born, and later pursuing her, stuck with me. I get comfort from knowing Jesus escaped him."

"Yep, those passages are here," Jim nodded. "That whole idea is important for our family. Our Savior triumphed over Satan. The devil may come after us, and we may fall from time to time, but we have a Savior to keep us."

Birth defects

After looking at the list for a few seconds Jim went on, "There's a few passages here about people born with handicaps—a blind man and two crippled men. I remember how your mom and I worried about each of you before you were born. But we remembered how Jesus dealt with the man born blind. Birth defects aren't a punishment. They can even be an opportunity for a Christian family to give glory to God by cheerfully accepting his will."

"Yes," Rebecca added, "we prayed that each of you would be born healthy. We also prayed that God would give us faith and courage, whatever happened. Jenn, when you came into the world two months early, that was a time of testing for us. But you were a fight-

**A little
missionary's
faith lights up an
emergency room**



Two-year-old
evangelist
Sarah Unke

Emergency room evangelism

by Timothy A. Unke

I suppose more than one or two folks “get religion” in an emergency room as they prepare to meet their maker, whether their condition warrants it or not. Often though, people are just making deals with God, deals that fall through when the doctor signs the hospital release form. But I witnessed an emergency room conversion. It wasn’t a patient, it was a nurse.

No, the nurse didn’t witness an extraordinary, breath-taking miracle. Then again, maybe she did. She saw a little girl demonstrate her faith in the midst of perhaps the greatest pain of her two years.

Little Sarah was strapped into a straitjacket so the doctor wouldn’t have to wrestle a screaming, squirming toddler while he sewed together her lacerated finger. Her momma tried to distract her by singing “Jesus songs” with her. So far so good. But the needle hadn’t yet been introduced to the tiny finger.

They were in the middle of “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” when the needle made contact. Braced for a yelp and a struggle, the doctor was understandably amazed that the little evangelist never missed a beat in her song. She

just sang louder as the pain increased. Huge tears rolled down her cheeks as she launched into the Easter songs she would be singing in a few days. Five stitches later Sarah was still singing her precious Jesus songs.

The nurse, who had been on the alert for a panic stricken child, stood in silent wonderment. She had never seen anything like it. And she had seen a lot. (So she said.)

After the brave little girl apologized to the doctor for getting blood over everything, she delivered the *coup de grace*. She invited the nurse to “come to my church” on Easter to hear about “my Jesus.”

Sure enough, the littlest missionary’s message had gotten through. The nurse wanted for her little one what Sarah had deep in her heart. On Easter Sunday that nurse brought her three-year-old daughter to Sunday school and church.

What if we all wore our faith like that little emergency room evangelist?



Timothy Unke is pastor of Trinity, Woodbridge, Virginia.

In class, James usually had the wrong answer. But for what was most important, he had the

Right Answer

by Michael M. Sebald



In my first year of teaching I had a student named James (you would never call him Jim). I guess you might call him an LD—learning disabled—student. He struggled with just about everything academic.

A learning disabled student

James was in my English class. He would spend an hour trying to read a story that took other students 15 minutes to read. When he finished, I could tell he had very little understanding of what he had just read.

We politely suggested to his parents that perhaps James would get better help at a school equipped to handle students with learning problems, but the parents would hear nothing of it. They wanted their son to have a Christian education.

James was not without talent. He was an above-average soccer player. The team was to go to the state playoffs—but they would go without James.

James died. While he was riding his bike to a friend's house, he was hit by a drunk driver. Later we learned that the driver had tried to hide James, still breathing, in the bushes.

If you were to die today. . . .

On the day before James died we had a beautiful day. In the Pacific Northwest you could go for a month without seeing the sun. Then all of a sudden it would appear, and the weather would be warm and breezy. The mountains would be “out” (native talk for being able to see the mountains) and you could see Mt. Rainier from our classrooms.

It was that kind of day, and it was hard for teachers and students to concentrate. It was the last hour of the day; James was in religion class. The instructor had finished his presentation and had some time left. He asked his students to take out a piece of paper and answer this question: “If you were to die today, and God asked you why he should let you in heaven, what would you say?”

James wrote, “Because I have been baptized and I believe Jesus died for my sins.” No doubt he spelled most of the words wrong, but it was the right answer.

He got it right

Not only was it the right answer, it was the Right Answer. In class, even though he was eager to answer questions, he usually had the wrong answer. But, for what was most important, James had the Right Answer.

I think of James from time to time. He helps me to remember why I'm teaching.

I can teach my students about chemistry. I can teach them to find the right answers for problems that involve stoichiometry, electrochemistry, and thermodynamics. Those things may be important, but there's a more important reason I'm teaching—so that my students will know the Right Answer.



Mike Sebald teaches at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee.

A new plan in New London

A congregation gets help from a parish planner

by Dorothy J. Sonntag

Emanuel's members weren't satisfied. The 100-year-old parish in New London, Wisconsin—population 6600—has a large school and an active ministry. But its members believed they could do better.

"We wanted more people to do more things for God's kingdom," said Pastor Steve Witte.

Getting advice

To learn how to do more for God's kingdom, a strategic planning committee went to work. Research and discussions made the committee decide the congregation needed outside help. They contacted Pastor Ron Heins, the synod's parish planner. He helps churches analyze their ministry, set goals, and draw up a plan to reach those goals.

"We help them focus on what's significant," said Heins. "Congregations can run into trouble when they don't keep their main goal in mind. It's like starting on a trip without first agreeing on your destination. You'll be arguing by the time you reach the first spotlight."

The parish assistance process takes a year or more. "I don't know a quick way to grow a congregation," Heins explained. "Doing the Father's business is steady, hard work. You have to know where you're going and keep that in mind in setting goals."

Getting information

Heins started out by asking Emanuel's leaders to gather information so that they could evaluate their ministry. He recommended a series of surveys.

"We didn't want to do it that way," said Marcia Rhone, one of five members of the strategic planning committee. "We wanted to skip some of the surveys. He talked us out of it. He made us stop and listen to the people.

"For example, a survey showed we have 100 visitors every Sunday. We had no idea we had that many. It gave us a different perspective on our ministry especially when we talked about liturgy and hymns."

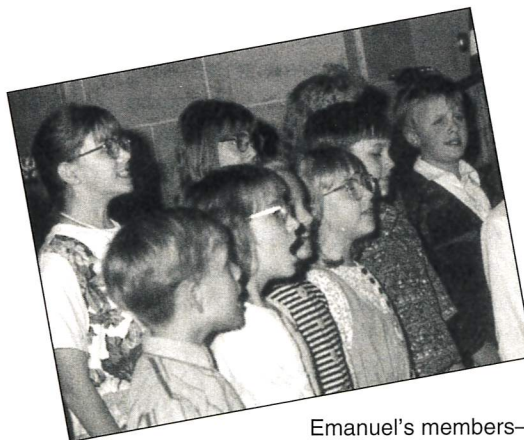
"That's the value of outside consulting," commented Dale Krause, another committee member. "We talked about doing this ourselves. If we had, we'd

probably have skipped a number of steps."

Heins also brought in consultants experienced in parish ministry and education. He prefers to work in a team, usually with two others. "Eventually the consultants can help others without me," he said. "That's how we'll be able to keep the parish assistance service going." Consultants at Emanuel were Dr. Daniel Schmeling, administrator for the Commission on Parish Schools, and Pastor Paul Kelm, who was at the time administrator for the Commission on Adult Discipleship.

Getting recommendations

Besides taking surveys, the consultants and committee members met with congregation members. When they had gathered enough information, the committee was ready to make recommendations. With the help of the parish assistance team, they drafted a 25-



Emanuel's members—active in ministry.

page direction document outlining a plan for Emanuel that includes adult spiritual growth, worship, evangelism, outreach, youth ministry, volunteer service, and fellowship.

"The direction document is our coordination plan," said Witte. "We had so many activities but no focus. Everybody was doing good things, but they were going in different directions. We have to learn to focus, and that means saying no to some things and yes to some things."

Witte expects it will take five to seven years for the

plan to bear fruit. "It may take ten or more for some things," he added. "A congregation can't say, 'Let's get this done in six weeks.' It just isn't going to happen."

The committee also drew up a second, one-page document, headed "Model A" and "Model B," that outlines the changes needed for Emanuel to reach its goals.

"This is the tough phase—moving from model A, where the church council makes all the decisions, to model B, where more people have the responsibility," said Dale Krause.

Getting to work

Krause is full-time director of adult spiritual growth. Establishing the position was one of the first



changes Emanuel made, and it is not by accident that spiritual growth is the first item in the direction document.

