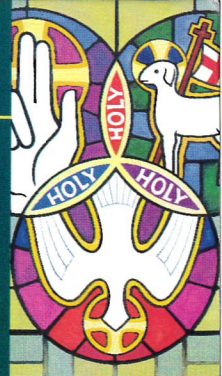


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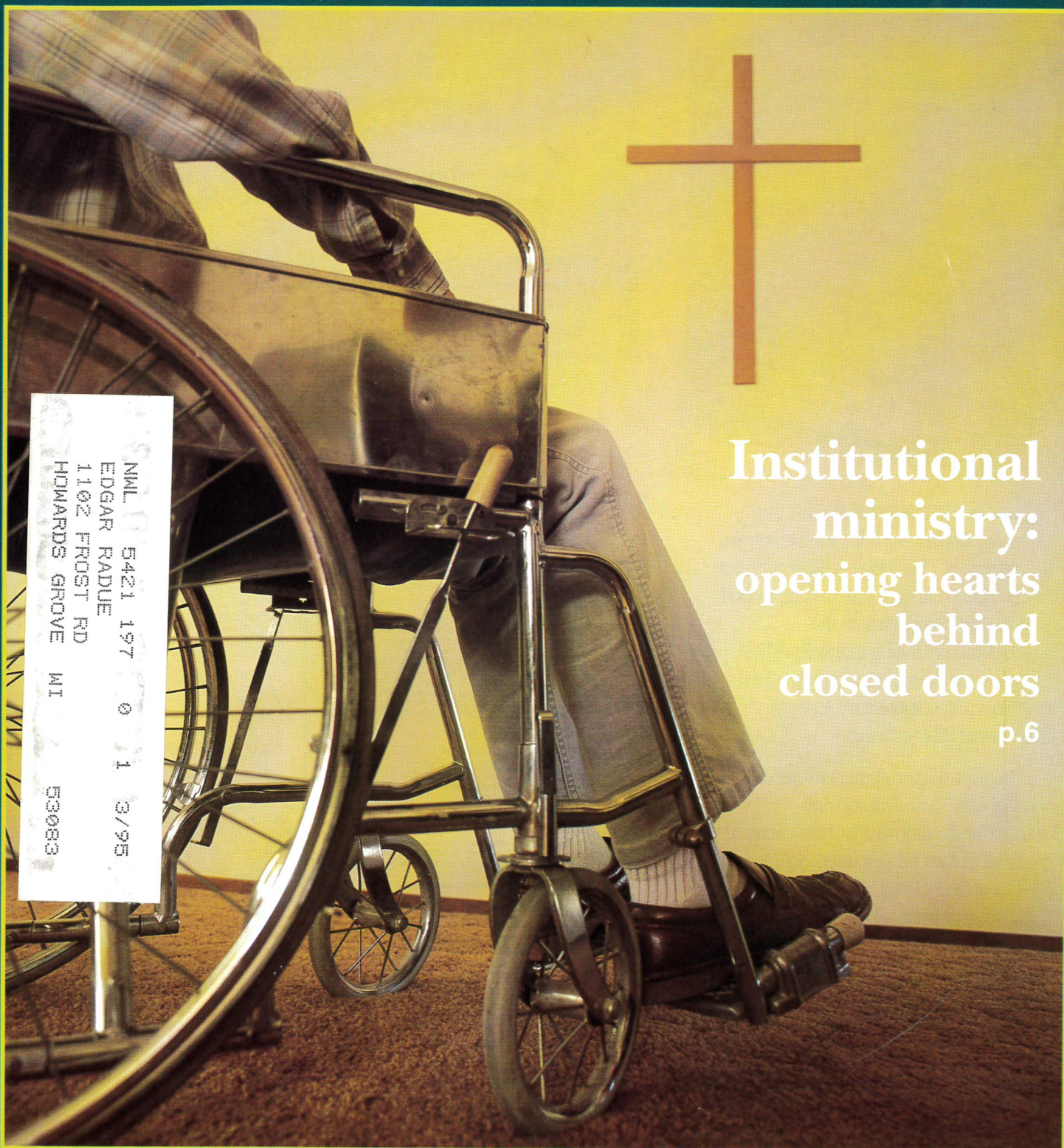
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# NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

August 1994



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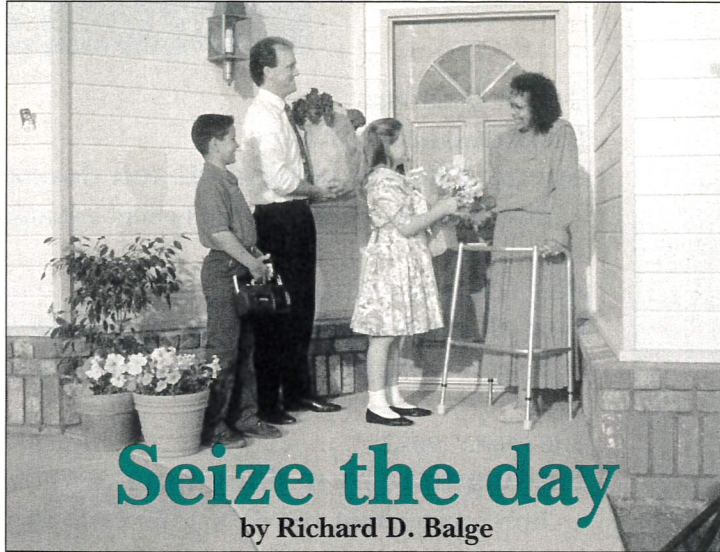
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## Seize the day

by Richard D. Balge

**W**e Christians do not have to spend our lives wondering whether we are saved. We have heard the gospel that tells us Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again to rescue the whole human race from eternal misery for eternal happiness. We know this good news includes us among God's saved people. We've heard it and believe it and have eternal life through it.

If we were here only to receive that blessed assurance, the Lord could have taken us home long ago. He leaves us here for other purposes, and that is why it is important for us to make the most of every opportunity he gives us.

### Opportunities to learn

The attitude "I learned all that in confirmation class; we talked about that at our youth group once" has no place in a Christian's thinking. In work and in human relationships, people need to grow. Christians need to grow in the things of the Spirit, too. Only then can we know how to make the most of every opportunity to be all that the Lord has created, redeemed, and called us to be.

Paul says this is important "because the days are evil." The worse the moral climate becomes and the more hostile the surroundings in which Christians live, the better equipped we need to be. The more secularized our society grows, the more important it is that we use every opportunity to grow in the wisdom

*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. . . . Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Ephesians 5:15,16,21

and knowledge that only the Spirit of God can provide, and which he provides only through the Word he has given in the Bible.

### Opportunities to serve

We know Christ, who is the wisdom of God. "Use and apply this wisdom in your

lives," Paul urges. We can't do that by merely wishing or wanting. It means work, self-discipline, curbing our "me-first" attitudes.

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Don't maneuver and compete to get the upper hand over others. Rather, try to be of service to them. In every situation we face hard and thankless but necessary tasks that "go with the territory." Paul urges us to be willing to accept responsibility, to serve, to submerge our own interests in the interest of others, to do the job that needs doing. He urges us to be that way "out of reverence for Christ." Let forgiven sinners live their appreciation to the Savior in service to others.

"Seize the day," said the poet Horace, who was without God and without hope. With an eye on eternity, the apostle Paul says, "Make use of every opportunity."

In the context of the gospel his words mean: "Make a full-time career of being a Christian."



Richard Balge is dean of students and teaches church history and homiletics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.



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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**BITS & PIECES**



Not all gays are happy



Shaping young lives



Institutional ministry

■ Edgar Herman is chairman of the synod's institutional ministries committee, and he's excited about a vast mission field: prisons, nursing homes, mental health facilities, and other institutions. Many people within those walls are eager to hear the gospel. "Easy evangelism," he calls it. For news about institutional ministry, see page 6.

■ Another opportunity for evangelism is opening as the need grows for child care centers. Laurie Biedenbender describes how these centers are "Shaping young lives" (page 12).

■ After NL ran a series of articles on sexual abuse, Phil Merten, who put together the series, received letters, calls, and even visits from people struggling with homosexuality—WELS people. Phil proposed another series, this one about how the church can help homosexuals. The first article appears on page 8.

■ What is a minister? What does a minister do? As the church adds new forms of ministry, those questions require new answers. In "The meaning of ministry" Wayne Mueller will provide those answers. The first article in the series, "Ministry requires a servant's heart," begins on page 14.

Dorothy Sonntag

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# Institutional opening hearts behind

by Dorothy J. Sonntag

**P**risons, hospitals, and health care facilities are mission fields, and we need to do more to bring the gospel to those institutions. So says Edgar Herman, who chairs the synod's Institutional Ministries Committee (IMC).

"A nursing home, halfway house, or jail is the same kind of mission opportunity as a new subdivision," says Herman, pastor of St. Mark, Flat Rock, Mich. "Institutional ministry is mission work."

## Prison ministry

IMC presently is concentrating on prison ministry. "A red hot item is the Bible correspondence course for prisoners," said Herman. Three courses covering the basics of Christianity are available free to prison-

ers or prison chaplains. Two more should be ready by the end of the year.

Herman expects to need even more than the 50,000 copies that have been printed. "The market for these seems endless," he said. "We surveyed 500 prison chaplains and found we can use as many as we can put out." IMC also provides Bibles for prisoners.

Prisoners also receive mailings—*Northwestern Lutheran, Meditations*, and sermons—from the Commission on Special Ministries.

Prison ministry isn't easy. "Some prisons won't let me take devotional materials in," said Michigan institutional chaplain James Vogt. Another difficulty he finds is that "most of the time we meet in a large room with other prisoners and visitors. There's no privacy. It gets

## Making history by ministry to troubled kids

**S**arah Owens may not look the part, but the petite, soft-spoken young woman is a history-maker. She's the first WELS deaconess.

Owens works with children and teens at two Milwaukee County treatment centers for young people. Although "about 85 percent of them have been abused," Owens said, their troubles aren't always immediately evident. "These kids don't look all that different; their bruises are mostly internal."

The centers provide counseling and a safe haven for troubled young people. "The treatment center meets their physical and emotional needs," Owens explained, "but not their spiritual needs. That's



Deaconess  
Sarah Owens

why I'm there."

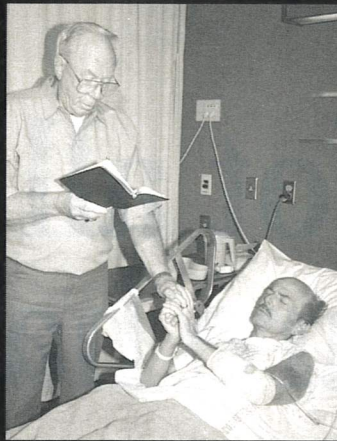
Her approach varies with each child. "I take cues from the children, what they want to talk about. I might read a Bible verse and discuss it, or just talk about concerns. I try to be a friend and role model. Then they'll talk about their lives and I can tell them how God loves them."

A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Owens is a psychology major with a minor in theology. She is called by Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry (WLIM), an organization supported by congregations in the greater Milwaukee area. WLIM also has three full-time chaplains and over 70 part-time volunteers.

Sarah Owens may be the first WELS deaconess, but others will follow. Deaconess education is part of the synod's staff ministry program that begins this year at Dr. Martin Luther College.



# ministry: closed doors



PHOTOS BY MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY

frustrating—but I should learn to be patient.”

## Member ministry

Besides ten chaplains and one deaconess who serve full time in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, throughout the synod dozens of parish pastors double as part-time institutional ministers. Even so, they can't get to all the health care centers, retirement homes, mental health facilities, prisons, halfway houses, and hospitals across the country.

Edgar Herman has a solution. “More lay people need to be involved. Under the direction of the pastor, they can make prison and hospital visits and conduct Bible classes.”

## OWLS ministry

One group involved in institutional ministry is OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors). They have begun a pen pal ministry with prisoners.

