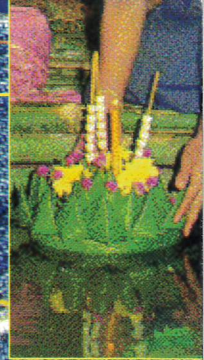


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NORTHWESTERN

January 1995

LUTHERAN



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p.6

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TYRA BAUMLER

**YOU HAVE
24
HOURS
TO LIVE!**

Today, that is.

Richard E. Lauersdorf

*Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
Psalm 90:12*

The ad caught our attention. In bold letters it said, "YOU HAVE 24 HOURS TO LIVE!" But underneath in the fine print were the words, "Today, that is." What a catchy reminder for us to view and use each day as if it were our last.

The new year is also a reminder of time's relentless march. Each day inevitably carries us toward eternity. And any hour could be our last.

How fast!

Number our days? Don't we already do that? In our youth we count them impatiently as they move ever so slowly toward birthdays and holidays. In middle age we celebrate them as milestones in our family, business, and other areas of life. In the graying years we wonder where they went and how many more there will be.

When Moses prayed, "Teach us to number our days," he had much more in mind. He—who had led the Israelites through the wilderness and buried thousands of them in the sand—was stressing the brevity of life. Like grass in the field, it waves in the morning wind only to lie withering in the evening shade. Like a night's sleep in which we close our eyes one minute only to hear the alarm seemingly moments later, life whizzes by.

No need to push the panic button. Moses' purpose was not to frighten us so we hesitate to enter each new day. Rather he would have us use each new day God grants us; or, to quote his words, that we "number our days aright."

How full?

What to do with our days? On the average we spend six months of life waiting for the traffic light to turn green and another eight months reading junk mail. We have to sort through the mail and we must wait at the light. But what about the rest of our time? Between ages 18 and 65 we will have 137,333 hours for personal, social, and recreational time. What about our use of those hours?

Moses encouraged using them to "gain a heart of wisdom." What greater wisdom can there be than to know "Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from

God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30)? Where else can we find such wisdom than in "the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15)? How about our use of God's Word for gaining and growing in such wisdom day by day in 1995?

Nor does wisdom in Christ remain potted in the greenhouse of the heart. Always it is transplanted into the garden of daily life. Isn't that the point in James' words: "The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17)? Doesn't this put a new spin on each new day in '95?

Lord, help us to view and use each day of '95 as if it were our last—for it might well be.

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

May the Lord our God be with us
as he was with our fathers;
may he never leave us
nor forsake us. 1 Kings 8:57

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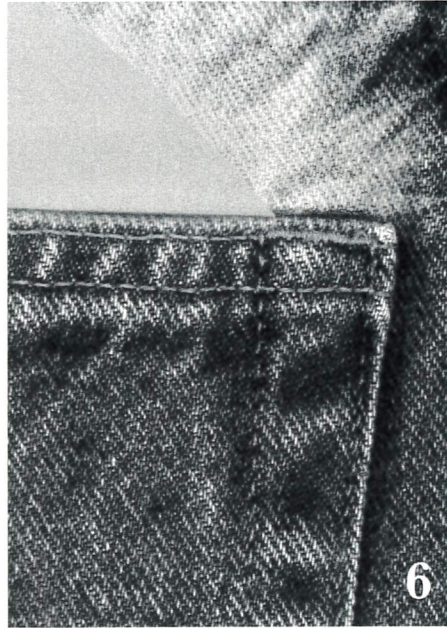
BITS & PIECES



Someone to hold his hand



Lessons from a computer



The god in my pocket

■ As we begin a new year, we begin a new series on the ten commandments. One way we disobey the first commandment, says author Pastor Wayne Laitinen, is by minimizing God's hatred of sin. If he doesn't care whether we sin, then he's a small god, one that could fit in my pocket. That's the name of the first article in the series. You'll find it on the next page.

■ We try to observe copyrights, but getting permission to reprint a picture from a postcard printed in Thailand posed a problem. NL staff member Linda Baacke, who's up to any challenge, solved our dilemma by calling the Thai consulate in Chicago. So the picture (from the *Loy Krathong* festival) on page 10 is there thanks to the Thai consul and Linda's determination. Don't miss the story, either; you'll want to hear about the mission exploration going on in Thailand.

■ Computers truly are amazing, says Carl Henkel. They're more efficient and versatile than most people. But can computers replace Christians? Read "Lessons from a computer" on page 12.

Dorothy Sonntag

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The god in my pocket

Wayne A. Laitinen

TYRA BAUMLER

“**G**od accepts you for what you are, not what you should be,” read the sign. I was puzzled. Perhaps it meant: “God accepts you for what you are in Christ.” But that’s not what it said.

It would be a clear, Christian confession if it read: “Though you are a sinner, God declared you to be holy for Jesus’ sake.” But if we posted that on a sign, we would break the first commandment of secularized religion: “Thou shalt not harm thy neighbor’s self-esteem.”

According to the world, religion must be positive, never negative; always affirming, never accusing.

Maybe the sign had words that the world can accept to get people in the door and bring them to repentance gradually, painlessly—a kind of ecclesiastical

“bait and switch.”

But that sign said what my sinful flesh likes to hear. It avoided all the nasty lectures my conscience gives me. It made no mention of uncomfortable things like sin or guilt or death or hell. If what the sign said is true, I don’t have to stand before God, awesome in his holiness and terrible in his justice, and cry out, “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips!”