"Adult spiritual growth—pay attention to it!" said Steve Witte. "It's the top priority."

Other changes are also evident. More members are taking part in Bible study, said Krause, who believes spiritual growth begins with education. From there, he said, lay people can move to "running the church and sharing the gospel."

"The role of the pastor is changing," said Steve

Moving from A to B

*Emanuel's plan for more effective ministry:
move from Model A to Model B*

MODEL A	MODEL B
• Day-to-day managing	• Future-focused management
• Personal opinion-driven decisions	• Vision-driven decisions
• Activity-oriented	• Goal-directed, results oriented
• Inward-looking, congregation-centered	• Outward-looking, service-to-others centered
• Emphasis on "how to do it"	• Emphasis on "what to do"
• Emphasis on administration of routines	• Emphasis on innovation
• Prime reliance on money and the material	• Prime reliance on people and the power of the Spirit (God's promises)
• Keeping things as they are or restoring the past	• Meeting the needs of today, anticipating the future
• My needs and wants (my kids, my wife)	• Meeting the needs of others, especially the hurting and lost
• Desire for rules and regulations to solve problems and maintain system	• Prayer and spiritual encouragement and growth to solve problems
• First question: How much money do we have?	• First question: What would the Lord have us do?
• Most gifted people in administration	• Most gifted people in ministry

Witte. "Will he train lay people, or is he going to try to do everything himself? You need to get lay people truly involved. They can do more than shovel snow."

Lay people have to change, too, Krause noted, and some are uncomfortable with the change. Not everyone wants to be involved in ministry. "There's a lot of people who say that's what we call a pastor for—it's his job."

"We're not out of the woods yet," said Marcia Rhone. "There are things coming up that are going to be tough. But God's going to show us the way."

She believes that the plan won't work unless members are united. "People have to want growth in their congregation," she noted, and they have to understand that "the Word doesn't change, but the structure can."

Steve Witte is sure that asking for parish assistance was the right decision for Emanuel. "We could have said we're not that bad. But you have to take a look at what's not getting done. You can't be on cruise control in God's kingdom. You've got to be constantly pushing on the gas pedal."



For more information on parish assistance, see Open Doors on page 21.

Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor for Northwestern Lutheran.

Four steps to cross-cultural evangelism

The synod's Multicultural Ministry Committee has a four-step plan for cross-cultural missionaries.

◆ Having read everything he can on the culture and, where necessary, learning the language,

the missionary becomes friends with at least one person who can be his confidant and help him understand the culture.

◆ The missionary interviews at least 50 families to gain a deeper understanding of their culture.

BECOMING FRIENDS

How a missionary becomes friends with people of a different ethnic background

by James R. Connell

You can count on your friends. If you are in the market for a vacuum cleaner, camera, or car, you ask your friends how satisfied they are with theirs. You trust them more than professional salespeople. You value your friends' advice.

Since we count on our friends, it's not surprising that friendship can play a big role in evangelism. A recent study showed that nearly 80 percent of new members in congregations came as a direct result of invitations from friends. This is called "friendship witness."

Friendship witness

Friendship witness can be used in cross-cultural mission work, too. But how does a missionary become friends with people of a different ethnic background? How does he gain their trust when he is an outsider?

He can't establish individual friendships with an entire ethnic neighborhood. He can, however, become

a friend to three or four community or opinion leaders. He can witness to them, and they will in turn—God willing—evangelize the people from their culture. To carry out such a witness, the synod's Multicultural

Ministry Committee has a four-step plan for cross-cultural missionaries (see "four steps" above).

A missionary at work

Let's examine a cross-cultural mission in El Paso, Texas. On El Paso's east side, which is 60 percent Hispanic, Pastor Dan Baumler is in the middle of those four steps.

Baumler and his wife, Ellen, went to Guadalajara, Mexico, for 15 weeks to begin language and cultural training. They arrived in El Paso in November 1992.

Then he began the interviewing and analyzing stage. He gathered ideas for outreach and set December 5, 1993, as the date for the first worship

A missionary can't establish individual friendships with an entire ethnic neighborhood.

He can, however, become a friend to three or four leaders.

He can witness to them, and they may in turn evangelize the people from their culture.

This interview needs to be just that—an interview. He needs to ask questions and listen attentively.

◇ The missionary analyzes this information. He also records it, so that his observations and con-

clusions can be compared with other studies.

◇ The missionary will begin programs tailored to the needs of the culture. For example, if he learned during the interviews that gangs are causing trouble,

he will offer a youth program aimed at supplying biblical answers to the problem. If he senses that the elderly are neglected, he will plan a senior citizen program to deal with their spiritual problems and needs.



Carlos Roque, a native from Mexico now living in El Paso, greets missionary Dan Baumler.

service. Fifty-five people attended the first service.

Before that service there were youth nights, adult information classes, and mini-services with Bible study emphasis—all in response to the wants and needs Baumler had heard during his interviews with people in the community. On the previous Sunday, he had baptized seven children, ages 2 to 15.

After conducting 42 interviews, Baumler comments: "The response has been overwhelming. The Lord has blessed us with 44 prospective souls during our interviews. What's even more incredible is we were not actively looking for prospects; we were only trying to listen to the people."

Baumler found that listening pays: "The finest compliment we've received from many is: 'I appreciate your style. You cared enough to come to my door to listen to me and my concerns instead of arguing. Thank you.'"

The reason for listening, however, is not so that the missionary can become an expert in understanding a culture. His goal is to give Christian witness and testimony to people of another culture. His goal is to preach the powerful, priceless gospel of Jesus. That's real friendship.



James Connell is pastor of San Juan, El Paso, Texas.

We plan, God provides

Starting a new mission takes time,
planning, and blessings from God

by James J. Radloff

From Milwaukee to Miami, I assist new mission groups and new missionaries for WELS. As a mission counselor, I work with as many as 50 different churches at a given time. I help especially with the planning for new missions. We go through several time-consuming steps to start a mission.

Making plans

- **The district mission board calls an outreach explorer.**

Transplanted WELS members often form a nucleus for a new mission. Charles Westra, mission explorer in Columbia, Tennessee, writes about how such a group welcomed him:

"I remember pulling up to the house, and the joy I felt when I saw them there to help unload my things. I was not alone. The Lord had already given me a dedicated group of people who were excited about sharing his message of salvation in our community."

- **The mission counselor prepares the nucleus for its role on the ministry team.**

Even before the outreach explorer arrives, the mission counselor meets with the core group to prepare them for the outreach effort. He emphasizes that they are not just fans in the stands, cheering for the pastor. They are part of the team.

- **The missionary, the mission counselor, and the core group prepare a "countdown" calendar.**

We plan nine months in advance and list specific objectives for each week.

During the first month, the missionary gets to know the community and introduces himself to community leaders. The mission counselor leads a workshop to help the core group become more effective witnesses to friends and relatives.

The mission counselor also offers on-the-job training in canvassing, workshops for leaders, and help in

planning for ministry. He assists the group in organizing a congregation and provides resources for continuing mission awareness. He encourages the new mission through visits, phone calls, and letters.

Canvassing and nurturing

- **The members of the exploratory mission canvass door to door. They hold informal worship services and Bible studies.**

Canvassing and survey work can be difficult. Says Charles Westra, "I remember wearing holes in my new loafers. Doing canvass work in 95 degree heat was challenging. The days when my spirit was unwilling often seemed to be the days when

God accomplished the most."

- **The missionary and core group nurture prospects with personal visits, phone, and mail contacts.**

During the third through ninth months, as the prospect list grows from 20 to 50 or 100, follow-up becomes the key. It can take eight to ten visits of lis-

Steps to starting a mission

- ✓ *Call a missionary*
- ✓ *Meet with the core group*
- ✓ *Prepare a "countdown" calendar*
- ✓ *Canvass*
- ✓ *Nurture prospective members*
- ✓ *Hold public worship*



New members at Living Savior, an exploratory mission at Brandon, Florida.

tening, learning, sharing, and leaving materials before someone will even consider an invitation to study the Word. Repeated follow-up is vital.