“The thrust is to share their faith and be an encouragement,” said Gerhard Bauer, New Ulm, Minn., who's organizing the new program. IMC is planning a newsletter and devotional materials that the pen pals

## For more information about institutional ministry, contact

- Pastor Edgar Herman, 25385 E Huron River Dr, Flat Rock MI 48134; 313/782-3726
- WELS Commission on Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3241
- Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry; 2949 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/259-8122

can include with their letters.

OWLS volunteers also correct prisoners' completed correspondence courses and plan to take over distributing the courses. That help is needed, Edgar Herman said, because the number of prisoners and chaplains requesting the courses is mushrooming.

## Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry (WLIM) has the largest group of lay people in institutional ministry. Over 70 volunteers conduct weekly Bible classes in 14 health care centers, mental health facilities, prisons, and retirement homes in the Milwaukee area. Most of the people they minister to are unchurched.

WLIM volunteers will tell you institutional ministry is an opportunity and a responsibility. They'll also tell you it's rewarding. Laughter, smiles, and hugs from the people they serve are among the benefits.

But the best part, says volunteer Jackie Schleicher, “is the excitement in their eyes when we tell them about Jesus.”



Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor for Northwestern Lutheran.

## Services for those with special needs

Featured in this issue:

- Institutional Ministries Committee
- Special Education
- Hearing Impaired
- Visually Handicapped
- Care Committee for Called Workers
- Military Services
- Senior Ministry
- WELS Membership Conservation



# Not all gays are happy

**Some are unhappy with their homosexuality and want out.  
Can our churches reach out to them, rather than scare them off?**

by Philip W. Merten

**M**ention the word "homosexuality" among evangelical and conservative Christians and you may evoke images of gay libbers holding "Gay Pride" parades and lobbying to get pro-gay books and curriculum into schools.

That image tends to bring out our fighting side. So it's not surprising that most of what's written and said in our circles about homosexuality revolves around witnessing that the Bible clearly classifies homosexual desires and activities as sinful.

That's true, of course. An unbiased reading of passages like Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Leviticus 18:22, etc., makes it obvious that homosexual desires and activities are against God's will. Anyone who respects the Bible as the Word of God will have no difficulty understanding the sinfulness of homosexuality.

## A horrible problem

But we evangelical and conservative Christians often fail to see that a homosexual may not be a gay libber. She or he may be the housewife and mother who heads the church's altar guild, or the teenage boy who ushers you to your pew. And he may be the person who is visiting your church because he's looking for answers and help for the shame and confusion he feels.

I became aware of this after I helped put together a series of articles about sexual assault for *Northwestern Lutheran* [Feb.-May 1993] and received letters, calls, and visits from readers. Many of those readers wanted to talk about their struggles, not with sexual assault, but with homosexuality.

The conversations were eye-opening. "There are two kinds of homosexuals," one man told me, "those

who are not unhappy with their homosexuality, and those who know it's sinful and want out."

Another man, who felt he had heard sermon after sermon condemning gays, echoed that thought. "[The church] forgets who their audience is," he wrote. "We are not the ones you see on TV or newspapers, proclaiming the right to do whatever we want. No, we are sitting in church, trying to deal with a horrible problem, looking to our Savior."

This "horrible problem" these people are dealing with goes beyond simply choosing to commit immoral acts with people of the same sex. "I didn't ask to become homosexual," one man said. "Nobody does." The roots of this condition and the sin it spawns go deep.

## A result of conditioning

Bob Davies, a recovering homosexual who now counsels other people wanting to leave the homosexual lifestyle, writes, "Many homosexual men . . . never sensed warmth and acceptance from their fathers. Others lived with controlling, hostile mothers. Other significant factors include peer rejection, homosexual molestation, same-sex experimentation, exposure to homosexual pornography, and the absence of healthy sex education.

For a lesbian, a lack of bonding with the mother often leads to a feeling of isolation from her own gender ("I never felt like a girl"). That lack of sexual identity can also result from her father not having affirmed her femininity. Another common factor in lesbian development is sexual trauma.

These factors don't force a person into a homosexual lifestyle, but they can set a person up for attraction





to people of the same sex. In fact, they may condition a person so deeply that he or she comes to believe that homosexuality is part of basic identity, a belief that the cultural leaders of American society today reinforce. One person told me, "I wouldn't have believed it at first, that it was a result of conditioning."

That man's Christian counselor convinced him of the truth. "You were conditioned into it," she told him, "and you can be conditioned out of it."

She was right. Along with many others, he has left the homosexual lifestyle behind and, with the patient help of fellow Christians, is discovering what it means to have healthy relationships.

#### **A need to do more**

As I talk with homosexuals and confer with counselors and pastors who work with them, I've learned we need to do more than proclaim the sinfulness of homosexual desires and activities. A lifelong WELS member now recovering from homosexuality told me, "Just knowing it's a sin didn't stop my behavior."

What homosexuals need, above all, is the same thing everybody else needs: the love of the Father, the forgiveness of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Where else are homosexuals going to get the help they really need, if not from the church of Jesus?

---

*"We are not the ones you see on TV or newspapers, proclaiming the right to do whatever we want. No, we are sitting in church, trying to deal with a horrible problem, looking to our Savior."*

---

They're not going to get it from secular institutions, with the social and political climate in our culture. One man told me, "I went into a psychiatric hospital for help. They told me homosexuality was normal and natural. They assigned me a gay psychiatrist to help me adjust to it."

He left that hospital and got involved in prayer groups and Bible study. Now he is happily married and the proud father of a little girl.

But what about others who still want help? Can our churches reach out to them with the good news of Jesus, rather than shying away from them or scaring them off? Jesus' command, "Preach the good news to all creation," leaves us no choice.

I spoke with one couple—the husband was a recovering homosexual—who were enthusiastic about the idea of outreach to unhappy gays. "Think of the mission field right here, downtown, in the inner city . . ." she said.

"Inner city? The mission field is right here in our own pews!" her husband interrupted.

"True," she answered, "but it's a mission field no one wants to touch."



*Phil Merten is a chaplain with Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry, Milwaukee.*



PHOTOS BY MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY



# Finding time by making time

by Thomas B. Franzmann

**T**he jangle of the telephone interrupted Jim as he read his magazine. The caller was Rick, a young man from their church. Rick wanted to know if Jim had time to have breakfast with him next Saturday. Jim agreed to the meeting.

When Jim came back into the den he told Rebecca, "It was Rick from church. He wants me to meet him for breakfast next Saturday, and I have no clue what it's about."

Saturday came. Rick was already waiting in a booth. He smiled and said, "Thanks for coming. I neglected to give any hint what this is about. Sorry. Let's order first, then we can talk without interruption."

**As they sipped their coffee, Rick spelled out what was on his mind.** "My wife, Gina, is a wonderful woman. I feel extremely grateful that God brought us together.

We've been married about six years now. I suppose most couples go through the same things, but we had to work fairly hard at learning to understand each other—we have a lot of common interests, but we are also very different."

Jim nodded, a slight smile at the corner of his mouth. "Opposites do attract," he noted.

"As I was saying," Rick went on, "we have managed to arrive at harmony in almost everything in our marriage. We've usually been able to find enough time for each other. But it looks like that's going to change. Gina is pregnant."

Jim expressed his joy at the news, still wondering why Rick was telling him this.

**Rick continued, "What this meeting is about, Jim, is something that concerns Gina and me.** Our work



keeps us busy, and we're concerned that with the new baby, and maybe more children later, we won't find time for one another. Gina suggested I talk to you, because it seems you and Rebecca really have it together. When we were getting counseling from the pastor before our marriage, he told us not to be afraid to seek opinions from fellow Christians whom we admire."

Jim could almost hear the pastor's words echoing in his mind. He had given Jim and Rebecca the same advice when they were having problems earlier in their marriage. Their difficulties were pretty much behind them now, but they had been painful. The last thing Jim imagined was that someone would be seeking his advice about this mystery called marriage.

On the other hand, he and Rebecca had prayed hard and worked hard to implement the steps their pastor had taught them in counseling. By the grace of Christ they had done it. They no longer feared their marriage would not last. But to have someone else see it as exemplary was surprising. "Well, well, our Lord certainly does answer prayer, doesn't he?" Jim mused.

**"To begin with," Jim started, "We rarely find time for one another. We almost always have to make it.** What's more, I'm not sure that what works for one couple necessarily works for another. But I'll be happy to share with you what we have discovered and how it works for us. Part of our answer came from a time management seminar I attended at work."

"I know," Rick interrupted, "I just went through one of those. But the speaker was really boring."

"That wasn't the case with me," Jim went on. "It was one of the most dynamic talks I've ever witnessed. I still remember some of the charts and illustrations he used. He took a paper clock face and cut it into wedges, like pie. Then he said, 'If you invite company for dessert, and you fail to cut the pie in the right number of pieces, it can be embarrassing. It's the same way with time. You really have enough. It's all a matter of how you slice it.'"

Rick was nodding as Jim talked. "Another image from that seminar was kind of humorous," Jim continued. "It was a picture of a man trying to make headway with a huge ball and chain attached to his ankle.

---

*How we manage our time will be governed by what is really important.*

*What's necessary?*

*What's important but not critical?*

*What's expendable?*

---

But the ball was a large clock face. 'How many good intentions are lost,' the speaker asked, 'because we let time manage us, rather than we manage it?' Every time I start to get bogged down, I think of that picture."

"But those lessons didn't really help me in my marriage," Jim continued, "until sometime

later, when they merged with some concepts from a stewardship program at church. One session was devoted to stewardship of time. Until then, I never thought much about time as part of my stewardship, much less as a key ingredient in a marriage. It's all a matter of priorities.

**"How we manage our time will be governed by what is really important to us.** I don't mean the things we give lip service to, Rick, but what's really important. Bottom line. What's necessary and must be done? What's important but not critical? What's expendable, at least for the time being?"

Jim was afraid he was rambling, but Rick still seemed interested, so Jim went on. "Somewhere along the line the Lord sat me down and made me realize that my relationship with my wife is more important than any other earthly relationship. That made it easier for me—us, really—to adjust our priorities. In short, we learned how to slice the pie more effectively.

"We agreed that no matter how busy we became, we needed to keep Christ first in our marriage and never neglect worshiping together. And we decided to pray regularly for God's help in slicing the rest of the pie in the best way."

At home, Jim told Rebecca what the breakfast meeting was about. She snuggled closer as she listened. "Good thing," she teased, "Rick didn't ask you that ten years ago."

"Don't worry," Jim replied, "ten years ago he would have seen no reason to ask." With a smile they turned to their Saturday chores, a little late, but each with a prayer of thanks in their hearts.



Tom Franzmann is pastor at Our Redeemer, Santa Barbara, California.





# Shaping young lives

Child care centers bring opportunity for evangelism

by Laurie Biedenbender

**W**hen Carol needed to work full-time, she knew what she wanted in child care for her two preschoolers: a safe place where traditional values were taught and where people really cared.

What she found was a WELS church-affiliated child care center that was all those things and more.

The child care center is the newest hand with which congregations are reaching out to the community. Though the centers differ in name, size, and services offered, all share the same mission, to feed Jesus' lambs.

## Lansing—service and outreach

Pastor John Vogt of Emanuel First Lutheran in Lansing, Michigan, admitted that although at first he did not advocate opening a child care center, he became a believer. "I now feel that our child care offers a means of service and outreach with tremendous potential. Unchurched parents who would never seek out Sunday School or worship will often willingly place their children under the spiritual program in a church-run child care center."

The teachers and caregivers at Emanuel do not simply babysit. They teach Bible stories and songs, they pray, they discipline with a forgiving hand, and

they model loving behavior.

"We are shaping the lives of young children with God's Word while they still can be shaped and guided," said Vogt.

## Milwaukee—a way to become familiar with the church

The early childhood center at Atonement, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, began serving 3-year-olds as a feeder into their 4-year-old preschool and Lutheran elementary school. About 60 percent of the children are non-members.