A pocket-sized god

Rather, the sign gives me the liberty to fashion a god who comes almost to my shoulder, a god who is

First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

flattered that I should find an hour to stop by and chat with him some Sunday morning. He is the god in my pocket.

We have this agreement: I'll pay him an occasional visit, if he doesn't say things that offend me. I'll slip him a buck now and then and he nods politely when I talk. Occasionally, my words make him wince a bit, but he swallows hard. For the sake of my self-esteem, he reaffirms his love. Like a doting grandfather, he comes to my rescue when others suggest that my life is not what it should be. He sets me free to be me. After all, I created him in my own image.

A god I don't need

There is a problem with the little god who accepts me the way I am. I don't need him. If I sit in front of a mirror, it would produce the same effect. Besides, if he weren't around, I could have my Sabbaths all to myself and save money too.

In fact, the god in my pocket needs me more than I need him. He's forever making polite overtures for my money and my Sabbaths. We both know that if it weren't for goodfellas like me, his church would have been boarded up years ago.

Keeping my little god in good repair is a lonely, thankless, futile business. For all my work, he gives me no peace. But I humor him anyhow, because charity is a good thing. And it's always safe to have a stockpile of charities—just in case there's a real God out there.

A God who doesn't need me

And I know there is a real God.

He is revealed in Holy Scripture and he is not at all like the god who accepts me the way I am. If this God needed anything, he would never ask me. He created me. He owns me, together with all the silver and gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

When the mighty waters of his voice strike my ear, I dare not raise my eyes to his. My heart melts because I know I am not what he made me. I am not what I should be. And this is not good. His wrath is revealed from heaven against goodfellas who sacrifice to their little gods.

A God who changed me

He is a holy and just God who cannot accept me the way I am by nature. Rather, he subjected his holy, innocent Son, Jesus Christ, to the furious wrath I deserved. Then, for Jesus' sake, he declared me to be holy and sinless and an heir of heaven. The God of heaven accepted me not for what I am, but for

*There is a problem with the little god
who accepts me the way I am.*

I don't need him.

*If I sit in front of a mirror,
it would produce the same effect.*

Besides, if he weren't around,

*I could have my Sabbaths
all to myself and save money too.*

what Jesus is.

What is more, by the Holy Spirit he put to death my old way of thinking and opened my mind to believe that the free gift of Jesus' redemption is mine. From then on, I was never the same.

The sin I used to glory in, I hate. The self-esteem I held so dear is vanity. Now my highest joy is when Christ is esteemed and glorified. The God I formerly chafed under I now love and long to serve. The "freedom" I had to sin is loathsome slavery. Everything I had and am, I considered to be mine. Now I know they belong to him. And it is the highest honor to use them to promote God's kingdom.

That's why I get indignant when my Savior-God is represented as the kind of God who "accepts you the way you are—not the way you should be." The true God doesn't describe himself that way. That description misrepresents God as one whose plan of salvation is unnecessary.

And let's have some truth in advertising. When our Savior exorcised demons, he didn't negotiate with them. They left with a fight and a shriek. Politely showing our sinful flesh the door won't persuade it to leave. It must go down into the water kicking and screaming, before it drowns and a new being can emerge who lives before God in righteousness and purity. It is better by far that sinners find that out sooner rather than later.

Wayne Laitinen is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Someone to

Dorothy J. Sonntag

Adrian was dying of AIDS. She held his hand and shared the gospel



PAM MUSKE

hold his hand

I knew the hospice was there, and I knew people were there who needed somebody to be their friend,” said Marilyn Paschen.

One of those people was Adrian (not his real name). At 36, he was dying of AIDS.

For several years Marilyn has volunteered at a health care center in Wisconsin, bringing its residents comfort, affection, and—always—the gospel. But she had not visited the fifth floor.

On the fifth floor are the terminally ill. Marilyn knew that few volunteers go to that floor, although the patients there especially need help and hope.

“I went there and asked, ‘Does anybody need someone to hold their hand?’” The nurses said, ‘Where do you want to start?’”

She started with Adrian. She visits other AIDS patients, too.

Dying from AIDS

A registered nurse, Marilyn had seen death before, but not death from AIDS. “When they come to the hospice, they’re in the final stage, and they know they won’t leave again—not alive. Their bodies are wracked with pain. They’re emaciated. The death they die is not like anything I’ve seen before.”

Adrian’s AIDS came from contaminated needles. “He was a drug addict,” Marilyn said, “but no matter what he had done, Jesus died for him, too.”

Adrian had been raised in the Catholic faith, but had fallen away from the church. “I saw someone in conflict,” Marilyn said. “He didn’t really know who

he was or where he belonged. But he did know he was dying.”

His death was slow and painful. “He looked like a shadow on the wall. He was skin and bones,” Marilyn remembered. “His immune system had shut down. He was dehydrated. He ran very high fevers. At the end he was on morphine.”

Talking to Jesus

Marilyn visited Adrian for nearly two months, holding his hand, feeding him ice chips, and sharing the gospel.

“I concentrated on Jesus, that all our sins are forgiven because of what Christ did for us on the cross,” she recalled. “I would read out of *Abide with Us*. That’s a beautiful book. It’s very simple, but it has everything you need to know about Jesus and his love. I would read to Adrian and hold his hand.