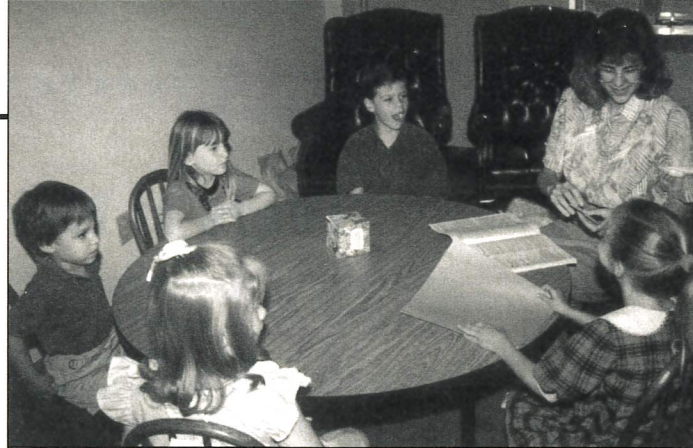
Following up can bring unexpected results. Thomas Kock, a missionary in Johnson City, Tennessee, writes: "I met a family who was unchurched. They said, 'We want you to know we will never come to your church—we don't see any need for it. But you seem like a nice guy, so if you want to come and visit us again, you may.'

"I continued to visit them, never having much chance to make more than small witnesses. When they hired some new employees, they invited them and us to a pool party and barbecue. We met a young couple with two small children. They soon joined our Bible information course and had their children baptized."

Our Lord only calls us to fish. He provides the catch, sometimes on the other side of the boat.

• **The mission nucleus conducts a telephone survey.**

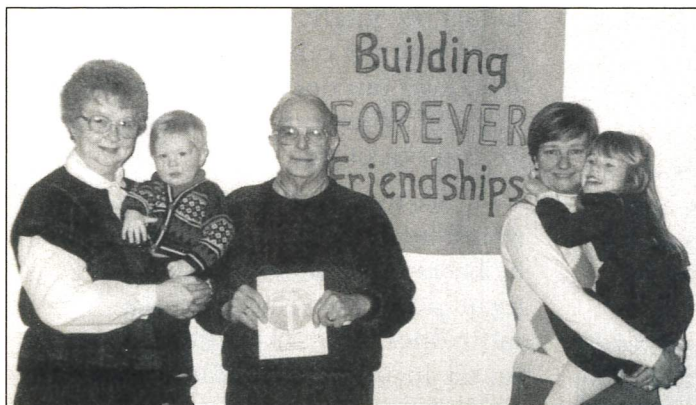
Nine weeks before the first service, a phone survey may follow the door-to-door work, sometimes with help from the Organization of WELS Lutheran



Sunday school at Living Word, a mission congregation in Johnson City, Tennessee.



Christ Our Savior, our mission in Spring Hill, Tennessee, has plans for the future.



Exploratory missions reach all ages. Recently Chris Gordon, Charlie Ungemach, Larry Myers, Kay Thompson, and Molly Thompson were baptized at Bethlehem, Carmel, Indiana.

Seniors, better known as OWLS. This effort usually adds 500 or more names to the prospect list.

Four weekly mailings precede the first public service. A week before the first public service, all prospects also receive mailed and phone invitations. A few people will come. Some say they will come, then don't.

In the months that follow, we keep in touch with those people with monthly newsletters. Occasionally we call to invite prospects to a special service or event. The result is a slow but steady trickle of visitors.

In one mission congregation, people contacted

seven years ago are now coming for the first time. Over half of the parish is made up of people first contacted via telephone.

The first service

• **The mission holds its first public service.**

The first service, which seemed so far off nine months ago, comes quickly. Anywhere from 50 to 150 may be in attendance. We rejoice over even a single sinner reached.

• **The exploratory group receives mission status.**

The exploratory phase lasts for two or three years. When the congregation requests mission status, it has a five-year ministry plan in place. Although it may need subsidy at first, the new mission will aim to be financially independent within five years.

We can plan, but we cannot determine the results. We do what God has called us to do, and trust that he will bless our labor.



James Radloff is mission counselor for the South Atlantic and Southeastern Wisconsin Districts.

Tears at Easter?

Happy Easter! Surely, you would be surprised if I wished you anything other than a happy Easter. Or, if in wishing it, I appeared to be sad or gloomy. Happy is the right word for Easter. Tears are not appropriate.

Yet, that first Easter, someone was crying. "Woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked Mary Magdalene.

Mary shed tears that first Easter because she thought her losses were permanent. She had cried earlier because she thought she had lost the living Jesus. Now she cried because she thought she had lost the dead Jesus as well.

Remember how we cried as children when our balloons popped? Remember the loss we felt as teenagers when a good friend moved away? Remember our tears at the death of a loved one? We thought our losses were permanent.

Mary's idea that her losses were permanent affected her seeing and hearing. Because of her tears she did not recognize Jesus. In her grief she

did not at first recognize the sound of Jesus' voice.

When he called her by name and she finally did recognize his voice, she tried to hold onto him. She would never allow him to get away from her again. However, once she recognized by faith that because of Jesus' resurrection no earthly loss is permanent, she could let go.

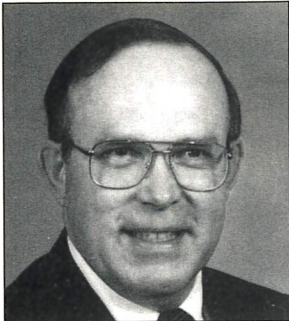
For us to know too that our gain through Jesus' resurrection is eternal, making all loss only temporary, we need to get rid of our tears. With tears in our eyes, we cannot see clearly even what is right before our eyes. We cannot begin to comprehend what is waiting for us in the unseeable future.

That's why we need to hear the Word often, not just on Easter Sunday. In fact, we might say we need the Word more at other times in our life. Who ever ran out of gas when the tank was full? When our tank is on empty, we run out of gas.

So, too, on Easter Sunday, it would be hard for any Christian not to be happy. But on those other days throughout the year, when the difficulties of life overwhelm us, when we are inclined to think our losses are permanent, when tears so easily flow, especially then we need the tear-drying words of Jesus.

Tears for Easter? Surely not! Rather may the news of Jesus' Easter victory make us see how no earthly loss can do us any kind of permanent harm. Just like Mary, having our tears dried by the assurance of Jesus' resurrection, may we truly have a happy Easter.

Karl R. Gurgel



Pastor Karl R. Gurgel
is president of the Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Do you have a question for
President Gurgel? Please send
it to *PERSON TO PERSON*,
Northwestern Lutheran,
2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.



JAMES J. TISSOT

The synod's parish planner

Pastor Ronald K. Heins, the synod's parish planner, answers questions about parish assistance.

What is parish assistance?

It's a consulting service—provided for a fee—that offers congregations flexible, step-by-step assistance in planning their ministry of outreach and nurture. Our goal is to help congregations focus on the things God says are important. We provide help in five phases:

- Introductory meetings and a seminar to help congregation leaders look at their church biblically and gain an understanding of parish assistance. We do this at no charge. We want as many as possible in the congregation to know what they will receive.

- An analysis of the congregation, using interviews and surveys. We work in teams of two or three. This phase culminates in a 45-page written report.

- A training seminar and meetings with members to discuss their ideas for improvement and future direction, followed by recommendations from the consultants, and an analysis of the present staffing and organizational structure. It concludes with voter adoption of a mission statement and objectives, together with a vision statement.

- A strategic design and plan for action. Leaders identify and prioritize key issues and usually make a six-year action plan.

- Reinforcement and follow-up while the congregation puts its plan into effect.

Does asking for parish assistance mean that a congregation is in trouble?

No. It means a congregation wants to do better in carrying out the Lord's work. Many who asked us to come in are doing great but were struggling with their planning. Some were feeling "stuck." Others saw opportunities and wanted to take them. A few were hurting.

Will parish assistance improve church attendance?

Attendance might grow after we come in, but

that's not what we're trying to do. What we do is help parish leaders see planning as a God-pleasing way to carry out ministry. We try to help them focus on what's significant.

Ron Heins became the synod's parish planner in 1992. A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he is a former high school and college teacher, parish pastor, and superintendent of Wisconsin Lutheran High School. He and his wife Mary, an assistant professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, are the parents of four children.



How much does the program cost?

Costs vary. The anticipated total cost is \$3500 to \$7800 over a two-year-plus period, depending on the size of the congregation and the level of assistance needed. Financial assistance is available. There is no charge for phase one. Presently grants are given for up to 25 percent of the cost for phase two and up to 70 percent of the cost for phases three and four.

How can our congregation take part in the program?

Congregations file a formal application. Before that, the pastor, key leaders, and voters have to agree this is what they want to do. For more information, contact Pastor Ronald Heins, 601 N 119 St, Wauwatosa WI 53226; 414/771-1235; FAX 414/771-1235.

Do you have questions about the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—how it functions, how decisions are made and carried out? Please send your questions to *OPEN DOORS*, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Committee eyes synodical restructuring

Can WELS manage its affairs more quickly, more efficiently, and less expensively? If so, how? Those questions will occupy the Synodical Restructuring Committee, appointed by the Conference of Presidents in response to the 1993 synod resolution that called for a study and recommendations regarding "a

complete restructuring of our synod's corporate organization."