Principal Steve Schafer said both programs give non-members a couple of years to become familiar with the church and school before their children reach kindergarten age. Parenting classes offer another opportunity to get acquainted with Atonement.

"Initially they don't know how we tie home and school and church together," Schafer said. "Once they see how it works, they find it very attractive."

## San Jose—opportunity for evangelism

The child care center run by Apostles in San Jose, California, also started as an outreach into the city and a feeder for the elementary school. Each year three to five children proceed to the elementary school, but, Pastor Kerry Kronebusch asserted, "we



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—John Vogt

shouldn't be concerned with the numbers game. Christ said, 'Feed my sheep,' not 'Count my sheep.' The real opportunity for ministry that we have in the preschool is evangelism—raw evangelism. Often it's the first time those children have ever heard the gospel.”

#### **An evangelism avenue**

As the caregivers at these centers daily share the Word, many needs are met. Congregation members who need child care are assured of a Christ-centered atmosphere much like that in their own homes. Non-members receive the quality care and moral training they're looking for. And the church finds yet another way to sow the gospel seed, first into the fertile soil of young hearts and then into entire households.

Is church-run child care an evangelism avenue that other congregations should look into?

“Definitely,” said Vogt. “It's a unique tool in that people will seek us out, beg to get in, willingly pay the cost, and then bring their children faithfully day in, day out for years.”

“This ties directly into the ministry of the church,” added Schafer.

#### **Child care: a fact of life**

As more congregations consider this form of ministry, one concern often surfaces: Aren't we forsaking the traditional family ideal? Won't this encourage mothers to abandon their little ones and pursue their own careers?

Emanuel's members decided to accept the child

care trend as a simple fact of life. “Whether we like it or not, parents will use day care,” said Vogt. “For some it's a choice,

for others a necessity. It's just a question of who's going to bring up the next generation.”

#### **“Someone up there” has a name**

Although not all families who use the child care eventually join the church, Carol's story is one example of the complete package.

Until her preschoolers entered the child care center, her spiritual life had consisted of a desperate plea to “someone up there” whenever the going got rough.

After only a few weeks at the center, her children gave Carol's “someone up there” a name.

“Mommy, we learned a song today called ‘Jesus Loves Me.’ Can we sing it in church with the other kids?”

Carol went to hear her children sing, and in that song and everything else she heard that Sunday, she found what she hadn't even known she was looking for.

A friendly handshake from the pastor, a warm hello from another mother in the narthex, and a note about adult information class on the bulletin board gave her the encouragement and direction she needed.

Now an enthusiastic church member, Carol sometimes ponders at how it all began—with a search for good child care.



*Laurie Biedenbender is a member of Epiphany, Racine, Wisconsin.*



# Ministry requires a servant's heart

**We may have differing definitions of ministry.  
In the Bible, ministry simply means service.**

by Wayne D. Mueller

**C**hanges are taking place in the ministry of our church. All change causes some discomfort, but when changes affect the heart of our church's work—ministry—we tend to be very uncomfortable.

Some are ill at ease with the growing number of titles assigned to public ministers. Mission counselors, planned giving counselors, administrators, recruitment officers, and development directors are just a few of the new names we hear. Are such positions really a part of the ministry of the gospel? Should we require biblical qualifications and theological training of those who serve in these offices?

## Different kinds of ministers

This fall, formal education for staff ministers begins at our ministerial college in New Ulm, Minnesota. For the first time, a professional training track will prepare men and women for full time service other than the pastoral and teaching ministries. Staff ministry, in turn, includes several different positions. Do our churches really need staff ministers? Will there be places for them to serve when they graduate?

On the local level, congregations are training more of their own members for part time service as visitors, evangelists, stewards, youth counselors, and adult Bible teachers. Are these people all ministers too, or is there some other name for their work?

Finally, isn't every Christian a priest before God? Should we all be called ministers?

Some of the discomfort we feel about these

changes in ministry may be triggered by our uncertainty about what ministry is. It's obvious we will not agree on these issues until we all see ministry in the same way.

The search for a definition, then, is important. What exactly is ministry?

Over the next few months we are going to take a look at what ministry is. As we do, we will want to compare our thoughts with God's words.

## What ministry means

Over the years a lot of ideas have attached themselves to our mental picture of ministry. When we think of ministry in the secular realm we may think of Prime Minister or Minister of Defense. In church ministry, we think of "the minister," the chief spiritual leader. These images all carry with them a picture of authority, control, and leadership.

In the Bible, however, ministry simply means help or service. Authority may or may not be a part of that service. For instance, a word the Bible often uses for ministry (*diakonos*) means to wait on tables. We get our word "deacon" from it. That word might well be translated "to help in small things, to do the low tasks."

Jesus described his own ministry with this word. He had strong words for his feuding disciples who saw their ministry only in the worldly sense of control and power: "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to





MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY

serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28). To describe the ministry of his Good Shepherd, David wrote, “You prepare a table before me” (Psalm 23:5).

Jesus used that same waiting-on-tables word to describe the everyday ministry of the laity in the congregation at Thyatira (Revelation 2: 19).

Although Moses was the great spiritual leader of the Old Testament, Scripture describes him as “faithful as a servant in all God’s house” (Hebrews 3:5).

### All ministry is a privilege

Whether it is the everyday service believers give to God or the special service called workers carry out for the Lord, ministry in the church requires a servant’s heart.

This humble servant attitude comes from looking first to Christ and then to ourselves. When we look to Christ in faith, we see where the real authority and power in the church rests. He is seated at God’s right hand. All power in heaven and on earth is his.

That means that service to Christ in the church is a privilege. We don’t minister because God can’t get along without us. God doesn’t need any help. Paul writes that God “is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25).

Our omnipotent God could have chosen a thousand, yes, a million different ways to get his work done. Yet he graciously allows us to be a part of dispensing his love to the world in word and deed. Service to God, whether in our daily Christian lives or

in the public ministry of the church, is an undeserved privilege.

When we look at our own lack of merit and ability, our sense of privilege is heightened. Our unworthiness amplifies the love God shows by allowing us to share his work. The great apostle described his public ministry as a “grace” that God gave him: “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:7,8).

Paul encourages all of us to see our service to God in the same way: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1).

To wake each morning with the joy that yesterday’s sins are forgiven and forgotten—this is ministry. To realize that God who can do all is letting me do something for him—this is service in the church. To believe and trust the Savior who accomplished the greatest things by making himself least—this gives me a helper’s heart.



To whatever else God has to say about ministry, I will respond, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Wayne Mueller is administrator for Division of Parish Services.



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# A word to describe GOD

The Bible doesn't use "triune," but it's how God revealed himself

by Gary P. Baumler

**“Y**ou won't find this word anywhere in the Bible.”  
“No.”  
“It doesn't make any human sense.”

“Right.”

“Why do you believe it then?”

“It's how God revealed himself to us in his Word.”

We're talking about the word “triune” to describe God. How many times haven't we stumbled, trying to explain that word? And it doesn't help when unbelievers point out that God did not use it.

I suggest, therefore, that for the moment we forget

the word. Just pretend that no one ever thought of it and concentrate instead on one event in history, one night when a man named Nicodemus came to Jesus.

## Questions about God

Nicodemus was astounded by the miraculous signs Jesus performed. He had already concluded that Jesus must have “come from God,” and he wanted to know more about him. So Jesus told him about God. Jesus solemnly declared—“I tell you the truth”—that “unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Jesus spoke of need-



ing a new birth where the Spirit works together with water, namely, through baptism.

Nicodemus had trouble understanding Jesus. Two concepts begged for a place in his heart and mind: "being born again" and "the Spirit." "Whose Spirit?" "Where does he come from?" "What does he do?" The thoughts must have swirled through his head.

### God the Spirit

Some of the answers would become evident from Jesus' words: The Spirit causes the new birth. The Spirit works faith in a person's heart that turns one from a child of sinful flesh to a child of God and a member of God's kingdom. The Spirit does what only God can do.

Nicodemus was puzzled by what Jesus demanded because he knew it was humanly impossible. He was right: God, that is, God the Holy Spirit, had to work the miraculous new birth.

### God the Father

Jesus chided Nicodemus for his lack of understanding. After all, Nicodemus knew God's

Old Testament Scriptures and was a spiritual teacher in Israel. These thoughts shouldn't have been so strange to him.

Then Jesus told Nicodemus God's full plan of salvation. He spoke the words most of us have memorized and treasure: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God loved the world and gave his Son. Nicodemus had heard about the Spirit. Now he heard how God the Father made it possible for the Spirit to do his work. The Father sent his only Son, who was of the same essence as the Father. God did everything to give Nicodemus and everyone else eternal life. "Whoever believes" in the Son, promised Jesus—that is, whoever is born of the Spirit—"has eternal life."

### God the Son

God the Son came into the world. He was the Jesus who spoke with Nicodemus. God the Father gave him

to die in our place on the cross. Nicodemus saw a man like himself, yet he heard him talk of himself as the Son of God.

Jesus finished talking and Nicodemus left. We don't know if Nicodemus believed right away, but we do know the Spirit reached his heart. Later Nicodemus came again to Jesus, to help bury him.

### Three in one

Think now of what Nicodemus knew about God. Already before that night with Jesus, he knew that there was only one God. He knew it from the First Commandment of God. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one," said the holy Scriptures. He knew, further, how the Spirit of God hovered over earth's waters at creation. He had read, too, of the messenger of the LORD who himself was the LORD.

Now Nicodemus learned how God the Spirit works a new birth that brings people into God's kingdom. He learned how God the Father in love planned salvation for the world and sent his Son

to fulfill the plan. He had met God the Son in the person of Jesus.

- One God.
- One Person called the Spirit, who is God who works faith in those who believe.
- One Person called the Father, who is God who gave his Son to save the world.
- One Person called the one and only Son and Jesus, who is God who won eternal life for the world.

If Nicodemus had trouble understanding, no wonder we do too. The Spirit must work faith to believe it, as he did in Nicodemus.

Now, if Nicodemus had to come up with a single word to describe God, might he not have chosen "trine"—"three-in-one"?



Gary Baumler is editor of Northwestern Lutheran and WELS Director of Communication.



# Africa and AIDS: how missionaries deal with an alarming problem

**F**ormer missionary Ernst H. Wendland, who spent 21 years in Central Africa, is frequently asked about AIDS. How serious is it? How does it affect the church's work there? What does it mean to missionaries and their families in Africa?

"Although AIDS is a global problem," explained Wendland, "statistics from Africa are especially alarming. In some urban centers over 30 percent of young adults are infected. Even in rural areas, 10 percent of pregnant women have been diagnosed as HIV-positive; this means they can transmit the AIDS virus to their children."

No effective vaccine has been found. "I shudder to think of what this bodes for future generations," Wendland continued. "I've heard it said that AIDS could have the same effect as the Black Death plague that swept over Europe hundreds of years ago."

## They can't avoid contact

Americans can try to avoid people who are HIV-positive, Wendland said, but in Central Africa avoiding AIDS carriers is not possible, especially for missionaries.

"How can they refuse to shake hands with parishioners at church?" he asked. "How can they refuse to minister to a church member with AIDS symptoms? How can they imagine that AIDS has nothing to do with a dramatic increase in the number of funerals in their congregations?"

Because they can't avoid direct contact with people who have AIDS, Wendland said, missionaries and

their families know it's important to understand how AIDS is—and is not—transmitted.