“One day I was reading to him and he said, ‘Where have you been all my life?’ He wasn’t talking to me. He was talking to Jesus.”

Letting go

Last spring Adrian died. His mother, father, sister, and two daughters were there at the end. So was Marilyn.

“He was fighting death,” Marilyn said. “I took his hand and said, ‘Adrian, you can let go. There’s nothing to be afraid of. Jesus is here with you. He’s going to take you home. Everything you’ve ever done wrong in your life is washed away.’ And I know Adrian believed, because he just let go. Then he was gone.”

Marilyn continues to visit the hospice. She says the patients welcome her. “If they never before wanted anyone to tell them about Jesus, they do on their deathbed.”

That’s when they need a friend—a friend like Marilyn.

Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor for Northwestern Lutheran.

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Hundreds of *krathongs*—baskets holding flowers, incense, candles, and a coin—float down the river during Thailand's *Loy Krathong* festival.

The Emerald Buddha stands before a temple in Bangkok.



JOHN HARTWIG

Thailand: *Krathong* or Christ?

Banana leaf boats can't carry away sins

John P. Hartwig



JOHN HARTWIG

Lotus blossoms, incense sticks, and candles are offerings to Buddha.

The procession stopped at the river. A breathtakingly beautiful young woman dressed in fine purple and gold silk stepped down from the wagon and moved through the masses of people to the river's edge. Kneeling in the light of the full moon, she raised her hands, palms together as if in prayer, and gracefully brought them to her forehead as she bowed forward.

She picked up her *krathong* (a small lotus-shaped basket made of intricately folded banana leaves hold-

ing flowers, incense, candles, and a coin), lit the candles and incense sticks, and placed it into the current.

The crowd roared. The night came alive as up and down the riverbank the scene was repeated over and over until the river became a ribbon of floating lights. Firecrackers exploded everywhere. The night sky was dotted with points of light as people released *khom*, small hot-air balloons in brilliant colors fueled by kerosene-soaked rags and fitted with a payload of fireworks and firecrackers set to explode as the *khom*

floats far overhead.

The whole town sparkled with glittery light. People had placed candles—hundreds of them—around their houses. Doors had been decorated with palm leaves and paper lanterns. The streets and public buildings were strung with lights. It was a visual feast, and spectacular to the ears too. Huge happy crowds. Music blaring from speakers. Fireworks. Firecrackers.

Balloons and boats to carry away sins

The scene was Chiang Mai, a city in northern Thailand, on the night of the full moon in November. The occasion was *Loy Krathong*, a Thai festival originally celebrated in thanksgiving for the blessing of water.

The festival has taken on greater significance over the years. Many people believe that as their *krathongs* float away, the water washes away the sins of the past year. If the candle still burns as the *krathong* floats out of sight, they will have good luck in the coming year. The *khom*, too, represent sins carried off and blasted out of existence in the sky.

Loy krathong is spectacular, but hot air balloons and banana leaf boats can't carry away sins. Firecrackers, no matter how loud, will not have any effect "against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus is the only way.

Missionary explorers

Because few Thai know that Jesus is the way, we came to Thailand to find out what is being done to spread the Word of God and to determine where and how WELS might do mission work here.

Rob and Nora Meister, with their four children, and our family—my wife Helen and I and our three children—arrived in Chiang Mai in August 1993 for a two-year mission exploration. The world missions board will consider our proposals and decide how to proceed.

Keep the people of Thailand in your prayers. Pray that God will allow us to share his truth with them so they will trust Jesus, not a banana leaf boat, to carry away their sins.

The exploration of Thailand is funded outside the WELS budget. Your contribution is welcome. Designate "Thailand" on the memo line of your check or on an attached note. Please make checks payable to WELS, and send to Ministry of Planned Giving, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

John Hartwig is a missionary in Thailand.

Mission: Possible

Consider these facts:

◆ Over 99 percent of Thai people are not Christian

An estimated 60 million people live in Thailand. Fewer than 400,000 of them know Jesus as Savior. About 95 percent are Buddhists. They hope that by leading good lives, following the teachings of Buddha, and keeping their lives in harmony with a very active spirit world, they will live happily and be reborn one step closer to Nirvana.

◆ Changes are breaking down barriers to the gospel

Thailand has joined the ranks of the newly industrialized countries, however, and the economic boom is changing society. Rapid industrialization and migration from rural areas to cities is eroding the traditional lifestyle. Exposure to western values and culture through media and tourism is pulling the people away from their traditional beliefs, leaving a void that the gospel can fill.