Committee members are Pastor Jon Mahnke, chairman, San Jose, Cal.; Prof. David Valleskey, Mequon, Wis.; Principal Randall Westphal, Fond du Lac, Wis.; Pastor Joel Frank, Plymouth, Neb.; Mr. Ronald Rathke, Indianapolis,

Ind.; Judge Arnold Schumann, Jefferson, Wis.; and Mr. Arvid Schwartz, Green Isle, Minn.

Anyone wishing to share insights or suggestions with the committee may write to the Office of the President, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398.

Amalgamation and new programs are focus of ministerial education

New schools were the main topic at the recent meeting of the Board for Ministerial Education (BME).

A ministerial college is to be formed by amalgamating Dr. Martin Luther College and Northwestern College in New Ulm, Minn., and a preparatory school is to be created by combining Martin Luther Prep and Northwestern Prep in Watertown, Wis.

Faculties, campus plans underway

With presidents of the new schools in place, the boards of control are calling faculties. The intent, according to the BME report, is "to extend calls initially to the staffs of the two combining schools."

Master plans have been approved for the campuses. The plans identify immediate and long range needs. The boards will set priorities for construction.

Early childhood education receives attention

In addition, the BME reported that the school of education at New Ulm plans to begin an early childhood education program in the fall of 1995.

Staff ministry program moves ahead

The BME also approved a five-year degree program in staff ministry, either alone or in combination with elementary education. Students may choose from several areas, including family ministry, evangelism, deaconess, and administration.

Task force to look into foreign language instruction

The BME also reported that it has appointed a task force to study whether both the schools of theology and education should require foreign language study. The task force was instructed to consider the importance of language in the

growing need for multicultural ministry and submit a final report by October.

More field experience for future seminarians

The report also noted that future seminary students will receive more field experience as the result of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's self-study. A new plan calls for a two-year program of parish experience for first- and second-year seminary students. The study report highlighted the following policies:

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) of Mequon, Wis., continues to be a school for the preparation of pastors (rather than merely a school for the advanced study of theology).

WLS will give increasing attention to practical training while maintaining its focus academically on the study of Scriptures, including extensive use of Greek and Hebrew.

Lutheran campus ministry receives grants

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod students and campus pastors will receive \$55,000 in grants from Aid Association for Lutherans. One \$20,000 grant will be used for cam-

pus ministry presentations at regional workshops for student leaders, campus pastors, and congregations. A second \$20,000 grant will be used for regional pastor

training workshops and student rallies. A third grant of \$15,000 will be used for a survey to evaluate present campus ministry programs.

Program helps schedule missionary speakers

Scheduling a world missionary to speak at your church will be easier, thanks to the Harvesters Link Program that coordinates congregations' requests for guest speakers with missionaries on furlough. Coordinating the program are Kurt and Dawn Petermann of Appleton, Wisconsin.

Congregations provide the date they want a speaker. The Petermanns forward the list of all congregations to missionaries, who then accept the invitations that fit their schedules. Most missionaries take furloughs during the summer months.

"It will be up to our clearing house to try to 'mix up' the missionaries," said Petermann, "so that a congregation might have a variety of speakers from year to year."

The program coordinators send request forms to the Commission on Communication for Financial Support communicators, who provide copies to congregations.

The Petermanns can be contacted at 1906 S Kernan Ave, Appleton WI 54915; 414/734-0205.

The cost of freedom: German church needs your help

For 40 years, WELS sent financial aid behind the iron curtain in Germany to the synod's first mission outside North America. Now, when the need is far greater, the funds for assistance are depleted.

During the years the German mission—now a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELF)—was under communism, the synod sent \$16,400 to it annually. The money supported three pastors and 40 percent of the operating costs of ELF's seminary.

Not until the Iron Curtain came down did we learn that ELF now has

about 3,000 members, 15 pastors, and 44 congregations and preaching stations—an active sister church, with which we renewed our bonds of fellowship.

However, with the blessings of freedom have come high costs. The

*Our brothers and sisters
in Germany are
in dire straits.*

eastern German economy is in shambles and costs have skyrocketed. Our \$16,000 no longer is adequate. Our brothers and sisters in Germany are in dire straits.

Although steps are being taken to help it become self-supporting, ELF now needs \$6000 a month subsidy to keep going. The WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations and the Board for World Missions have resolved to try to provide ELF that amount—but only through offerings to the non-budgetary Germany Support Fund. The fund is out of money.

You may send offerings to the Germany Support Fund, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

—John F. Vogt



Gail Stuesser, secretary in the Board for Home Missions office, retired February 15. She worked in the home mission office for 13 years.

School of missiology enters second year

The experimental School of Missiology (the study of how we do mission work) can help pastors prepare for sharing the gospel across cultures. Now in its second year, the school offers courses during the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary summer quarter.

World mission counselor John Kurth will teach a course in applied missiology, examining the process

of adapting to cultural differences. Dr. Ernst Wendland, language coordinator for the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, will teach an introduction to the theory and practice of multimedia, cross-cultural communication. The courses are aimed for use in both overseas and USA intercultural gospel sharing.

Following this summer's program, the experimental school

hopes to present a series of missiology courses to the seminary for consideration as a part of regular course offerings.

"Few ministries today do not benefit from a multicultural understanding and approach," Kurth said, "and perhaps fewer men carry out a ministry within a subculture equal to the one in which they grew up."



Marriage Enrichment Seminar—Michael and Vicky Falk were among the 60 couples who attended a marriage enrichment seminar sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran College January 29-30 in Milwaukee. Led by Dr. John Johnson and his wife Laura, the workshop, "Gifted for Marriage: Husbands and Wives Enjoy and Appreciate Your Differences," can be adapted to any size audience throughout the nation. For information on how a church or a group of churches could present this workshop, contact John Johnson, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226; 414/774-8620.

Touch of laughter

When the construction crew arrived to start work on our new church, my husband—the pastor—went to the site to meet the crew and check on progress. Because the ground was muddy, he changed into an old pair of boots.

As he approached, the crew supervisor greeted him. "Hi, Pastor."

Surprised, my husband asked, "How'd you know I was the pastor?"

"It's easy," the boss replied, "I've worked on enough churches to know the pastor is always the one in the work boots and dress pants."

*Susan Balza
Appleton, Wisconsin*

The Sunday school lesson was the feeding of the five thousand. "Why do you think Jesus

had the disciples gather up the leftover food?" I asked the children. "I know!" a bright four-year-old answered. "They were recycling."

*Debra Mathwich
Wausau, Wisconsin*

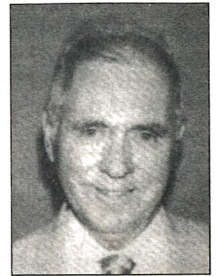
Contributions are welcome. Please send them to **LAUGHTER**, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.



"That was good, but I like the book better!"

Institutional ministry names new volunteer coordinator

Franklin P. Gauger is the the new volunteer coordinator of Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry's lay ministry. WLIM Lay Ministry conducts Bible classes and seminars in health care centers, retirement homes, and prisons, reaching out primarily to the unchurched.



Franklin Gauger

Gauger, a member of Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, replaces Jane Krueger, who resigned because of illness. The position is part-time.

WLIM also has five full-time staff members: three chaplains, a deaconess, and an executive director.

High schools recognized

Three Lutheran high schools—St. Croix, West St. Paul, Minn.; Northland, Wausau, Wis.; and Lakeside, Lake Mills, Wis.—received awards as exemplary schools in a recognition program sponsored by the WELS Commission on Parish Schools. The award, which includes a grant of \$2500, is part of the AAL Lutheran high school enrichment program.

St. Croix Lutheran High School's 1993 yearbook also received an award from Taylor Publishing Company. "This 'Award of Excellence' is given to a small percentage of staffs that set high journalistic standards in coverage and design," said Alan Heath, vice president of marketing for Taylor, a major publisher of yearbooks.

YOUTH NEWS

Please send photos or news on teen activities to *YOUTH NEWS*, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Piano ensemble winners

Rachel and Kayme Fritz won the Missouri State Teachers' Association piano ensemble competition in November at Springfield, Mo. They are members of Our Savior, Harrisonville.



Rachel Fritz



Kayme Fritz

Family ties

Family ties are strong at Michigan Lutheran Seminary for five freshmen whose grandfathers taught at the prep school in Saginaw. In back are Becky Toepel, Randy Zahn, and Mark Holtz. In front are Dorothy Thompson and Joanne Schultz with Pastor Robert Holtz. Besides Holtz, the others who served at MLS are Martin Toepel, Meilahn Zahn, Lloyd Thompson, and Armin Schultz.