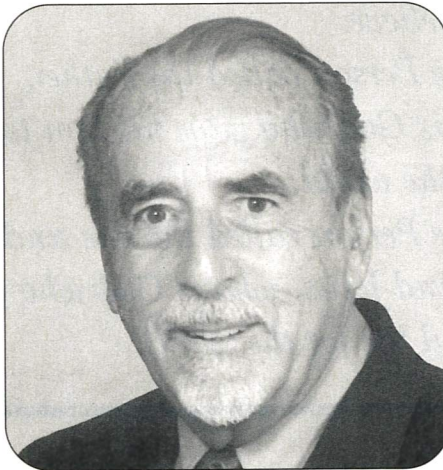
"One needs to know how to take care, and to avoid being overly protective," he cautioned. "There is a decided difference between using infective drug needles and shaking hands. One must also differentiate between indulging in promiscuous sex and working in the same room with an infected friend. It's important to realize that the over-publicized condom cannot guarantee protection, while casual tokens of friendship offer no danger at all."

## They can avoid irrational fear

Wendland believes that people who have "irrational AIDS fears" should stay out of Africa. "Those who follow the basic principles of Christian conduct and hygienic living can exist quite comfortably in Central Africa," he observed. "Excessive fear of contagion, on the other hand, can often be more disruptive than the contagion itself—whether living in Africa or America. Even antiseptic America, for that matter, is becoming more and more an unseen jungle of infectious diseases."

Ministering to someone afflicted with AIDS, Wendland believes, can be both difficult and rewarding. "There is no point in trying to dispense insipid palliatives," he said.

"David's cry, 'How long, O LORD, will you hide your face from me?' grows in intensity as the visits progress. But there is time for Word and sacraments to offer the only existing cure."



WELNETZ STUDIO

*"How can they refuse to minister to a church member with AIDS symptoms? How can they imagine that AIDS has nothing to do with a dramatic increase in the number of funerals."*

—Ernst H. Wendland



## The 3 Rs of mission work

**“W**hat’s in it for me?” Do you ever ask that question? Do you ever answer it before you’ll do something for someone else? Of course! There’s more than enough encouragement for such selfish thinking in the sin-corrupted hearts of all of us. Why, then, would I even suggest such a thought when it comes to doing mission work?

The answer lies in what we might call the 3 Rs of mission work. They are recall, respond, and repeat.

### Recall

Recall how long you have been a Christian. Maybe for you, like me, it’s been a long time, nearly all your life. That’s good, as long as we can still recall what it must be like not to know Jesus and the comfort of his love.

Many people don’t know how much God loves them. We need to recall what it would be like if we were like them. Recall the words of Paul in Ephesians 2:3-5: “Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

### Respond

Recalling what we once were, what God has made us now in Jesus, helps us to respond appropriately. When we recall what would have become of us without Jesus, we feel a certain urgency to respond to the need of those without him.

This response needs repeating. How quickly we all forget! Each day, as

we close our eyes, may we recall our sins. Each day, as we respond to God’s eternal pardon with thanksgiving, may we repeat our resolve to be concerned about mission work.

### Repeat

What’s in it for me? Mission work helps me recall what life would have been like for me without Jesus. Mission work gives me an opportunity to respond in love and gratitude for God’s love to me. Mission work repeats for me, each time I am involved in it, the never-ending cycle of how I, a sinner, have been made a saint by the forgiving love of Jesus.

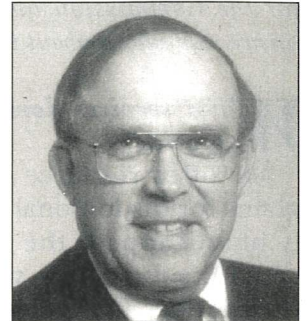
That’s what’s in it for me. As God uses you and me, that’s what can be in it for others. Along with others, the men, women, and children of the WELS, may we resolve “to seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls and establish ministering congregations throughout the world.”

*Karl R. Gurgel*

### Mission of the WELS

As men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.

**Objective two**—To seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls and establish ministering churches throughout the world.



*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.



# Special Ministries

## Services for people with special spiritual needs

*Do you have questions about the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—how it functions, how decisions are made and carried out? Synod administrators will provide some answers.*

*This month Alfons L. Woldt, administrator for the Commission on Special Ministries, answers questions about the services it provides.*

### **W**hat services does Special Ministries provide?

We offer resource materials and programs for institutional ministry, the visually handicapped, the hearing impaired, special education services, the Care Committees for Called Workers, military services, membership conservation, and senior ministry.

### **W**hat services could be added?

We're meeting spiritual needs; but we could offer more services to help with physical needs. We stick to providing resources for spiritual needs, because we don't have the size or manpower to offer services for physical or emotional needs. And we don't want to shift the focus from spiritual needs. We hope our congregations will meet the other needs.

### **D**on't our churches routinely minister to people with special needs? Why do we need a division for special ministries?

Some congregations are doing a beautiful job of meeting the special needs of some of their members, but there are areas where they need help in providing specialized materials. For instance, we have the latest technology, a computer where we convert print to Braille. Not many congregations could provide materials in Braille.

### **W**hy do we have civilians serving WELS military personnel? Shouldn't our chaplains be part of the armed forces?

We don't have military chaplains for doctrinal reasons. The military says that a chaplain doesn't have to violate his denomination's tenets, but that can get complicated. For instance, a military chaplain must give communion to anyone who comes to a service.

As a practical matter, too, those chaplains would



WELS Commission on Special Ministries staff: Al Woldt, Jackie Schleicher, and Ruth Eggert.

have to serve where the military says. They might be sent somewhere where there aren't many WELS members.

Even without military chaplains, we're reaching most of our people in the services. We have two full-time and about 120 part-time chaplains who serve our military personnel. Our chaplains have a good relation with the military and have free use of military facilities and access to service people.

#### SERVICES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

The WELS Commission on Special Ministries has a wide range of services for people with special spiritual needs, including:

- people moving to areas where there is no WELS affiliated ministry
- people with developmental disabilities
- people in the military
- people living away from their spiritual homes for an extended period
- prisoners
- people living in institutions

Please send names to the WELS Commission on Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Please send your questions about the synod administration to *OPEN DOORS*, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.



## School amalgamation on schedule

School mascots have been selected, construction has begun, and the curriculum is planned for the synod's new schools. Luther Preparatory School, the combined prep school, and Martin Luther College, the amalgamated college, are scheduled to open in the fall of 1995.

Martin Luther College's athletic symbol will be the Spartans. At Luther Prep the mascot will be the phoenix, a mythical bird said to arise from its own ashes. Early Christians used the phoenix as a symbol for the resurrection.

### Building projects under way

In New Ulm, construction crews are rehabilitating Summit Hall to house 134 men. It will be ready for use this fall by Dr. Martin Luther College. Also started is a link between the academic center and Old Main that will add administrative offices, science labs, and faculty offices. The school has purchased Highland Manor, a former nursing home near the campus, and is remodeling it to house students.

In Watertown, construction has

begun on an academic center and a student union/locker room addition.

### Schools plan curriculum

When it opens in the fall of 1995, Luther Preparatory School in

*Martin Luther College*

*athletic symbol—*

*Spartans*

*Luther Preparatory*

*School mascot—*

*Phoenix*

Watertown, Wis., will have its curriculum in place. Requirements include:

- All students: 4 years of religion, English, science, social studies, and music; 2 or 3 years of math; 1 year of Latin; 3 years of physical education; and 1 year of computer.

- Pastor-track students: 3 years of

Latin and 2 years of German.

- Teacher-track students: 2 years (beyond Latin 1) of a foreign language; 2 years of piano/organ.

- Available to all students: 4 years of piano/organ instruction; 4 years of chorus; 4 years of band and/or handbells; and other electives.

Meanwhile, 20 committees involving over 50 faculty members and students from the amalgamating colleges have spent hours completing arrangements for curriculum, counseling, athletics, library use, and student life.

They have given special attention to retaining the most essential elements of pastor and teacher education. The board of control expects to act on their proposals this summer.

Martin Luther College will combine the synod's pastoral, teaching, and staff ministry education on one campus in New Ulm, Minn., replacing Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College. Luther Preparatory School, in Watertown, Wis., will be a merger of Martin Luther and Northwestern prep schools.

## Three district presidents step down

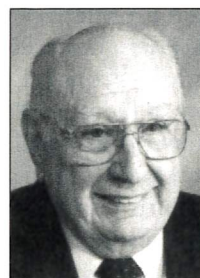
Three district presidents are leaving their positions this year. Reginald Pope, president of the Dakota-Montana District, is retiring after 42 years in the ministry. He served congregations in Lemmon, S. Dak.; Mandan, N. Dak.; Pompano Beach, Fla.; and Mequon, Wis. He retired from Ascension, Mitchell, S. Dak. He and his wife, Patsy, are the parents of four children.

Robert Mueller, president of Michigan District, decided not to run again. He and his wife, Donna, are the parents of four children. Mueller has served at Monroe, Flat Rock, and Livonia, Mich. He is pas-

tor at Salem, Owosso, Mich.

Carl Voss, president of Northern Wisconsin District, has accepted a retirement call to Grace, Scroggins, Tex. He retired from St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., after serving in Saginaw, Mich., and Beatrice, Neb. He and his wife, Margaret, are the parents of four children.

New presidents were elected at



Reginald Pope,  
Dakota-Montana  
District



Robert Mueller,  
Michigan District



Carl Voss,  
Northern  
Wisconsin District

the district conventions during June. News of the twelve district conventions will be reported in the September NL.



## New world mission fields show promise

A report from the synod's world mission board summarizes the work in new fields of ministry:

**Cameroon:** Two missionaries, funded by Lift High the Cross offerings, are being called to train national pastors.

**Dominican Republic:** Exploratory work has uncovered a ripe harvest field.

**Mozambique:** A congregation served by a Malawian pastor has grown from work carried on among refugees in Malawi.

**Sioux Indians:** Exploratory outreach on the Rosebud Reservation will be a joint venture with Zion, Mission, South Dakota.

**Thailand:** Two missionaries will spend two years exploring mission possibilities in the Chiang Mai region.

**Cuba:** Several expeditions by WELS missionaries have prepared us if this long-closed island opens to Americans.

**Laos:** A seminary-trained Laotian in



The first Lutheran service ever held in the Dominican Republic took place in a boxing ring.

Minnesota, the mission staff in Thailand, and lay people in Laos are contacting prospects.

**Bulgaria:** Two pastors, a teacher, and volunteers are manning the church in downtown Sofia.

**Russia:** Work is flourishing in Novosibirsk, a Siberian city of 1.7 million, where missionaries have

established an academic center.

On some other mission fronts, the work is encountering obstacles that require prayerful attention for the future:

**Indonesia:** Two veteran missionaries have left the field, one to take a stateside call and the other for health reasons. Meanwhile, the government has declared it will not extend our three-year visa slots beyond 1996, and it is making demands on our theological school (required to legitimize the presence of our missionaries in the country as teachers) that are inconsistent with our mission.

The world mission board is examining ways to serve the Indonesian Christians apart from the operation of the school.

**Hong Kong:** Missionaries in Hong Kong are making plans so that if necessary when China takes over Hong Kong in 1997, the national church can carry on.

### Obituary

#### Frederick P. Zimmerman 1917-1994

Frederick P. Zimmerman was born Nov. 1, 1917. He died June 7, 1994.

A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served at Arlington Avenue, Toledo, Ohio, and Zion, Lansing, Michigan. He retired in 1987. He was a member of the Michigan Lutheran Seminary board of control.

He is survived by his wife, Ivalo; children, Frederick (Kathryn) and Elizabeth (Melvin) Schwark; 11 grandchildren; his mother, Dorothea Zimmerman; and brothers, Donald (Emily) and Robert (Carol). One son preceded him in death.

### Book notes

#### **N**owhere Man by John D. Schuetze. Northwestern Publishing House.

What does the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes have to say to late twentieth century Americans? *Nowhere Man* will show you. You will travel through Education Alley, turn on to Pleasure Parkway, and cruise down Dollar Bill Boulevard. You'll stay with him until you find the Way. Clearly employing law and gospel, this seven-lesson Bible study will give fresh insights into your life now and forever.

—Gary P. Baumler

*Student's Manual*, 40 pages, softcover, \$3.50 plus postage and handling, stock no. 22N0855. *Leader's Guide*, 78 pages, softcover, \$5.50 plus postage and handling, stock no. 22N0856.