◆ Present Christian witness is ineffective

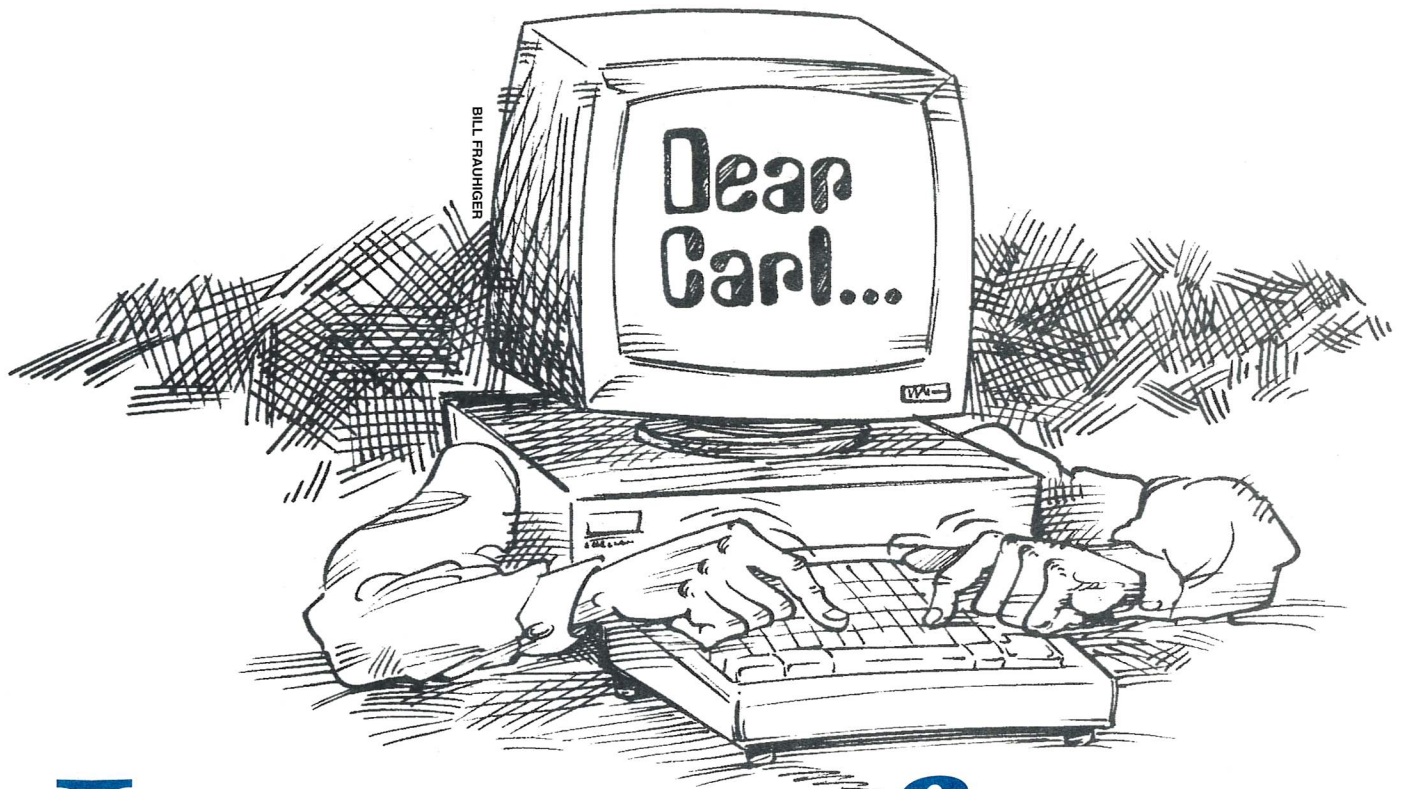
Although the first missionaries came to Thailand over 150 years ago, there have been relatively few converts. Many Christian churches have little gospel in their preaching and teaching, no outreach, and little local leadership.

◆ Mission activity is possible

We can do mission work in Thailand. Its government guarantees freedom of religion and allows foreign mission organizations to operate. Because the government controls the visas and work permits of individuals and organizations involved in gospel mission work, we need to be sure our missionaries will be able to get the necessary papers.

◆ Thailand occupies a strategic position in a gospel-poor corner of the world

Foreign missionaries are not now permitted in the countries surrounding Thailand—Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Viet Nam, and China, but those countries may reverse their policies. If they do, Thailand can be the base from which we can carry the Word to these gospel-poor areas.



Lessons from a computer

Carl R. Henkel

The capabilities of my computer impress me. At times it seems there is absolutely nothing it cannot do. I am in awe of the ease with which it takes data and transforms it into something meaningful and usable.

With the click of a button I can check the spelling of each word I type, the grammar of each sentence. With another click, the computer even tells me at what grade level I'm writing.

Here's something else my computer will do: It's called mail merge. With this function, I can enter a simple form letter into the computer, and by pressing a few keys, tie into my mailing directory. Then, with a couple more key codes, I can tell the computer to add a name in strategic places, making it appear as though I were writing a personal letter.

The computer will even automatically address an envelope for the letter.

Personalized form letters

We've all gotten form letters that seem to be personal. They have our name interspersed throughout and even our place of residence. "Dear Mr. Henkel, You are one of only a few people in Roseville, Minnesota, receiving this mailing. It's only because I consider you a special person and valued customer, Carl, that I am taking time to personally. . . ."

When I first started receiving personalized form letters, I was really taken in by them. I pictured a busy executive sitting at his typewriter, writing a letter just for me. How else could he get all the "Mr. Henkels" and "Carls" in just the right places? And,

Computers are much more efficient than people. They are faster, cheaper, far more adaptable and versatile. But a computer can't show compassion.

A box filled with circuit boards can't offer a caring touch to someone who's hurting or a shoulder to someone who's crying.

since we all like to see our names in print, I ended up reading letters that would normally be tossed, unread, into the circular file. Even Ed McMahon knew my name and wrote to me personally, telling me I might be a winner.