Athletes win awards

Becky Bauer, a member of Bloomington Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn., was named metro volleyball player of the year for Minneapolis and St. Paul. In December she was one of ten "tops in the nation" players to participate in the Mizuno All-America volleyball tournament.

Laura Verweibe, a member of St. Peter, Mayville, Wis., a three-time conference cross-country champion, won the Division 2 individual championship at the WIAA state meet last fall.

Traci Renken, a 1993 graduate

of Michigan LHS, ended her high school basketball career as the second leading all-time scorer for southwest Michigan. Named by the South Bend *Tribune* as the female athlete of the year, she received a full scholarship to play basketball at Central Michigan University. Traci is a member of Peace, Granger, Indiana.



Traci Renken

Academy hosts German students

"Willkommen in Amerika!" That's what students and faculty at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., will be saying to students from Darmstadt, Germany, this month. About 20 stu-

dents will attend classes at WLA for two weeks and will live with WLA families. In exchange, WLA students will have a similar experience when they visit the *Lichtenbergschule* in Darmstadt in 1995.

Outstanding teen

Cara Groff, a sophomore at Michigan LHS in St. Joseph, was chosen as one of the top 300 from a field of more than 10,000 in the 1994 Miss Teenage America contest. Cara is a member of Grace, St. Joseph.



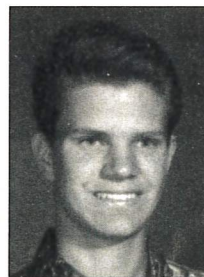
Cara Groff

Youths carry away prizes

Two WELS youths carried away the top prizes in a contest for newspaper carriers sponsored by the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Parade* magazine. Jason Nickels, Manitowoc,



Jason Nickels



Nathan Schmiede

Wis., and Nathan Schmiede, West Bend, Wis., will spend 10 days in Ireland as "Young Columbus" winners. They were judged on their performance records, writing ability, and interpersonal skills. Nickels attends Manitowoc Lutheran High School and Schmiede is a student at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High.

Kids Connection coming

Kids will host it, kids will view it, and kids will grow by it. Gerald Kastens, administrator for youth discipleship, envisions a Kids

Connection similar to the WELS Connection videotapes

that highlight synod news.

Through videos shared in Sunday schools and Lutheran elementary schools, says Kastens, the children of WELS will view examples of "the purpose, excitement, and joy of a living faith in Jesus Christ."

The project is funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Siebert Lutheran Foundation. "We will begin immediately to explore ways of accomplishing our goal," affirms Kastens.

KIDS
CONNECTION

South Atlantic District

Congregation relocates . . . Hope, Lexington, S. Car., held its last service in its original building on Feb. 27. The congregation has put up the property for sale and is moving to Irmo, a fast-growing suburb northwest of Columbia.

For the time being, Hope's members will worship in a dance studio. The church office relocated in December into rented space. The relocation should provide greater outreach opportunities for Hope. The congregation recently conducted a telephone survey of 8,000 homes and has a list of nearly 500 prospects.

—Martin A. Spriggs



Singing in the mall—When the choir of Peace, Loves Park, Ill., was invited to sing at Machesney Park Mall, they "jumped at the opportunity," according to Pastor Tim Gumm. They wanted to "share the true message of Christmas with holiday shoppers, and do a little 'PR' work." Kim Graaskamp is the choir director.

Pacific Northwest District

Congregation runs ad . . . Messiah, Nampa, Ida., received publicity after they ran an ad, "A Lutheran Response" in the Nampa newspaper, *The Idaho Statesman*. The congregation wanted to clarify that not all Lutherans condoned the homosexual lifestyle as did the much-publicized report by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The ad also contained a gospel message.

Sportsmanship award . . . Evergreen Lutheran High School's girls' volleyball team received the Sea-Tac League's Sportsmanship Award.

Vancouver outreach . . . Plans for a mission in Vancouver, British Columbia, came to fruition with the commissioning of Howard Festerling on July 11 at Calvary, Bellevue, Wash., and Earle Treptow at Grace, Portland, Ore., on July 17.

Anniversary . . . Divine Peace, Renton, Wash., celebrated 25 years on October 3. District President Warren Widmann delivered the sermon. Divine Peace is served by Pastor Neal Schroeder.

—David H. Birsching

Obituary

Kurt F. Oswald 1905-1993

Kurt F. Oswald was born June 13, 1905, in New Ulm, Minnesota. He died December 13, 1993.

He attended Dr. Martin Luther College and taught in Lutheran schools in Weyauwega, Watertown, and Appleton, Wisconsin. He retired in 1980 after 55 years in the ministry.

He also served as a school visitor and was a member of the synod's Committee on Worship.

His wife, Myra, and two sisters preceded him in death. His children, Robert (Janet), Harold (Barbara), and Marian (Gerhard) Biedenbender; seven grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren; a brother, Hilton (Trudy) and sisters, Clara Wichmann and Alma Swanson, survive him.

**Encourage
a friend to subscribe to
Northwestern Lutheran.
SEE PAGE 5.**

Book notes

A Feud with God, a novel by Lydia Heerman. Northwestern Publishing House. 175 pages, softcover, \$7.99 plus \$3.35 for postage and handling, stock no. 17N1624.

Set in the early 1900s, *A Feud with God* recounts a young woman's struggle with faith. The death of the young man she loved led her to conclude that "God let him die. God doesn't care about us at all . . . not at all." Therefore, she decided, "Never again shall I ask anything of him."

Readers who have despaired of finding current fiction without violence, sexual innuendo, or four-letter words will be pleased to find a well-paced story with a Christian setting and a spiritual message.

—Dorothy J. Sonntag

This book may be ordered from Northwestern Publishing House by calling toll-free 1-800-662-6022. In the Milwaukee area call 414/475-6600. Phone between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.



The members of Immanuel, Woodville, Wis., built their new church almost entirely by themselves. After the site was excavated, the footings and floors poured, and the exterior enclosed, congregation members took over the rest of the construction, keeping the total cost to \$358,000. The new building was dedicated August 15, less than one year after ground breaking.

Distance learning program to expand

Distance learning—using television and telephone to connect learners in one location with a teacher in another—in the WELS has taken another step forward. The pilot program in beginning Latin worked so well that the program will be expanded in the 1994-95 school year. Latin II and Spanish will be added.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw; Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA), Phoenix; Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.; and Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich. participate in the program. Latin instruction originates from MLS. Spanish instruction will originate from ALA.

NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

Importance of religion climbing again

Although other studies have questioned the religious tenor of the United States today, a 1993 Gallup poll indicates that the percentage of Americans who say that religion plays a very important role in their lives is on the increase. In 1978, only 52 percent (an all-time low) of those surveyed said religion was very important to them. In 1993, however, 59 percent held the same view.

Women (65 percent) are more likely than men (52 percent) to consider religion very important.

The sense of importance also

rises according to age. Less than half of those under 30 consider religion very important. But by 65, three persons in four say it is of great importance to them.

The sense of importance, however, falls as earning power rises. Two in three of those who have less than \$20,000 in annual household income (67 percent) consider religion very important, compared to less than half of those earning \$50,000 or more annually (45 percent).

Christianity gains slightly on population

Christianity grew by 30.5 percent while the world's population rose by 29.8 percent between 1980 and 1992, according to research by the Rockford Institute on Religion and Society. Christianity's growth topped all religions along with Islam, which also grew by 30.5 percent.

Boomers back in religious mainstream

If you have at least begun your 30s and are still a couple of years short of your 50s, you are a baby boomer, part of a group that accounts for four adults in 10. You helped set records in the 1950s and 1960s for religious attendance, membership, participation, and beliefs.

You also likely took time out from church.

Now, however, you are probably back in the mainstream of the church population. For example, 68 percent of baby boomers surveyed are church members, while 69 percent of all adults polled say they are church members; 38 percent of baby boomers said they attend church, while 40 percent of all

adults polled attend. Fifty-four percent of baby boomers said religion was very important in their lives, compared to 59 percent of all adults.

A summary of boomers past, present, and future:

- 1950s—So many parents bring their boomer toddlers to church to give them a religious upbringing that new religious records are established.
- 1960s—Teenage boomers are fascinated by eastern religion cults and New Age ideas, but stick to basic Judeo-Christian beliefs.
- 1970s—As college students and young adults, boomers are too busy burning the candle at

both ends to have much time for church.