#### **I**n Celebration of Christ's Coming: A Christmas Pageant by Wendy S. Walker. Northwestern Publishing House.

Here's a traditional Christmas service with a new slant—a pageant that maintains a reverent atmosphere while adding visual interest to the story of Christ's birth. The cast includes speaking and non-speaking parts and group recitations. Narrators do most of the speaking, keeping memorization to a minimum.

—Dorothy J. Sonntag

15 pages, softcover, \$1.00 plus postage and handling, stock no. 08N0351.

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





**Air Force Capt. John Smith** needed seven months and 395 pieces of glass to create the stained glass window in Fount of Life, Colorado Springs. The window, Smith's first attempt at working with stained glass, took first place in an Air Force art competition.

## Lutheran church in Bulgaria is a first

For the first time, Bulgaria has a Lutheran church. The government recently registered the Lutheran Church in Bulgaria, allowing it to operate freely.

"There has never been a Lutheran church here," writes WELS missionary Kirby Spevacek. "Now, by the grace of God, there is."

Spevacek, mission coordinator for Russia and Eastern Europe, has been seeking registration for over a year. Meanwhile, said Spevacek, missionaries have been studying the Bulgarian language and holding informal worship services and instruction classes.

In Sofia, the capital city, Spevacek, assisted by retired pastor Harold Essmann, has also opened a Christian Information Center with worship facilities, library, and a classroom. He hopes to add a pharmacy "as our mission of mercy for the poor."

The center is effective. "Spiritually starved Bulgarians are hungry for the Word," writes Spevacek. "Friends bring more friends to Bible study—without

our urging. Bulgarians and students from Africa attend bilingual classes."

Essmann is developing Bulgarian and Russian translations of Christian literature. "There was little Christian literature in the country and of course none from the Lutheran perspective," writes Essmann. Two books have been printed and 16 others are in some stage of production.

Essmann says he wants to produce Russian and Bulgarian versions of The People's Bible. "There is not a single basic commentary on the Bible available in Bulgarian," he explained.

Four missionaries and four lay volunteers are working in Russia and Eastern Europe. Two seminary graduates, Darren Green and Wayne Oblender, and teaching minister Arlin Bornschlegl, Jr., will arrive in August.

Three Bulgarian students are studying in Wisconsin this year, two at Shoreland Lutheran High in Somers and one at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

## Minnesota District

**Mission work . . . Pastor Loren Steele** has become a full-time missionary to Southeast Asians in the St. Paul area. Working with him is **Ger Yang**, who is translating religious material into the native languages. They are also in contact with 150 families in Laos who have requested Bible class material.

**School news. . .** Last year twenty students took part in the **West LHS Footsteps to the Ministry** program, which matches potential future ministers with pastors and teachers who show students what ministry involves. Two former students who took part in the program are now studying for the ministry.

Groundbreaking for a 20,000-square-foot addition at **Minnesota Valley LHS** was held April 17. . . . MVLHS girls' basketball team were district champions. . . . MVL students Anthony and Daniel Ross were chosen for the *Mankato Free Press* Academic Excellence area team. Daniel also received a scholarship.

New students will represent at least 11 different states this fall at **Martin Luther Prep School. . .** The school will move to Watertown, Wis., and merge with Northwestern Prep after this year to form Luther Prep. All MLPS faculty members have received calls to Luther.

**Dr. Martin Luther College** was the site for the second WELS Literacy Convention, June 28-July 1.

—Bradley J. Pearson

## WELS Connection videotapes

### August topics

- Campus ministry
- TEAM ministry

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



## YOUTH NEWS

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



**Scott Hanson and Nicholas Gresens** were national merit scholarship finalists at Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.

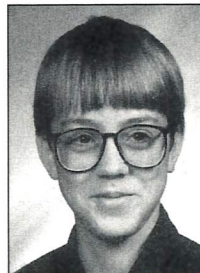


**Wisconsin Lutheran High School**, Milwaukee, teachers spent a night on a platform 35 feet in the air to keep a promise to sleep there if students raised \$12,000 for tuition assistance. They exceeded the goal, raising over \$13,000.

## Delegate to National 4-H Congress

**Richard Bakken**, a student at Illinois Lutheran High in Crete, was a delegate to the National 4-H Congress. He won the trip for citizenship.

**Michele Ballert**, Sonoma, Calif., won first place in an art contest sponsored by a Sonoma bank. Her artwork will appear on future bank brochures and announcements. Michele, 18, is a member of Living Word, Petaluma, Calif.



**Jim and John Henkel**, Rudolph, Wis., were medal winners at the Wisconsin state Tae Kwon Do championships in March. Jim, a student at Northland LHS in Wausau, won gold and silver medals. John, a student at St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, brought home a gold, silver, and bronze medal.

**Jon Draeger**, a student at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., was one of 100 US teens invited to take part in an international running meet in London last December. He placed fifth out of 200 runners in a 3 kilometer race.



## Touch of laughter

As the pastor of a mission congregation, I often survey the neighborhood near our church for prospective members. Early one evening I announced to my family, "I'm going out to canvass."

Five-year-old Hans, who's learning US geography, exclaimed, "Canvass! That's a long way!"

*Joel Voss  
Centerville, Ohio*

When gift-planning counselor Paul Soukup had surgery recently, his co-workers at the synod administration building passed around a get-well card for him. NL editor Gary Baumler, in a meeting when the card came around, hastily added a greeting just before the card was mailed.

Too late Gary learned that it was not, as he thought, a birthday card. What did he wish for his friend in the hospital? "Many happy returns."

*NL staff*

When my preschool class prays, I say a phrase and the children repeat it. One day the prayer went like this:

"Dear God, thank you for eyes to see" (repeat).

"Thank you for ears to hear" (repeat).

"Thanks you for noses to smell good things" (repeat).

"Thank you for mouths to eat" (repeat, followed by Michael's "Yuck!").

"Michael, "I said, "when we're praying, we don't say 'yuck.'"

"But Teacher," replied Michael, "a mouse to eat?"

*Margaret Prange  
Redding, California*

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





Over 400 handbell ringers gathered at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School in Jackson, Wisconsin, April 17 for a program of

instrumental and choral music. The national handbell festival is an annual event.

## NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

### Bible knowledge and the average American

Over the years Gallup has tested people on their religious knowledge, and the following quiz is based on those questions. Answer the questions and see how you compare with the average American.

*Quiz:*

1. What is the first book of the Bible?
2. Name as many of the Ten Commandments as you can think of.
3. Name one or more prophets mentioned in the Old Testament.
4. Who delivered the Sermon on the Mount?
5. Where was Jesus born?
6. Who was the mother of Jesus?
7. What country ruled Jerusalem during the time of Jesus?
8. How many disciples did Jesus have?

9. What religious event is celebrated on Easter?
10. What is the Holy Trinity?
11. Name the four Gospels of the New Testament.

*Here's how Americans in general fared:*

1. About half of adult Americans (49 percent) know that Genesis is the first book of the Bible.
2. On average, teens can name about three to four of the Ten Commandments. Most likely to be named are the commandments against stealing, adultery, and murder.
3. Only 21 percent of adults could name at least one of the Old Testament prophets.
4. One adult in three (34 percent) knows that Jesus delivered the sermon on the mount.
5. About two adults in three (64 percent) know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
6. Most adults (95 percent) know that Mary was the mother of Jesus.
7. Only about one adult in three (35 percent) knows that Rome ruled Jerusalem during the time of Jesus.
8. Two teens in three (66 percent) know that Jesus had 12 disciples.
9. Three adults in four (75 percent) know that Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
10. Four adults in 10 (40 percent) can describe the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—correctly.
11. Only one teen-ager in three (35 percent) can name the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.



## Downward trends continue for Catholics

Roman Catholics in the US have experienced a decrease in the number of priests, seminaries, and elementary schools in recent years, according to *Context* (April 15).

Father Eugene Hemrick, director of research for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, offers the following statistics:

√ The number of diocesan priests dropped by 20 percent from 1966 through 1984 and will drop 20 percent from 1985 through 2005. By the millennium, the average priest will be over 60, and fewer than 12 percent will be

under 35.

√ Presently, 5,892 seminarians are studying in 213 seminaries. Twenty-five years ago there were nearly seven times that number (39,838) in 320 seminaries. Careful estimates suggest that 37 percent of priests will resign before reaching their silver anniversary.

√ There are 3,111 fewer Catholic elementary schools in 1993 than there were in 1968. Enrollment in these schools has dropped from 4,165,504 to 2,007,299.

## Commandments will stay off Atlanta courthouse

The US Supreme Court has refused to review a decision ordering Cobb County, Ga., to remove a plaque with the Ten Commandments from its courthouse.

"It's up to the voters to take our country back," said County Commission chairman Bill Byrne.

Gary DeMar, leader of America Vision, called the commandments the "basis of all Western law." Unless they are upheld, American society will collapse, he warned.

## 20 questions to test your religion IQ

Survey questions have become popular on quiz shows as contestants try to guess how the public has answered questions posed by the nation's pollsters. For today's quiz, imagine that your clergyman asked you how Americans responded to the questions below, posed by Gallup in recent years. Answers are on page 27.

### QUESTIONS

1. What percent of the United States population is Jewish? (a) 2 percent (b) 22 percent (c) 42 percent.
2. How many people say they are born-again or evangelical Christians? (a) 25 percent (b) 35 percent (c) 45 percent.
3. How many people in the United States believe in God? (a) 54 percent (b) 74 percent (c) 94 percent.
4. How many believers think they are going to heaven when they die? (a) 29 percent (b) 49 percent (c) 69 percent.
5. How many teens pray when they are alone and no one is looking? (a) 22 percent (b) 32 percent (c) 42 percent.
6. In a typical week how many people in this country attend worship services? (a) 20 percent (b) 40 percent (c) 60 percent.
7. How many people think Jesus Christ was for real? (a) 64 percent (b) 74 percent (c) 84 percent.
8. How many people think the devil exists? (a) 52 percent (b) 62 percent (c) 72 percent.
9. How many people believe the Bible should be interpreted literally word for word? (a) 12 percent (b) 32 percent (c) 52 percent.
10. How many teens attend Sunday School only because their parents make them go? (a) 13 percent (b) 33 percent (c) 63 percent.
11. How many college students stop believing in God? (a) 6 percent (b) 26 percent (c) 46 percent.
12. What form of prayer is most often said? (a) formal prayers (b) meditative (c) conversational.
13. Who has been the most admired religious figure over the past 30 years? (a) Billy Graham (b) the pope (c) Mother Teresa.
14. Compared to other professions, how do the clergy rank in reputation for honesty? (a) first (b) second (c) third.
15. How does organized religion rank compared to other American institutions in confidence? (a) first (b) second (c) third.
16. How many people are absolutely convinced they are going to be called before God on Judgment Day? (a) 52 percent (b) 62 percent (c) 72 percent.
17. How many people think the world is going to end within the next 100 years? (a) 6 percent (b) 16 percent (c) 26 percent.
18. How many people think religion can answer today's problems? (a) 31 percent (b) 45 percent (c) 64 percent.
19. How many people say religion is very important in their lives? (a) 39 percent (b) 59 percent (c) 79 percent.
20. How many people say they have been influenced by an outside force or power such as God? (a) 34 percent (b) 44 percent (c) 54 percent.



## Religion in America on D-day

Fifty years after D-day, Gallup offers us a look at the faith of Americans at the strategic point of World War II in 1944:

Belief in God was at 96 percent of the American people, compared to 94 percent in recent years.

More people (76 percent) in 1944 believed in life after death than do so today (65 percent).

As they faced 1945, the third most popular New Year's resolution among women was to be more religious or go to church more frequently. Among men this resolution ranked fourth in popularity.

Church attendance in 1945 was actually lower than now, but many people at that time worked double shifts and transportation was severely

restricted. Fifty-six percent said then that they had attended religious services in the past month, compared to 66 percent now.