I finally caught on. While serving as pastor in St. James, Minn., I received a letter that began: "Dear Carl, I feel that since I know you so well I can call you by your first name. You are the only one in St. James that I am writing to. . . ."

I don't intend to use the computer to send personalized form letters, even though it would be easy to do. And while I am impressed by the abilities of this electronic wizard, I believe there is a lesson to be learned by its inabilities.

Real friends

Yes, computers can do great things. They are much more efficient than people. They are faster, cheaper, far more adaptable and versatile, and can work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without a break. But a computer can't replace people.

A computer is incapable of feeling. It can't show compassion. A box filled with circuit boards can't take personal interest in people, or offer a caring touch to someone who's hurting or a shoulder to someone who's crying.

It seems to me that as our society becomes more computer-oriented, we become less people-oriented. Since our world has become so impersonal, however,

we who are members of God's family have opportunities to be real friends. We have opportunity to care for one another and share with one another. God help us if we ever fail to respond to hurts and needs by turning people into nameless numbers.

Our God is not some silicone computer chip in the sky. He is a caring, compassionate, living being whose interest in us and knowledge of us does not permit a hair to fall from our heads without his notice.

By faith in Jesus, we are the children of God, and as children, we are called upon to reflect the personality of the Father. Compassion, prayer, a haven for lost souls, and a concern for hurting hearts—these must remain the virtues of our Christian community. Once these qualities are lost, we'd be better off replacing our pews with a row of computers.

Likewise, if a pastor loses sight of what it means to be a shepherd, you might as well replace him with a computer, too. A computer, loaded with several translations of the Bible, the original Hebrew and Greek, a concordance, and thousands of illustrations could produce and preach a sermon. It could send out weekly "personal" letters and keep loads of membership data.

Until a computer is invented that can feel and care, however, continue to pray for your pastor and for one another.

Carl Henkel is pastor at Mount Olive, St. Paul, Minn.

MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY

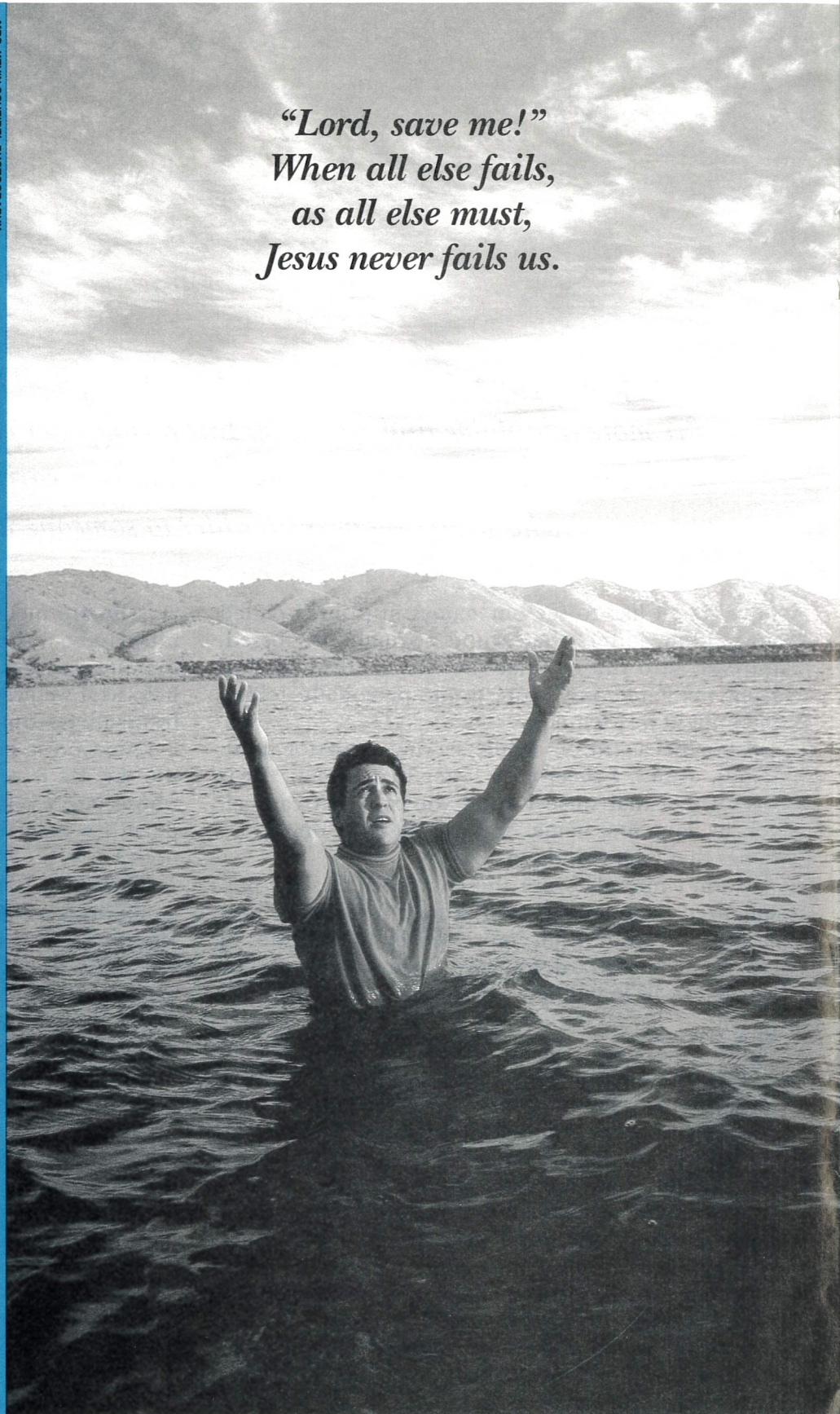
But when [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

MATTHEW 14:30-33

*"Lord, save me!"
When all else fails,
as all else must,
Jesus never fails us.*



“Lord, save me!”