- 1980s—The flower children suddenly transform the decade into an age of greed as they “go establishment,” including renewed interest in the church.

- 1990s—Late-marrying and child-bearing boomers wait until the last minute to have children to start their own latter-day boom and generate gradual increases in religious participation.

- Forecast for 2000—Graying and long-lived boomers create an unprecedented demand for expanded senior citizen programs at church.

Lutherans total 58 million

Latest figures from the Lutheran World Federation estimate that in 1993 the total number of Lutherans worldwide was 58.5 million, up from the 1992 figure of close to 58.3 million.

According to the latest issue of Lutheran World Information, the Church of Sweden, with 7.6 million members, is the world's largest Lutheran church, followed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with 5.2 million. Germany has more Lutherans than any other country—its 13 Lutheran churches have a combined membership of 14.6 million, followed by the US with 8.3 million.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has just over 400,000 members.

News reported in this section is derived from Religious News Service, Ecumenical Press Service, Evangelical Press Service, and Lutheran World Information.

No receipt, no deduction

Under a new federal tax law that took effect Jan. 1, if you make a contribution of \$250 or more to a church or other charity, you can no longer use a canceled check as a receipt when filing your federal taxes.

Instead, you must obtain a detailed receipt from the church or charity stating the amount and nature of the donation. Since many churches already provide such a receipt, however, you may

not be affected by the change.

The new law is meant to prevent people from claiming they have contributed to charities when, in fact, they have been receiving services from such organizations. For example, someone might write a check to a church to cover the costs of a child's youth retreat but claim on the tax return that it was a donation to the church.

Faithful marriages still prevail

The divorce rate in the United States declined 11 percent between 1981 and 1991, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Nowadays only four of every 10 couples getting married are expected to divorce.

Couples who marry after living together have a 50 percent higher

rate of divorce. Those who are sexually active before marriage are 60 percent more likely to divorce than those who wait until marriage, according to Michael McManus in *National & International Religion Report*, summarized in *Current Thoughts & Trends*.

The deadline for submitting notices is six weeks before publication date.

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

The Medical Clinic on Wheels, a medical mission of Thoughts of Faith (a church-related organization of the ELS), seeks a medical director to coordinate the medical program based in Ternopil, Ukraine. Qualifications include MD licensure, ability to travel to Ukraine three to four times a year, a high degree of medical and personal ethics, and strong devotion to conservative Lutheranism. The clinic also seeks doctors and dentists to volunteer 10-14 days or more in Ternopil.

For more information, contact Ed Meier, PO Box 37, Stoughton WI 53589; 608/873-5099; Fax 608/873-1630.

RELIEF HOUSEPARENTS NEEDED

New Beginnings, a home for mothers in Denver, Col., needs couples or women to serve as relief houseparents. Housing and utilities will be provided in exchange for your services in our apartment complex. Call Craig or Judy Schwartz; 303/355-9343.

ITEMS AVAILABLE

HOMESPUN HOMILIES—Collection of 24 articles by Pastor Manfred Lenz, originally published in LinkAge. Send \$5 donation to The Lutheran Home, 611 W Main St, Belle Plaine MN 56011.

ANNIVERSARIES

HENRY, SOUTH DAKOTA—St. Paul (100th). July 17, 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Catered noon meal; reservations desired. Contact Pastor Paul Vander Galiën, Box 128, Henry SD 57243; 605/532-5243.

HILLSBORO, WISCONSIN—St. Paul (100th). April 24. Worship, 10:15 a.m., 2:30, and 8:00 p.m. Fellowship meal at noon. For more information call 608/489-2189 or 608/489-2171.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN—Grace (145th). May 15, 8 and 10:30 a.m. Dinner at noon.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

PASTORS:

Beckman, David J., from St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., to Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis.

Ceppek, Gary A., from King of Kings, Scottsbluff, Neb., to St. Mark, Sutton/First, Aurora, Neb.

Cortwright, Charles L., from Our Savior, East Brunswick, N.J., to Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

Lindhorst, Paul D., from Our Savior, Burlington, Ia., to Mt. Calvary, Kimberly, Wis.

Piltzweit, James A., from Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.

Rothe, George P., from St. Mark, Brown Deer, Wis., to retirement.

TEACHERS:

Haakenson, Cary J., from St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee.

Schultz, Daniel D., from Sola Scripture, Decatur, Ga., to Peace, Livonia, Mich.

MANUSCRIPTS REQUESTED

Northwestern Lutheran welcomes unsolicited manuscripts. These must be typed and double-spaced. Please send one copy only. Manuscripts not accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope cannot be returned. Although there are exceptions, feature articles should not be fewer than 500 words or more than 1000 words. Send manuscripts to *Northwestern Lutheran*, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. (NL mail is delayed if it is sent to the publishing house.)

VOLUNTEERS FOR INNER-CITY VBS

Volunteers needed to help with Milwaukee inner-city vacation Bible school June 12-24. Contact John Roebke, 5947 N 36th St, Milwaukee WI 53209; 414/438-0144.

HEARING IMPAIRED CONFERENCE

A national conference sponsored by the WELS Mission for the Hearing Impaired will be July 1-3 in Manitowoc, Wis. Information and registration forms are available from Gene Seidel, 8955 W Palmetto Ct, Milwaukee WI 53225; 414/536-1651.

Ephphatha, a quarterly newsletter published by the Mission for the Hearing Impaired, is also available free of charge from the same address.

LWMS CONVENTION

The 1994 Lutheran Women's Missionary Society national convention will be held June 24-26 at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, with accommodations at area motels. For further information, call Jane Oswald, 414/453-6866, or your congregation's reporter.

AUDIO/VISUAL LIBRARY SERVICES

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

EXPLORATORY: FIRST REPORT (Code: 5137)

1993 18 min. 1/2" VHS color JSCA
Armed with references from Miami and Puerto Rico, Missionary Ron Baerbock and his family began conducting Bible classes in the Dominican Republic. This video tells the story of a new mission outreach. **Rental: \$7.50**

SEX, LIES, AND . . . THE TRUTH (Code: 8237)

1993 30 min. 1/2" VHS color JSCA
This message is aimed especially at teens and preteens. It warns against the dangers of "safe sex," with the added feature of testimonies from sports and entertainment personalities who insist that abstinence before marriage is God's way and the best way. **Rental: \$10.00**

THE MINISTRY OF PAUL (Code: 8227)

1993 25 min. 1/2" VHS color PJ
This animated video tells the story of St. Paul from his appearance before King Agrippa to his shipwreck and demonstrates the power of the gospel in spite of persecution. **Rental: \$10.00**

TREASURES IN HEAVEN (Code: 8226)

1993 25 min. 1/2" VHS color PJ
The animated video contrasts the rich young ruler with Zacchaeus to point out the folly of following riches instead of Jesus. **Rental: \$10.00**

EDUCATING INATTENTIVE CHILDREN (Code 5136)

1993 45 min. 1/2" VHS color CA
The Commission on Parish Schools has made this video available for in-service training of Lutheran elementary school faculties. **Rental: \$7.50**

Please note that the lending and rental libraries have been combined. An annual fee of \$75 allows a congregation to use 30 titles at no additional cost except for return postage. For \$100 congregations may use 50 titles during the calendar year. Individual titles may be rented for \$7.50 or \$10 depending on the format. Order from **AUDIO/VISUAL LIBRARY SERVICES**, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113th St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Phone 1-800-662-6093, ext. 7 (Milwaukee area phone 414/475-6600, ext. 127). Call between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on weekdays.

WELS Connection videotapes

April topics

- Child Care
- Easter message from President Gurgel

May topics

- Los Angeles earthquake
- Vacation Bible school

For more information, contact *CCFS, WELS Administration Building, 2929 N Mayfair Road, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398*. Cost of a year's subscription is \$54.

OWLS CONVENTION

OWLS—Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors—will celebrate its tenth anniversary at the annual convention July 12-14 in Madison, Wisconsin. Join us for this special event and share in tours, workshops, fun, and fellowship. For information, contact the OWLS office at 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-9977.

MUSIC CAMP FOR TEENS

Dr. Martin Luther College invites young people who are completing the 10th or 11th grade to a music camp July 11-14. It will include private lessons in voice or instrument, ensemble participation, worship, library projects, and recreation. Cost is \$140 and enrollment is limited to 24. Write or call Summer Camps, DMLC, 1884 College Heights, New Ulm MN 56073-3300; 1-800-686-4142.

CHURCH MUSIC WORKSHOPS

Dr. Martin Luther College offers one-day, noncredit workshops for church organists, handbell choirs, or church choir directors. For further information on the workshops and how to make arrangements for them, contact your district Board for Parish Services worship coordinator, or contact Special Services, DMLC, 1884 College Heights, New Ulm MN 56073-3300; 1-800-686-4142.