## New catechism for Catholics

On May 27 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops formally unveiled the English version of the church's new catechism, the first new catechism in Catholicism in 400 years. According to the report, the document "reaffirms traditional church teaching but aims to make

that teaching relevant to the styles—and sins—of contemporary society." The 800-page book is not written in the typical question-and-answer format of many catechisms and is not meant for the youth, but for those who will teach or prepare materials for the youth.

### ANSWERS

1. **A.** Only 2 percent of the U.S. population in recent years said their religious preference is Jewish.
2. **C.** Forty-five percent of adults say they are born-again or evangelical Christians.
3. **C.** Ninety-four percent of Americans believe in God. There are very few atheists or agnostics in this country.
4. **A.** Twenty-nine percent of those who believe in heaven rate their chances of going there as excellent. Only 2 percent of those believing in hell think they will be punished eternally there for their misdeeds.
5. **C.** Forty-two percent say they frequently pray when they are alone, and an additional 32 percent say they do it occasionally.
6. **B.** Forty percent of people go to church in a typical week.
7. **C.** Eighty-four percent of Americans believe Jesus Christ is God or the son of God.
8. **A.** Fifty-two percent believe in the devil.
9. **A.** Just 12 percent think the Bible is the actual Word of God to be interpreted literally. The figure used to be much higher, but more and more people have come to believe the Bible, though the inspired Word of God, is not always to be interpreted literally.
10. **A.** Thirteen percent of teens go to Sunday School just to please their parents. The majority go because it is a good way to deal with adolescent problems or to gain a better understanding of their religion.
11. **A.** Belief in God drops to 89 percent among students, a decline of 6 percent from the general population. Some will probably recover their faith in God in later years.
12. **C.** Conversational prayers with God are made by 56 percent of those who pray.
13. **A.** All these leaders have been esteemed in recent years, but Billy Graham has been named among the top 10 for over 30 years.
14. **B.** The clergy now take second place to pharmacists when it comes to honesty. They used to be first, but the televangelist scandals and other incidents have taken their toll in recent years.
15. **B.** The organized church now is second to the military in matters of confidence. Once again, it is probably a result of the televangelist scandals.
16. **A.** Fifty-two percent completely agree we will be called before God at the judgment day to answer for our sins.
17. **B.** Sixteen percent think the world will end within the next 100 years, but many believe its demise is eons away or will never occur.
18. **C.** Sixty-four percent of Americans still believe religion can answer all or most of today's problems.
19. **B.** Fifty-nine percent of Americans say religion is very important in their lives.
20. **C.** A majority of 54 percent report they have been aware of or influenced by a presence or power such as God.



## New Mormon president

The successor to Mormon church president Ezra Taft Benson, who died May 30, is Howard W. Hunter, 86, president of the church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The quorum supervises the work of the whole church under the direction of the First Presidency, which consists of the president and two counselors. The president is thought to have prophetic powers.

Benson, secretary of agriculture during the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s, died at the age of 94 of congestive heart failure.

Hunter, a former corporate attorney, has been a member of the quorum since 1959 and its president since 1988.

The Mormon Church is known formally as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

## Church tithe ruled fraudulent

Creditors looking for compensation from Bruce and Nancy Young, a Minnesota couple who declared bankruptcy, have succeeded in getting a court order for the Youngs' church to return their weekly offerings from 1991. A federal bankruptcy judge decided the tithe of \$13,450 was "a fraudulent transfer."

The Rev. Stephen Gold, the Youngs' pastor, said that he and others are alarmed by the two criteria used by the court in ruling against the Youngs and their church:

—That "nothing of value was received by the Youngs in return for the money they tithed to the Lord."

—That "no value could be recognized except that which is temporal—something you can touch and feel."

The church is appealing the court decision.

## A quiet segment serves society

Based on recent polls, George H. Gallup Jr. makes the following observations about religious life in America:

- We enjoy an ongoing and high level of volunteerism, which is often spurred by religious faith and frequently church-related and is the envy of the rest of the world. Every second American volunteers two to three hours a week to some cause.

- We have increased numbers of

church people who meet weekly in small groups to pray and to share deep concerns.

- We see people actively reaching out to others on the margins of society (for example, prison ministry is expanding).

- We will find around and among us people who truly live what they profess. Gallup calls them "modern day saints."

## Spirituality in the USA

Studies by Barna Research reveal other things about the spiritual state of our country in the mid-1990s. Among their findings are the following observations:

- About 30 percent of adults classify as "unchurched" (individuals who have not attended a worship service during the past six months), and an additional 25-35 percent could be classified as "nominally churched."

- During a typical week, 37 percent of respondents read Scripture (reading during a

church service doesn't count). This figure has dropped ten percentage points in the past two years.

- Only 38 percent of adults strongly agree that the Bible is accurate in everything it says. (However, a somewhat higher percentage would say that the Bible is inerrant or even infallible.)

- Three out of four Americans have come to believe that there is no such thing as absolute moral truth.

## The "not-so-great" commission?

Jesus' scriptural admonition to "make disciples of all nations" ranks far down the list of important church functions, according to a poll of religious beliefs conducted by the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Only 32 percent of the nation's Christians outside the South—and 52 percent of Southerners—consider converting people to the faith a "very important" activity for the church, according to the poll.

Other church roles—such as providing moral guidance for young peo-

ple, opportunities for worship, and helping the needy—ranked as more important than converting people to Christianity.

Similarly, Barna Research, in a separate study, concludes that about 45 percent of all adults consider it their duty to tell others about their faith, but only 30 percent have actually done so in the last year.

News reported in this section is derived from Religious News Service, Ecumenical Press Service, Evangelical Press Service, and Lutheran World Information. World news items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or *Northwestern Lutheran*.



## NOTICES

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

### ADDITIONAL NOMINATION Michigan Lutheran Seminary

The Michigan Lutheran Seminary Board of Control announced a list of nominations for its call for president in July. The board will include a late-arriving nomination, sent from an international address, for Robert Koester, Moorhead, Minn. To provide information about the nominee, write Jerold Meier, 2777 Hardin St, Saginaw MI 48602.

### MISSION VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Mwembezi, Africa**—Two people. General maintenance, assist missionary and medical dispensary.

**Novosibirsk, Russia**—Work in a Christian Information Center. Support missionaries, teach Sunday school, help with the "Communicating Christ" video Bible course.

**El Paso, Texas**—Two people are needed to help develop mass communications for Latin America. General office work, data entry, and building and ground maintenance.

For more information, contact WELS Kingdom Workers, 414/771-6848 or 1-800-466-9357.

### POSITION AVAILABLE Nursing home administrator

The Lutheran Home Association, owned and operated by 171 WELS congregations, seeks an administrator for its Belle Plaine, Minn., location. The administrator is responsible for directing the operations of a 128-bed skilled nursing facility. Requirements include an appropriate educational background, a current Minnesota nursing home administrator's license (or eligibility for one), and three years experience as an administrator.

Candidates must display a high degree of interpersonal skills, ability to relate to staff and management, and be responsive to the needs of residents, families, and the public. Other preferred traits include creativity, strong organizational and communication skills, and compatibility with our Christian mission.

Interested persons should send a letter and resume to Michael R. Klatt, Chief Operating Officer, The Lutheran Home Association, 611 W Main St, Belle Plaine MN 56011.

### ANNIVERSARIES

**AURORA, ILLINOIS**—Resurrection (25). Sept. 25, 10:30 a.m. with noon meal to follow. Also celebrating Pastor Philip Schupman's 15th. Call 708/466-4586.

**GLENCOE, MINNESOTA**—St. John (125). Aug. 14, 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Catered dinner at noon. Call 612/864-3093.

**OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN**—University Lutheran Chapel (25). Nov. 19: dinner and alumni reunion, 6 p.m. Nov. 20: worship, 10:15 a.m., dinner at noon, anniversary service, 3 p.m. Please send names and addresses of campus ministry alumni to University Chapel, PO Box 2522, Oshkosh WI 54903; or call Pastor Bob Diener, 414/233-5731.

### NAMES WANTED

Survey work preliminary to conducting exploratory services. People interested in WELS services, contact person noted.

**BOISE/MERIDIAN, IDAHO**—Cross of Christ. Contact Pastor John Steinbrenner, 5171 N Buckboard Pl, Boise ID 83704; 208/375-3992.

### ITEMS AVAILABLE

**COPIERS**—3-M Thermalfax, AB-Dick spirit duplicator, and AB-Dick offset press. Contact St. Paul, Green Bay WI 414/435-8468.

**THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL**—100 copies. St. John, 16700 Greentree Blvd., Victorville CA 92392; 619/245-9090.

**ORGAN**—Conn Consonata, two manual, full pedal. Speaker included. Free; you pick it up. Gail Lumsden, 414/679-2292.

**PARAMENTS**—Altar and pulpit, red and purple, 80" x 33"; available for cost of shipping. Lucile Young, 602/474-9305.

### CHURCH LIBRARIANS

WECLO, the organization of church librarians, will meet at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., Sept. 17. Registration at 9 a.m. Workshop topics: Starting a church library. Contact WECLO, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3222.

### SPEAKERS AVAILABLE Mission work in Russia

After a year as volunteers at our mission in Novosibirsk, Russia, Pastor Robert and Carol Voss have returned to America and are available to tell about their experiences. For dates and times of their presentations, or to have them speak at your congregation, call WELS Kingdom Workers, 414/771-6848, or 1-800-466-9357.

### VACATION LODGING—PASTORS

Free lodging on a farm, available year-round, for one to three nights to any pastor and his family traveling in the Wisconsin Dells area. Accommodations are in the loft of a log home. Phone 608/986-4692.

Encourage  
a friend to read  
Northwestern  
Lutheran.  
SEE PAGE 5.

### CHANGES IN MINISTRY

#### PASTORS:

**Berg, Jeffrey A.**, from Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis., to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.

**Elgin, Walter F.**, from Grace, Sitka, Alaska, to St. Paul, Honolulu, Hawaii

**Humann, James E.**, from Divine Savior, Pullman, Wash., to Salem, Edmonds, Wash.

**Kock, David E.**, from Zion, Rhinelander, Wis., to retirement.

**Schwerin, Richard C.**, to Salem, Stillwater, Minn. (additional charge)

**Voss, Carl W.**, from St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., to Grace, Scroggins, Texas

**Zindler, Ronald F.**, from Grace, Columbia, Mo., to Our Redeemer, Wabasha, Minn., and Grace, Nelson, Wis.

#### TEACHERS:

**Anderson, Judith E.**, from St. John, Wrightstown, Wis., to Memorial, Williamston, Mich.

**Bivens, Krista L.**, from St. Paul, Tomah, Wis., to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.

**Brich, Steven M.**, to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.

**Falk, Michael W.**, from Gloria Dei-Bethesda, Milwaukee, Wis., to St. John, Westland, Mich.

**Hahn, Susan C.**, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

**Hein, Linda**, to Grace, LaCrosse, Wis.

**Hoff, Angela J.**, from St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., to Christ the Lord, Houston, Texas

**Jeffers, Alan L.**, from Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie du Chien, Wis., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

**Kelm, Paul H.**, from Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn., to Thoughts of Faith mission school, Czechoslovakia.

**Kremer, Wendi L.**, from Immanuel, LaCrosse, Wis., to Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.

**Lindloff, Sarah B.**, to Zion, Chesaning, Mich.

**Loomis, Cheryl A.**, from Zion, Hartland, Wis., to St. John, Lannon, Wis.

**Marowsky, Gerald R.**, to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.

**Pekrul, William A.**, from Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis., to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.

**Peterson, Kenric F.**, from California LHS, Wildomar, Calif., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

**Steil, Luella J.**, to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.

**Weis, Pamela J.**, from St. Paul, Round Lake, Ill., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.

**Westendorf, Rachel M.**, from New Salem, Sebawaing, Mich., to St. Luke, Vassar, Mich.

**Wiegman, Robert J.**, from St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION WORKSHOP

The K-12 Curriculum Committee of the Lakeshore Principals' Conference invites you to a physical education workshop August 18, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis. Prof. John Gronholz will be the keynote speaker. Contact Marcia Wendt, 414/756-2302.