Gary P. Baumler

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can move mountains. If you follow the Lord's bidding in faith, you can walk on water. But, what if the mountains don't move? What if you begin to sink into the waters?

Last month we looked at the miraculous potential of faith in Jesus. Now we need to contemplate the day-to-day reality of the failings in our lives—both evident in Simon Peter, the Rock.

I want to walk on water. Don't you? I want to have a faith so strong it never wavers—a faith that accomplishes great things with and for the Lord Jesus. Don't you? I want that, but sometimes I wonder. I don't feel very secure. I don't see myself accomplishing much. I see stormy waters all around. I feel afraid.

We're sinking, too

Do you know what I mean? Ask yourself: How do you feel most often? As if you're walking on the waters or sinking into the sea? As if you're moving mountains out of the way or carrying the weight of them on your shoulders?

Don't we all, altogether too often, share the feelings of Peter at the moment we see him walking on the water? Peter suddenly saw the wind tossing the waves about him, became afraid, and began to sink.

“Lord, save me!” he cried.

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.”

Peter, strong in faith one moment, the next moment sank hopelessly into the black waters. Hopelessly, that is, except for the presence of Jesus.

“Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.”

In Peter, we see ourselves. Even when we are strong, we are hopelessly weak. Even when we think we know exactly where we are going, we find we have doubts about the direction. Even when we appear secure, we can be shaken and fall at any moment. The storms are whipping up the waves about us. Left alone, we must sink. “Lord, save us!”

Jesus reaches out his hand

Jesus, ever present, reaches out his hand and catches us.

That's why we call the Word of Jesus the gospel—good news. When all else fails, as all else must, Jesus never fails us. He is with us to help us in every storm as long as we trust in him, as long as we believe in him as God's Son, our Savior.

At any moment we might feel as if we are sinking into murky waters because of sin. Sin causes all the doubts, all the storms, all the failings that threaten our peace. Because we cannot avoid sin, we cannot avoid those problems. We cannot help but falter on our way.

But Jesus, since he has taken care of the problem of our sin, is there to catch us. He did not falter at the cross, where he had to suffer what our sins deserve, namely, separation from God and the very pains of hell. He passed through the storm of death and by rising from the dead stilled the storm for us.

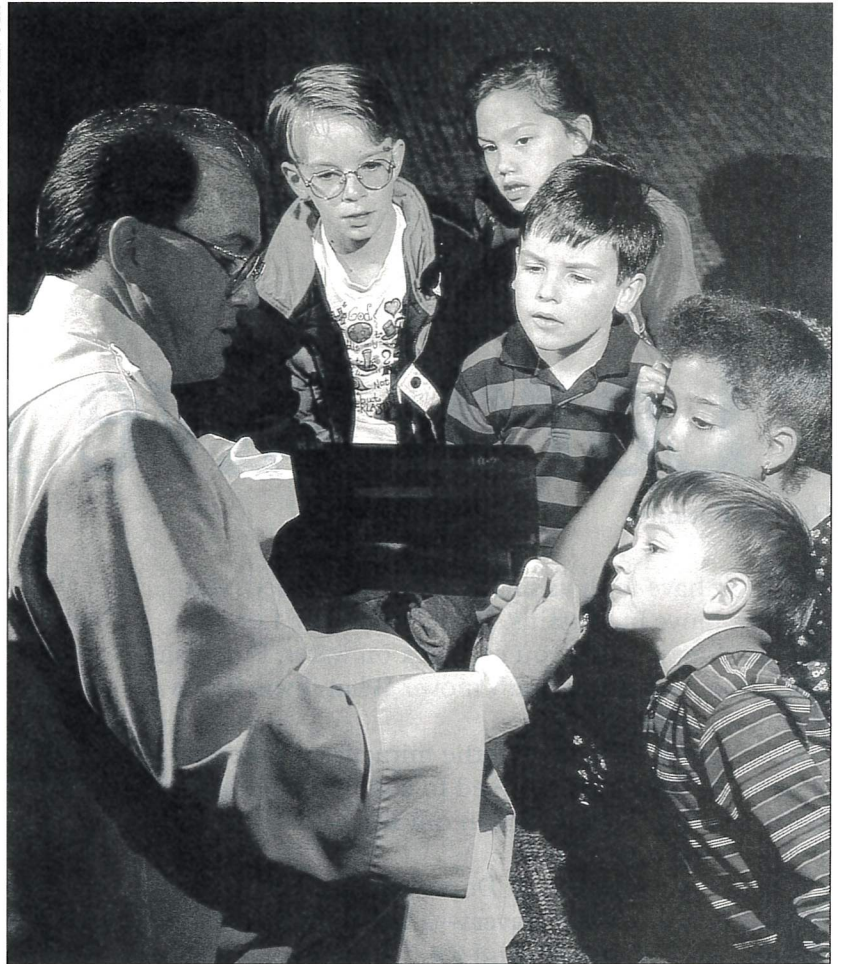
So it's true. Jesus, the Son of God, will at times give us the power to walk on water. And the other times, the really hard times, when we begin to sink, he needs only to hear us cry out, “Lord, save us!” and he reaches out his hand and catches us.