VACATIONING PREACHER NEEDED

Preach in exchange for staying in our parsonage in Summerville, S. Car. Twenty minutes from beach and historic Charleston. Six hours from Orlando. June 19 and 26, July 3 and 10. Contact Martin Spriggs, 803/873-5522.

AREA CODE CHANGE

In the Michigan area, if you dial area code 810 and you receive a message such as "Your call cannot be completed as entered," try dialing area code 313. You should be able to get through to the correct telephone number. Some of the 810 area codes listed in the 1994 Yearbook are in error.

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are needed for mission work at home and abroad.

Overseas:

- Lay people for Novosibirsk, Russia, to spend a year or more working in the Christian Information Center.
- Retired pastor and wife to work and teach in Novosibirsk.
- Lay couple to assist missionaries in Bulgaria.

America:

- Canvassers in Bolton, Ontario, Canada, August, 1994.
- Temporary houseparents for New Beginnings Home, Denver, Colorado, late April and May, 1994.
- Construction workers for Builders for Christ.

For more information, contact **WELS Kingdom Workers 1-800-466-9357**

A call to judgment

by Mark E. Braun

Peter once remarked that Jesus “went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” Thousands in Israel would have agreed.

As many others saw it, however, especially in Judea, Jesus wasn’t so much going around doing good as he was becoming a considerable pest. He was making enemies, and they were plotting to take his life.

A threat to the religious establishment

It becomes clear why the religious establishment viewed Jesus as such a threat. He rebuked the haughty skepticism of the Sadducees, who discarded most of the Scriptures, denied the existence of angels, and disparaged the resurrection. He felt no sympathy for the political leanings of the Herodians, who wished to govern Jews for Rome’s benefit, imposing cruelty and injustice on their own race. He was equally opposed to the Zealots, whose tactics for overthrowing Roman rule in Palestine included sabotage and terrorism.

Although he might have had more in common with the Pharisees than any other group in Israel, Jesus found himself at odds with them most often. They scolded him for not honoring their traditions. They accused him of claiming altogether too much authority for himself and his teaching. Worst of all (as they saw it), he was far too willing to associate with the dregs of Jewish society. “He welcomes sinners, and eats with them!” they wailed.

In turn, Jesus called the Pharisees blind guides and whitewashed tombs. “Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?” he demanded. Those “sinners” the Pharisees despised, Jesus said, were the ones his Father joyfully accepted.

Exposing hypocrisy

What made Jesus so troublesome to these divergent groups was that he was calling them to judgment. Everything he did and said exposed their hypocrisy,

condemned their unbelief, and contested their leadership. Jesus wasn’t only going around doing good. He was propelling the powers-that-be toward a bitter, unavoidable showdown.

Jesus began his ministry by announcing, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” And there was plenty of good news. He overpowered demons, mastered wind and waves, gave sight to the blind, reversed the horror of death. He had compassion on the least and the lost in Israel. “Your sins are forgiven,” he promised them. “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your

life of sin.” He embraced a repentant tax collector among the sons of Abraham. He came “to seek and to save what was lost.”

Parables that rumble with judgment

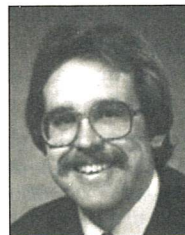
But “repent” is also a call to judgment. To refuse Jesus and his good news is to remain as you are, estranged from the Father, excluded from his family. To turn away from Jesus means to be left to face the frightful holiness of God’s justice with nothing

more to plead than all the times we’ve tried but failed to be good. Those who were his own did not receive him, so Jesus said, “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce fruit.”

During the last days of his life on earth Jesus told a third set of parables. Unlike the bright expectation in his parables of the kingdom, unlike the big-heartedness of his parables of grace, these last stories rumble with judgment.

The grandest thing our Lord ever did was send us his Son. The saddest thing we can ever do is say “no” to him.

Next: The workers in the vineyard.



Mark Braun teaches at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

Jesus began his ministry by announcing, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” And there was plenty of good news. But “repent” is also a call to judgment.

Play ball— but don't kill the umpire

David Schroeder is the principal of St. Mark Lutheran School in Citrus Heights, California. At the beginning of a new season of interscholastic competition involving athletic teams from his school, he addressed a letter to parents. We'd like to share some of his thoughts with you. You may want to share them with others.

Schroeder began by noting that an important element of an athletic program is the instilling of a spirit of sportsmanship along with Christ-like humility. Society often teaches the opposite. But Christian parents and teachers are intent on teaching the value of fair play.

In all sports, from the professional level to the grade school level, Schroeder observed, "it seems that second guessing, heckling and taunting have become part of 'the game.' Referees are berated, coaches' strategies are questioned endlessly, and many athletes have inflated opinions of themselves—all in the spirit of 'the game.'" Bad attitudes and conduct find their way into gyms and ballparks also on the elementary level, even in Christian schools. And it isn't always the kids who exhibit these.

In a positive vein, Schroeder added, "St. Mark's spiritual and academic principles extend from classroom to playground. . . . Our standards uphold and support our league's goals of Christian sportsmanship and fair play."

"As coaches, players, and fans," Schroeder concluded, "we have opportunity to demonstrate our individual and collective Christian

witness. We have occasion to chip away at those negative attitudes and practices so prevalent in organized sports. What we do or say (or don't do or say) will make a difference."

Thanks, David, we needed that reminder. Gym doors and turnstiles at ballparks are not places for Christians to leave behind their ethics and morals. Berating umpires and coaches, or joining in choruses of boos to humiliate a fellow human being,

*Berating umpires and
coaches, or joining
in choruses of boos
to humiliate
a fellow human being
is conduct unbecoming
those who profess
Christ as Lord.*

meant to be a bearer of God's image, is conduct unbecoming those who profess Christ as Lord. Letting our reflected light shine when we're sitting in bleachers is just as necessary as when we're sitting in pews.

Paul's counsel to Timothy is still apropos. "Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things."

Joel C. Gerlach



Joel Gerlach is pastor of St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

by John F. Brug

Which is a better choice—attending a public school where the curriculum teaches humanism, evolution, and anti-Christian morality, or attending a Christian school not in fellowship with WELS?

Are there really only two choices? Another option may be home schooling. On the high school level, our synod prep schools or area high schools are another option.

The public school curriculum may expose students to humanism, evolution, and anti-Christian morality, but students do not have to accept such views. Being exposed to them may, in fact, be an opportunity to testify against them.

Parents should be sure they know what the public school is actually teaching and not rely on rumors. They may explore opportunities for their children to opt out of certain classes. If the classes require the children to do things that are sinful, they must, of course, refuse to participate.

In a non-Lutheran Christian school, teaching may be unbiblical. Subtle false doctrine may be more dangerous to faith than the obvious errors of some public schools. If the Christian school requires children to participate in worship that violates the biblical princi-

ples of fellowship, this a parent cannot accept or allow.

Limited to the choices you describe, I would use the public school, but would carefully seek accurate

In a non-Lutheran Christian school, teaching may be unbiblical. Subtle false doctrine may be more dangerous than the obvious errors of public schools.

information about what is taught, speak against those teachings which are unscriptural, seek relief from them where possible, and teach my children the truth that opposes those teachings.



Send your questions to *QUESTIONS*, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Road, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. Questions of general interest are preferred. Questions will be answered, however, only through this column.

John Brug teaches theology and Old Testament at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

READERS FORUM

We can all learn from Angie

While looking through NL I came across "Angie's lesson" (Sept.). I can easily relate to this wonderful story. When trying to comfort those who had lost someone close to them, I never knew exactly what to say. Angie showed me the best way is to reassure them that they'd one day see them again in heaven. We can learn from this little girl.

Thank you for publishing this article. It has encouraged me and has made me look at death with a whole new perspective. I hope others can find encouragement in this article and see that a Christian's death isn't to be feared, rather to be looked forward to.

*Becky Mau
Slinger, Wisconsin*

Keep on witnessing

"Why so many unbelievers?" (Jan.) put the blame for unbelief squarely on each individual.

So often our attempts to share God's Word are met with outright rejection or total indifference. When this happens, we usually blame ourselves. We become burdened with thoughts such as "I must be doing something wrong. . . . I guess I'm not very good 'doing' evangelism. . . . I'm certainly not going to try that again!" It seems the devil uses those feelings of inadequacy to discourage us from future attempts to share law and gospel.

Thank you, Pastor Piepenbrink. Your article encourages me to keep on witnessing, despite negative reactions expressed by some unbelievers.