### NORTH ATLANTIC LABOR DAY RETREAT

The WELS North Atlantic Labor Day weekend retreat will be held at Camp Taconic in the Massachusetts Berkshire Mountains September 3-5. This year's program will include sessions on origins of the canon of Scripture, creation science, Noah's flood, spiritual warfare, and a study in one of the minor prophets. Programs for children run concurrently.

Six meals are served. Cabin, tent, or trailer camping options are available. Team sports, tennis, boating, beach or pool swimming times. Sunday outdoor worship. For information or registration call 603/472-5551.

### SPIRITUAL RENEWAL WEEKEND FOR WOMEN

Mark your calendars now. St. Peter Lutheran, St. Peter, Minn., will sponsor a women's spiritual renewal retreat April 21-23, 1995, at the Radisson Downtown, Rochester, Minn. Watch for more information.

### NEEDED

**ORGANIST**—for Divinity-Divine Charity, Whitefish Bay, Wis. Call Pastor Robert Dick, 414/332-7572.

### AUDIO/VISUAL LIBRARY SERVICES

#### AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

**IN PUERTO RICO** (Code 5138)

1994 24 min. 1/2" VHS color PIJSCA  
Puerto Rico was our synod's first stepping stone to Latin America. Much has happened since WELS missionaries explored the island. WELS Kingdom Workers have given us this update on what is going on there. **Rental: \$7.50**

#### GOSPEL SPRINGTIME IN SIBERIA

(Code 5141)  
1994 21 min. color 1/2" VHS IJSCA  
WELS missionaries tell us what it's like to share the good news about Jesus in a land where that message has been forbidden for 70 years. **Rental: \$10.00**

#### WOMEN OF THE WELS—

**UNITED TO SERVE JESUS** (Code 5140)

1994 14 min. 1/2" VHS color JSCA  
The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society supports and stimulates interest in mission endeavors. This video gives us an update on the work of this organization. **Rental: \$7.50**

#### ALL GOOD THINGS

(Code 8236)  
1994 30 min. 1/2" VHS color JSCA

Christians living in a prosperous society easily fall into the trap of associating God's love with material blessings. In this video a young Christian social worker learns that God's blessings are also bestowed upon the poor. The presenter should be prepared to strengthen the gospel message of this video. **Rental: \$7.50**

#### MOSES

(Code 8241)  
1994 25 min. 1/2" VHS color PIJ

Children will enjoy this entertaining video about the life of Moses. The story is, however, richly embellished by the author's imagination. **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 weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

### NL SUBSCRIPTION INCREASE

Effective January 1, subscription rates for *Northwestern Lutheran* will increase from \$8.50 to \$9.00 for an individual subscription; from \$5.50 to \$5.75 for bundle subscriptions; from \$6.00 to \$6.25 for blanket subscriptions.



# The tenants

Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19

by Mark E. Braun

St. Paul once called the message of the cross “foolishness to those who are perishing,” but “God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”

There’s a lot of “foolishness” in Jesus’ parable of the tenants, but it isn’t all on God’s side.

## The foolish landlord

We can see how a rich landowner could lavish great care on his vineyard—planting it, putting a wall around it, digging a winepress, and building a watchtower. It made sense for him to lease it to local farmers who would work it and give him his share of its profits.

But what owner would send servant after servant to his vineyard, only to have them mistreated by his tenants? And what man would send his son to such a bunch of thugs? Wasn’t it naive to think his workers would change their ways?

The gospel is foolishness, Paul said, but “the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.” God is the owner, his servants the prophets, Jesus the beloved son. The vineyard stands for the advantages, privileges, and blessings God granted his people.

## The foolish tenants

But if there was something foolish about the landowner, the tenants turned out to be the real fools. What could they gain by beating one servant, killing a second, stoning a third? The absentee owner was too far away, they must have reasoned, and his vineyard too much trouble for him to press his claim.

And what chance was there that if they killed the son, they’d get the estate? Maybe they figured the

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*The landowner may have seemed foolish to send his son to be killed by a bunch of thugs, but the tenants turned out to be the real fools.*

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owner died, and his son was now coming to take possession. Maybe they assumed the owner transferred title to his son. Jewish law said that anyone who had use of the land for three years was presumed to own it, if no one else claimed it.

So they killed the son, and to add insult to injury, they pitched his body over the vineyard wall.

The tenants disclosed their true feelings when they said, “Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” There was the problem: they’d come to think the vineyard was theirs all along. They felt they could do as they pleased, and never face judgment.

“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” The one they rejected and murdered would become the risen Lord, the cornerstone of God’s people. A Jewish proverb says, “If a stone falls on a pot, woe to the pot. If the pot falls on the stone, woe to the pot. Either way, woe to the pot!”

## No fooling: God is serious

So it is with Jesus: “He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

What began as an odd, unlikely tale took a dangerous turn: “They knew he had spoken this parable against them.”

No fooling: God is deadly serious about his gospel. He sent his Son to a cross to accomplish it, but he will take it away from those who refuse it.

*Next: The wedding banquet.*



Mark Braun teaches at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.



## Hair and soap: four-letter words

Our local television station has been using four-letter words. In themselves, the two words aren't offensive. What disturbed me was the way they were used and what they implied.

The first word was "hair," with a capital H. The Broadway hit musical is being revived and presented at a local theater. When it was first staged, *Hair* was considered to be a daring venture into realms of self-exposure.

By today's moral standards, or lack of them, *Hair* doesn't seem all that daring. The TV ad urged us to come and see what used to get people so stirred up.

The other four-letter word was "soap," the title of an avant garde TV sitcom of a generation ago that's appearing in reruns. The promo urged, "Watch *Soap* and get dirty. Watch the program your parents wouldn't let you watch."

What used to shock people a generation ago doesn't shock them today. Not only does public opinion change, but if we're not careful, our opinions change with it, and usually not for the better.

When I see them in reruns, the TV programs I wouldn't allow my children to watch don't seem to offend me so much. They haven't been edited. All the sexual innuendoes are still there, but now, if I'm not careful, I can almost find it refreshing that they're only clever innuendoes and not the outright acts blatant in so many programs today. Today's programs may seem tame one day compared to what may be offered to future generations.

If you live near the railroad tracks, at first the rumble of the trains keeps you awake at night, but you eventually get used to it. It becomes familiar and friendly and finally it almost rocks you to sleep.

In Psalm 1, the Lord warns us that sin can affect us in the same way. First, you learn to walk with it. Then you stand with it. Finally, you sit down comfortably with it.

It would be hard to spend a summer in Minnesota without being bitten by at least one mosquito. It is impossible to live in this sinful world without being bitten by sin. That's why the Lord sent his Son to die for us and taught us to pray "forgive us our trespasses."

We are in the world, but we must not be of the world. To avoid this, the psalmist tells us to meditate on God's Word. That Word doesn't change. It remains good, holy, and true. God promises to strengthen those who meditate on it and try to follow it. He watches over their ways and calls them blessed.

Walter F. Beckmann



Walter Beckmann is pastor of Grace, Falls Church, Virginia, and president of the North Atlantic District.

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*What used to shock people a generation ago doesn't shock them today. Not only does public opinion change, but if we're not careful, our opinions change with it, and usually not for the better.*

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by John F. Brug

*Explain why our pastors are not active in their communities. The public sees our pastor at funerals and weddings. He is not known outside the church.*

Pastors may have different opportunities for community involvement. A pastor whose children attend public school will have more opportunity to be involved in the community than a pastor who has children in a Lutheran school. A pastor in a small town may help with a volunteer fire department or ambulance service while a pastor in a large city cannot.

A pastor must be careful about getting involved in

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*The best thing a pastor can do for the community is to be a faithful preacher.*

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political affairs that take unpopular and divisive positions. His involvement may alienate people.

The best thing a pastor can do for the community is to be a faithful preacher and teacher of law and gospel. The best way for the pastor to contact unchurched people is through the members of the church. If they talk about their faith and refer friends and relatives to the pastor, he will have more people to visit in the community than he can keep up with.

It is good for the pastor to be involved in the community to the degree that his pastoral duties and his abilities permit. He must, however, devote the majority of his time to the ministry of the Word. Other activities and services within the community can more effectively be carried out by lay members.

If your pastor's days and nights are heavily scheduled with church responsibilities, it is unreasonable to expect extensive community involvement unless you are willing to share more of his responsibility for evangelism visits and other congregational duties.

If the pastor is not involved in community contact, members of the congregation can introduce him to prospects and invite him to community affairs or social events.

If you feel your pastor and congregation have a problem, be sure you have an accurate understanding of the situation, be willing to be part of the solution, and be ready to work with the pastor in a patient, kind way.

*During their ministries Jesus and the apostles healed many people. From time to time we hear of claims of miraculous healings, such as those of a faith healer or at*

*a shrine. Could these healings be real miracles done by the power of Jesus?*

Most "miracles" are hoaxes, psychosomatic healings, or deceptions of Satan. Some are deliberate hoaxes, arranged by the healer. In other cases there were no measurable physical symptoms before the cure. Our minds can make our bodies display symptoms of illness or disability when there is no physical cause. When the mind is convinced that the body is well, the symptoms disappear. Satan and those who serve him can sometimes imitate miracles, as the magicians of Egypt mimicked the signs performed by Moses.

Scripture also tells us that in response to believers' prayers, God may grant an unexpected healing for which doctors have no explanation.

But faith healers claim that a certain person or place possesses power to heal that exceeds the power of the prayers of ordinary Christians. In evaluating such claims we should keep a number of facts in mind.

- Even during biblical times, the power to work miracles was largely limited to the times of Moses, Elijah, and Christ. There were long periods of biblical history when there were no workers of miracles.

- The apostles' ability to work miracles was connected with their calling as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection (2 Corinthians 12:12, Acts 1:21-22). There can be no more apostles, because no living person can be a witness of Jesus' resurrection.

- The Bible never promises that the gifts of healing and doing miracles will continue beyond the times of the apostles. In fact, the Bible warns against false miracles during the last days (Matthew 24:24, Matthew 7:22-23, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

- No apparent miracle used to support false teaching or a false teacher can be from God. If the "healer" promotes teachings contrary to God's Word, we are not to follow him no matter what claims of miracles he produces. If the miracle promotes the worship of Mary or some other saint, it can't be a sign from God.

The Bible assures us that God may heal in answer to prayer. It nowhere encourages us to seek healing from individuals who claim to possess healing power.

On the contrary, it warns us against such claims.

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.





**Why the drop in synod growth?**

One wonders whether the drop in statistical growth in synodical membership [March] along with the news that we will open one SMO [synod mission offerings] supported home mission this year, correlates to the growth in synodical administration over the years. One wonders whether we have forgotten that the real work is done with the Word in the field. One wonders whether we have lost our way in the blizzard of new programs, mailings, and ministries howling out of Milwaukee.

Administrator Malchow noted that the shortfall in SMO last year was equivalent to five mission openings. So, one wonders whether five less [sic] administrative positions and five more mission openings would reverse the trend. One can only wonder and plant the seed. Only the Spirit knows and grants growth.

*John Berg  
Kenosha, Wisconsin*

*The Committee on Program Review, in a 48-page report to the 1993 synod convention, addressed the size of synodical administration and concluded in part: "From the standpoint of staffing needs, WELS is not top-heavy. From the standpoint of program needs, WELS is not top-heavy."—Editor*

**Isn't the ascension important?**

Of all the things in the May issue, there was not one word about our Lord's homecoming: the ascension. So the world doesn't know about or do anything with the ascension. And we in the church have set it aside as not very important. Or what?