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

Jesus gives his church public ministers

Wayne D. Mueller

MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY



Jesus gives public ministers to his church. If we believe this, we will receive their message as though it came from Jesus himself.

Let's face it: preachers don't get much respect any more. Gone are the days when congregation and community alike honored ministers.

A number of things contribute to this shrinking respect. Some of the blame can be laid at the door of modern secularism. People preoccupied with sports, gambling, leisure, and entertainment do not look to religious leaders for role models.

America is said to be entering the "postchristian" era. As the gospel is less appreciated, there will be less respect for those who preach it. The world's fading image of preachers will not change until God renews and blesses our efforts at gospel outreach.

But honor for public ministers is also diminishing within the church. Secularism takes its toll among church members too.

Clergy disrespect inside the church stems from another problem, too. Misunderstanding about ministry—especially the Bible's distinction between the priesthood of all believers and the public ministry—

often subtracts from our appreciation of public ministers.

Divine gifts

It's clear from the pages of Scripture that God gives public ministers to his church. "It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

The course pastors and teachers follow is easy to see. They grow up in Christian homes. They train in special schools. Voters' meetings choose, or call, them. Then they move into the house next to the church.

The visibility of the human process, however, must not blind us to the invisible divine direction that brings public ministers to us. Paul insisted on this respect for his public ministry: "Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Galatians 1:1).

Regardless of the human process involved, it is Jesus who gives public ministers to his church. If we believe this, we will receive their message as though it came from Jesus himself. Jesus reassured the evangelists he sent out: "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16).

The divine call

How exactly does God provide public ministers? First the Holy Spirit calls them to faith. Although God is able to use the word of hypocrites and unbelievers to his advantage, he wants his public ministers to be "full of the Spirit" (Acts 6:3) and mature in their faith (1 Timothy 3:6).

God also gives public ministers the special gifts they need for serving his church. He demands that only those with a good reputation, stable family life, and an ability to understand and teach the Word be chosen for public service in the church (1 Timothy 3:1-10; Titus 1:7-9).

Finally, God himself directs the decisions of believers who choose their public ministers. Ostensibly, the elders at Ephesus attained their office through human decisions; yet Paul assured them that it was the Holy Spirit who made them overseers (Acts 20:28).

Because God is at work in preparing and choosing them, we are right to say that public ministers have a divine call—a call from God. We do not hire or fire pastors and teachers in the manner of the secular world. God's call to them leads us to honor them as his representatives. Paul asked for this respect from the Corinthians: "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Luther's balance

At the beginning of the Reformation, Martin Luther emphasized the Bible teaching of the priesthood of all believers. Against the clergy-dominated Roman church, Luther stated that priests are baptized, not ordained. In private life, every Christian is a minister. Every believer studies the Word, shares the gospel with family and friends, and sacrifices his life as a thankoffering of good works.

A few years later, however, Luther found it necessary to strike a balance in his teaching of ministry. He faced a bunch of radical and disorderly sects. Many of these groups were headed by self-appointed ministers who claimed the right to teach others.

Because it was rooted in the Bible, Luther did not back down from his earlier teaching about the priest-

*Everyone is a minister,
but not everyone is
a public minister.*

hood of all believers. Instead he struck a balance by adding what the Bible said about public ministry.

Luther taught that God established the public ministry alongside the universal priesthood. Against self-appointed preachers, Luther asserted that no one could represent the church without a divine call. Everyone is a minister, but not everyone is a public minister.

God has always given his church public ministers by calling them through the believers they serve. Not even Jesus himself served the church without a divine call. "No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest" (Hebrews 5:4).

Public ministry today

Public ministry is not essentially different from the gospel ministry every believer has. Public ministers preach the same gospel, offer the same forgiveness, hold the same keys that Jesus gives to every believer.

But public ministry differs from the priesthood of all Christians in that it is the privilege to represent other believers. The "public" in public ministry means the right to proclaim the gospel in the name of and on behalf of believers.

This right to represent fellow believers requires a call from God. Neither faith nor personal desire makes one a public minister. Personal ability and professional training are not entitlement. In the church, God does the appointing. Only God's call, through God's people, grants the privilege. That's why James warns as Luther once repeated: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers" (James 3:1).

We don't always understand why God calls some and not others to the public service of the church. But we trust our Lord. We respect those he sends as the voice of Jesus in our time.

Wayne Mueller is administrator for WELS Parish Services.

People don't believe what they read in the newspapers anymore. What difference does it make if you read the *New York Times* or the *National Enquirer*? Each is just peddling its own version of the truth.



LINDA BAACHE

I have my doubts

Paul O. Wendland

We live in a world saturated by doubt. Call it relativism, call it the post-modernist blues, call it just plain original sin: it's part of the air we breathe.

We doubt the media

People don't believe what they read in the newspapers anymore. What difference does it make if you read the *New York Times* or the *National Enquirer*? Each is just peddling its own version of the truth.