*Carol Pratt
Ann Arbor, Michigan*

Scriptural guidelines for music

A letter writer (Jan.) commented on contemporary Christian music. I believe everyone who has opinions on the matter would do well to understand the Scriptural guidelines.

Different kinds of music, no matter what style, are not evil in and of themselves (Psalm 24:1 and 1 Corinthians 10:26).

There is nothing wrong in rightfully using something secular, but we should be careful that we do not give offense (1 Corinthians 8:1ff, Romans 14).

Christian music should not be an imitation of the world, but be a cut above the world (Romans 12:2 and Colossians 3:2).

Christian music should put Christ first (Colossians 3:16-17).

Labeling other music as better, or rock music as inferior, belies these

tenets. There is a right and proper place for a variety of music in a Christian's life. Practicing Christian discernment is where we should exercise our Christian freedom. Belittling someone's personal preferences is not.

*Jeff Scheibe
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*



St. Jacob, Grass Lake, Michigan

**Oldest church:
Grass Lake, Michigan**

I'm writing to make a correction to February's NL. On page 20 there is a picture with the caption, "St. Paul, Monroe, Mich., built in 1860, is the oldest Lutheran structure in Michigan."

Here at St. Jacob, Grass Lake, Mich., we've been using our house of worship since 1853. As far as we know, ours is the oldest building in the synod still used for every Sunday worship. In October 1992 we dedicated a new narthex and ramp, and in July 1993 we celebrated the 140th anniversary of the building.

*Paul C. Stratman
Grass Lake, Michigan*

Amalgamation's essential issue

I thank Pastor Baumler for his message (Feb.) which brought to light the central and most essential issue in amalgamation [of the synod schools]: the integrity of the pastoral ministry track. With God's blessing, amalgamation can be a positive step forward if, and only if, we continue to see the maintenance of the pastoral ministry as a top priority. I am confident that those entrusted with overseeing the

amalgamation will do everything to guarantee the maintenance of the pastoral ministry, which is contingent on the training of our synod's future pastors. In addition, it is my prayer that we see this as our primary goal as we look forward to a new century committed to spreading the gospel.

*Peter Prange
Janesville, Wisconsin*

Hymnal hint

When our church received the new set of hymn accompaniment sheets for *Christian Worship*, the organists were concerned about losing the loose sheets, misfiling, and the bother of refiling them after each use.

We called NPH to ask about ordering additional binders to hold all the sheets. No additional binders are available. Standard three-ring binders do not fit the holes or page size of the hymn sheets.

However, we did finally locate the right-sized binders among the photograph albums at a local store. Now our hymn sheets will not have to be refiled. They won't be misfiled. And they are ready for use immediately in their "permanent" binders.

*Debera Fellers
Fort Collins, Colorado*

(The writer is referring to hymns printed on individual 6"x 9" cards. The boxed set, which comes with one small binder, is available from Northwestern Publishing House.)

**Retirement plans
should include a church**

Many WELS members retire to a different location, but in many cases their planning does not include a location near a WELS church. I am a member of a district mission board. We are getting many requests from WELS members wanting us to provide an exploratory or a mission. These members could do a better job of planning the location so they can be near a WELS church. Please, WELS members, consider all the options before making a move.

*Louis A. Leitz
Lansing, Michigan*

In the interest of conciseness, letters are subject to editing. Full name, address, and daytime phone number should accompany each letter. Names will be withheld only under unusual circumstances. Letters cannot be acknowledged, nor can all letters be used. Address your letters to *READERS FORUM, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.*

**May
'94**

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

One of the marks of God's people is their love for his Word. Many have said, "I will start at Genesis and read the Bible through to the end." But the project is soon abandoned. These proposed readings—5 to 10 minutes each day—will take you through the entire Bible systematically and with variety. The next month's readings will appear in the next issue.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN THREE YEARS

He rose again!

The story is told of a gentleman standing before the window of an art store where a picture of the crucifixion of Christ was on exhibition. As he stood there, a young boy of the streets stood beside him. Pointing to the picture, the gentleman asked the lad, "Do you know who it is?"

"Yes," came the quick response, "that's our Savior."

His face plainly showed surprise and pity at the ignorance of the gentleman. Then, after a pause, with an evident desire to enlighten the man, he said, "Them's the soldiers, the Roman soldiers," and with a long sigh, "that woman crying there is his mother."

After a moment, he added, "They killed him, mister, yes, sir, they killed him."

The gentleman turned and resumed his walk, but he had not gone a block, when he heard the lad's excited call, "Mister! Say, mister!"

He turned and waited for the lad to catch up with him.

"I wanted to tell you, he rose again! Yes, mister, he rose again."

∞ ∞ ∞

Some scholars have given deep thought to Jesus' rising from the dead. "Yes," they'll allow, "you can say Jesus rose from the dead. He lived on in the memories and the stories and the lives of his followers. He still lives in the spirit of the church. He lives on in his teachings. Each believer keeps him alive in his or her heart. If he lives for you or me, then he lives."

"But did Jesus rise?" the childlike thinker wants to hear.

The scholar pauses and allows further, "Many think he did. . . ."

∞ ∞ ∞

The women who approached the open tomb wondered, "What have they done with his body?"

The angel answered, "He has risen."

Mary Magdalene wept at his disappearance. "Mary," he called her by name.

The disciples hid away in fear and uncertainty behind locked doors. Jesus came to them in person.

∞ ∞ ∞

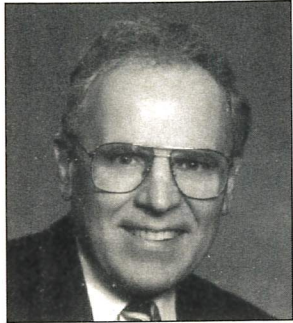
Why do we doubt? Why do we fear and give in to uncertainties? Why do we need to make Jesus less than he is? Is it any wonder that Jesus called for a childlike faith? Imagine what might happen in the church if everyone believed as a child! Why not?

As the lad said, "He rose again! Yes, mister, he rose again."

∞ ∞ ∞

Did Jesus rise? The childlike thinker believes the Scriptures and tells all who will listen, emphatically, Yes.

Gary P. Baumler



"But did Jesus rise?" the childlike thinker wants to hear.



Another empty pulpit

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If you can't grow it here, you can't grow it anywhere."

"You'll be happy to grow anything here with the sandy soil and the hot climate."

Those were the conflicting reports about planting gardens we heard on our arrival in Florida five years ago.

We soon discovered that Florida's warm temperatures and rainy season bring about rapid growth in vegetation. Still, I was not prepared for what I saw in our church's courtyard last summer.

For the Easter sunrise service last year, we fashioned a crude cross from two tree limbs. A friend and I cut the limbs from a tree in the woods behind our church. The tree had no signs of life. The limbs were bare, giving just the look we wanted for our cross.

The cross served as a backdrop for the outdoor sunrise service. After the service, several people suggested that the cross remain there permanently, because it looked so nice. So it stayed.

In the weeks that followed I would look at the cross as I walked by, noticing its simplicity and beauty. It looked like it did on Easter. It lacked only the white cloth that had hung on it.

When we returned from vacation early in July, things were different. The cross had started to grow. Green shoots were sprouting from its base.

It didn't take long to find some spiritual parallels in what had happened.

Three months after we planted a lifeless tree limb



Life from the cross

The Easter cross had started to grow. Green shoots were sprouting from its base.

It didn't take long to find spiritual parallels in what had happened.

by James F. Pope

in the ground, there were signs of life. Three days after people put Jesus' lifeless body in the tomb, he showed himself alive to many of his followers.

Life emerged from what looked to be a dead branch. Life comes from him who was dead and is now alive.

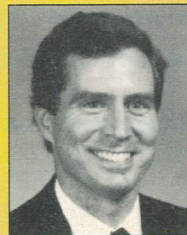
Life comes from the cross. That's what the seasons of Lent and Easter tell us. The apostle Paul wrote that God reconciled people to himself through the cross.

Through the cross we find our forgiveness and spiritual life. The little branches at the bottom of the cross reminded me of that.

They reminded me of one last biblical truth. A couple of months after the shoots started growing, someone pulled them off the base of the cross. Within hours the leaves shriveled up. The shoots quickly died. That was a vivid lesson of Jesus' words: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

How vital that we remain attached to Jesus, the vine, through faith. The cross and its message of life is there for all people, but only faith finds meaning in the cross and receives life from it.

The poet was right: Only God can make a tree. And sometimes God makes us think by what he does with a tree.



James Pope is pastor of Peace, Bradenton, Florida.