*G. J. Ehlert  
Little Chute, Wisconsin*

*The ascension is important. Thanks for the reminder.—Editor*

**Her office was on the cover**

I was surprised to see a picture of my former office building on the May cover. The building shown on the left was destroyed in the earthquake, as you know.

I am an RN working for the Los Angeles County Health Facilities

Division. We are now in temporary headquarters in another building. We were all grateful that it was a holiday and no one was in the building. We survived the quake and are joyful to say, "The Lord is my Rock."

Just wanted to tell you a WELS member was involved in your picture.

*Miriam Satorius  
Canyon Country, California*

**Don't leave evangelism up to a committee**

In the WELS we have our share of committees and groups. These have important roles, but the most important role given to all of us was the command of Christ to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." It seems we leave evangelism for the pastor or the people on that committee. It's not just the responsibility of the greeters to give a friendly welcome to a visitor. We should all examine how we present ourselves to a new face or someone who is needy. Let's not hold back from sharing the gospel. Don't wait until our turn comes to be a greeter before we smile at a newcomer. Let's start now. With the Holy Spirit's help, we will fulfill Christ's command.

*Susan Punke  
Howe, Indiana*

**Teen surprised by NL**

I am a student at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. Throughout the year we have been reviewing several issues of your magazine. I was surprised to see that this magazine was very interesting for people of all ages. I found many articles that were enjoyable and easy to read.

I especially enjoyed the teen section. It gave me the satisfaction of knowing that other teens are involved in God's Word. Looking at this magazine reassures me that I'm not the only one struggling through this hard time in our lives.

Many articles in the magazine explain what is happening in the synod. These are good articles, but they don't really apply to teens. Including what effect these synod

changes will have on my life will make them easier to read. I am interested in knowing these facts. However, I would also like to know how it will affect me, and how I, as a teen, can get involved.

*Jaime Tebo  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

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 Road, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; Fax 414/256-3899.

**Sept. '94**

- 1. James 1:19-27
- 2. Jas. 2:1-13
- 3. Jas. 2:14-26
- 4. Jas. 3
- 5. Jas. 4
- 6. Jas. 5
- 7. 1 Chronicles 1—9
- 8. 1 Chron. 10, 11
- 9. 1 Chron. 12
- 10. 1 Chron. 13, 14
- 11. 1 Chron. 15:1—16:6
- 12. 1 Chron. 16:7-43
- 13. 1 Chron. 17
- 14. 1 Chron. 18—20
- 15. 1 Chron. 21:1—22:1
- 16. 1 Chron. 22:2-19
- 17. 1 Chron. 23, 24
- 18. 1 Chron. 25—27
- 19. 1 Chron. 28
- 20. 1 Chron. 29
- 21. Psalm 107:1-32
- 22. Ps. 107:33-43
- 23. Ps. 108
- 24. Ps. 109
- 25. Ps. 110
- 26. Ps. 111, 112
- 27. Ps. 113, 114
- 28. Ps. 115
- 29. Ps. 116
- 30. Ps. 117, 118

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 THROUGH MY BIBLE IN THREE YEARS



## A legacy of doubt

### Scholars unite to question authenticity of Scripture

**T**he Jesus Seminar moved toward consensus. The question: "What did Jesus really say?" Following tedious scholarly discussion, the members decided the answer by voting.

They voted by placing colored beads into voting boxes, allowing the scholars four choices in weighing the authenticity of the saying under consideration. The colors, under one explanation, meant:

Red—Jesus undoubtedly said this or something like it;

Pink—Jesus probably said something like this;

Gray—Jesus did not say this, but the ideas contained in it are close to his own;

Black—Jesus did not say this; it represents the perspective or content of a later or different tradition.

The effort was called bold and daring and the results "startling," and a book (*The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*) has been published to present them. But, sad to say, nothing was surprising. The panel found few words they believe were actually spoken by Jesus.

They concluded that Jesus did not teach his disciples the Lord's Prayer, word for word, as it appears in the New Testament. They labeled the record of his remarks at the Last Supper as not authentic. They identified Jesus' dying words as fabrications because all the available accounts differ.

As you might expect, the panel encountered stiff opposition from some conservative Christians. However, the opponents are largely dismissed as "those who lack academic credentials."

Now that they have dared the public eye, the panelists are eager for more. Next they propose to answer the question: "What did Jesus really do?"

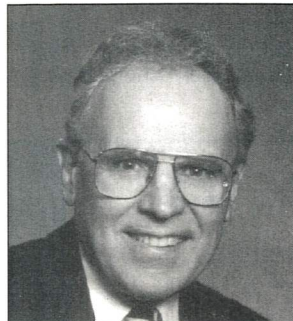
Perhaps we can save them time, effort, and money. They will conclude, again, that you cannot be sure of anything Jesus did. Note, for example, how every one of the choices above of what Jesus said leaves some doubt. Look also for the miraculous to be downplayed, if not rejected altogether.

The issue, you see, is not what did Jesus say or do. We cannot decide authenticity by consensus or vote. If we do not believe that the Bible reports only authentic accounts, authentic deeds, authentic words, then everything is in doubt. Everything! Human opinions, however scholarly, are built on sand.

The issue, then, is how you view the Scriptures. If you accept them by faith as God's verbally inspired words, you know they are authentic. And you read the authentic words and deeds of Jesus to grow in authentic faith to authentic eternal life in God's authentic heaven.

Pity those who must remain in doubt.

*Gary A. Baumbach*



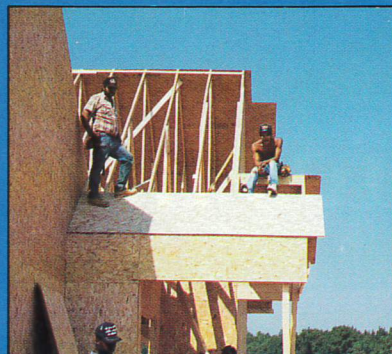

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*In Scripture,  
you read the  
authentic words  
and deeds of Jesus  
to grow in  
authentic faith to  
authentic eternal  
life in God's  
authentic heaven.*

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*You can help  
Build  
His  
House*



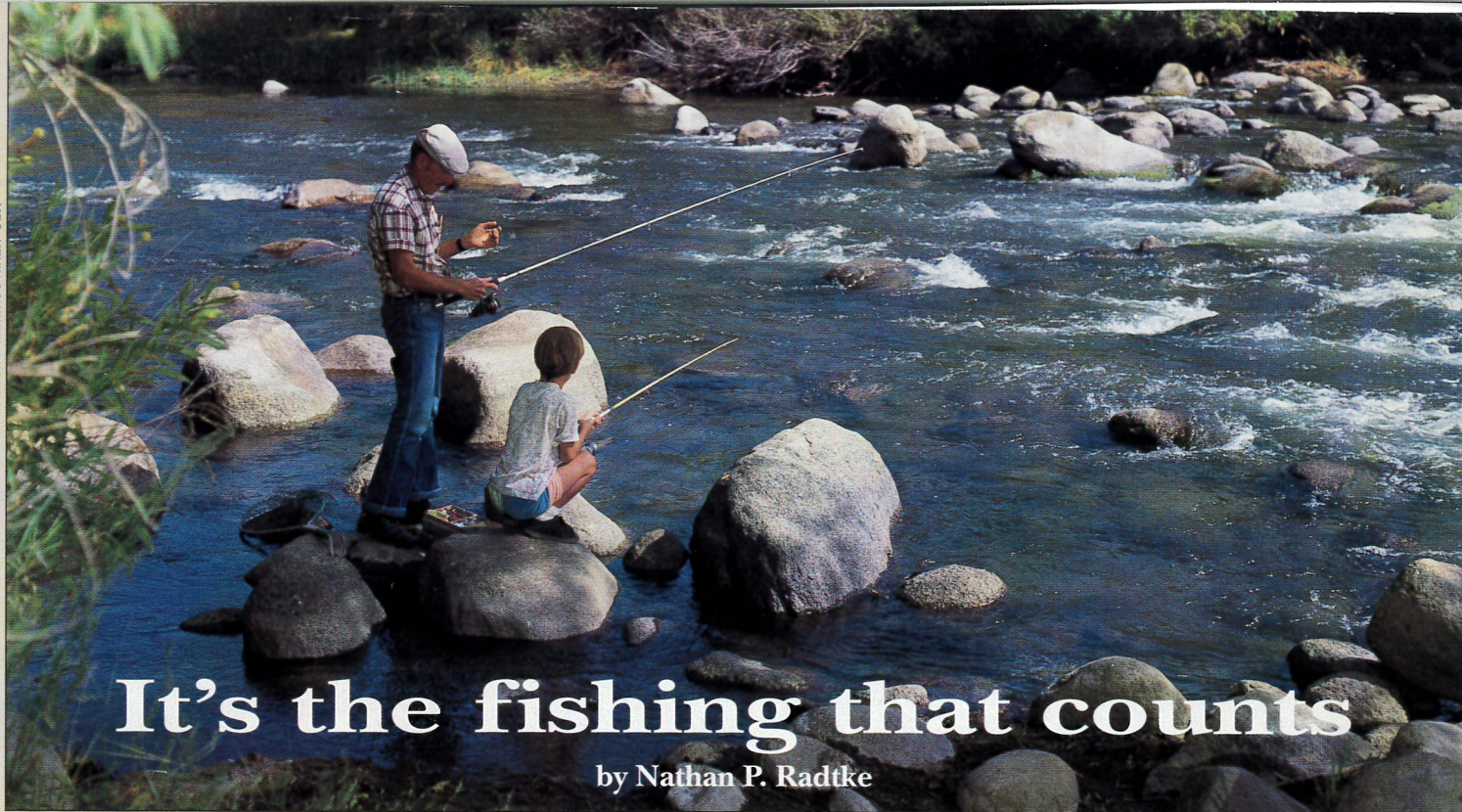
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# It's the fishing that counts

by Nathan P. Radtke

**I**t's fishing season. Fishermen—and women—are preparing their gear. They spend money on boats and motors, rods and reels, baits and lures. First timers listen to hear all about catching the big ones and some read up on it in *Fisherman* magazine. Parents help children practice casting on the front lawn. Getting ready is exciting, but it's the fishing that counts.

I love packing up the gear, getting the kids together (waiting for Mom!), heading down the road, and discussing whose hot tip we should try first. Even backing the boat into the lake on the first try is a treat, and the panorama of God's creative work that we see on the boat ride is excellent.

Casting from a shoreline with overhanging trees is the ultimate challenge. What a thrill to get it just right. If the line loops over a branch, I shinny up the tree, risk my life to save a \$ 3.45 lure, and smile all the way down.

Twenty minutes and not a bite. Guess we should go to the next spot. We can always try this one again later. After all, it's not how many fish; it's the fishing that counts.

Fishers of men are a lot like fishermen. For one thing, they get excited, too. They enjoy the preparation. No necessary supply is overlooked. Old-timers share stories of success with newcomers. The serious

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*Cast out the line of the gospel,  
enjoy the fishing, and let the  
results be God's department.*

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read up on the subject. They study veterans of outreach so they can imitate them. Practice makes perfect, but it's the fishing that counts.

Like fishermen who rush to the hot spots someone has mentioned, shouldn't we promptly

call on prospects we hear of? When fishermen come up empty at one spot, they return at a better time. Certainly, fishers of men can learn from this optimism.

**I**f fishermen can accept getting skunked as a part of fishing, then fishers of men will not be disheartened when not every call appears to catch a harvest. If fishermen can handle the cast that ended up in a tree, then fishers of men can handle a gaff or a goof and swallow their egos to straighten out a mistake.

Fishermen know the number of fish on the end of a stringer is not the measure of manhood/womanhood/childhood. Fishers of men can learn this too. God converts or man rejects. We can only fish.

Cast out the line of the gospel, enjoy the fishing, and let the results be God's department. Evangelism is not a results contest. Remember, it's the fishing that counts.

*Nathan Radtke is pastor at Peace, Hayward, Wisconsin.*