Nor is seeing believing. Maybe once upon a time we trusted those images on our TV screens. But now we're sophisticated enough to know they can be manipulated, cut, edited, or even manufactured altogether. *Forrest Gump* made that pretty clear.

Listen to one of the radio talk-shows where folks pontificate about politics. No matter what tune they're playing that day, it's always set in the key of "c"—for "contempt." Contempt for those venal, power-hungry, posturing losers in Washington. It seems sometimes as if government of the people, by the people, for the people has already perished from the earth.

We doubt each other

I guess the worst thing is: we don't even trust each other anymore. The marriage vow is no longer seen as an invitation to trust your partner for life, but as an agreement to live with the other as long as he or she won't let you down. We see other close human relationships as dark and murky passageways, fraught with peril at every turn. Who knows how much my parents might have damaged me when I was little?

Even though we may grant the need to maintain a

healthy skepticism towards all things human, can this steady diet of doubt be any good for us? For those of us who live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us, this is a question worth asking.

I doubt my God

Why do those passages of Scripture in which believers express their doubts and fears connect with us? Why do I hear an echo of my own inner voice every time a prophet or a psalmist says, "Why, Lord?" Why is one of my favorite prayers that of the wretched father crying "Lord, I believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Maybe the air of doubt I breathe is poisoning the spirit of faith in my heart, so that I even find it hard to trust the words of my God.

There really is no maybe about it, is there? The world is too much with us. In fact, it's right there in us, as close to us as our sinful flesh.

"When the Son of Man comes," our Savior said about the last evil days, "will he find faith on the earth?" Surely not by any power in us, Lord, but only by the power present in your Word. Your Word calls us heavenward from our earthborn doubts. Your Word made the world, and only by your Word can we make any sense out of this world. Your Word will stand firm even after this present universe has been blown to bits, and in your Word we'll find a place to stand on the day when it all falls down. By the power of your Word we live, dear Jesus, a power made perfect now in our weakness.

Paul Wendland teaches at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

World missions

Administrator Duane Tomhave answers questions about the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's world missions.

Where are we opening new world missions?

We are exploring in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The disenchantment with communism allowed us to work in countries that previously showed no potential. Now we have missionaries in Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Russia, and Siberia.

We need to know government politics and anticipate what will happen. We want to be there when people are searching for something solid. If we can put Bibles into people's hands and instruct them in the Word of God, the Holy Spirit does the rest.

Where do we get the money for mission work?

All funds come from Christians in WELS congregations. But the way it has been submitted varies. Until 1970, most money came from congregational mission offerings. In the last two decades there's been a growing interest from financially blessed individuals to support mission programs. Lift High the Cross has also helped us.

How do you decide where to send missionaries?

In earlier years, appeals came in from people overseas. Today we do extensive exploration from several

months to several years to see if there's potential. Choosing among them is often a matter of where the Lord opens doors.

When do you decide to pull out of a mission?

We have trouble "shaking the dust off our feet" as the Bible says. Once we begin a church we don't want to ever abandon it. We may pull out because govern-



World missions staff—Gloria Hermanson, John Kurth, Trudy Mucha, Duane Tomhave, Kaye Eckert.

ment restrictions, security problems, or hostility limit the work we are able to do.

But it all comes to human judgment, with the study of the Word and prayer, because I've never seen a note from God on my desk telling me what to do.

What about national pastors?

After studying at our Bible institutes, workers go back to serve their congregation as lay leaders and are certified to go on to the seminary. The purpose is having nationals carry on the work and free our missionaries to go someplace else.

What is the make-up of world missions administration?

The Board is made up of committees, each responsible for a region of the world. Our office ties them all together.

We're the narrow of the hourglass. The gifts come to us and we transfer that money to help a missionary study, another one get into his car, and another go to the village to preach.

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

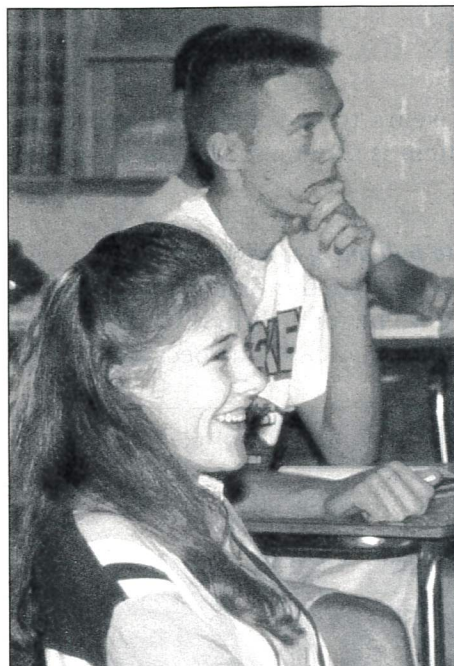
Proclaim the Word to the world

WELS has 100 mission workers—63 missionaries, 21 teachers, 5 nurses, 2 vicars, and 9 volunteers—plus almost 100 spouses and several hundred children in . . .

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| ✓ Japan | ✓ Malawi | ✓ Indonesia |
| ✓ Nigeria | ✓ Mexico | ✓ Taiwan |
| ✓ India | ✓ Puerto Rico | ✓ Brazil |
| ✓ Zambia | ✓ Hong Kong | ✓ Colombia |

. . . and in these new fields of ministry:

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| ✗ Cameroon | ✗ Mozambique | ✗ Laos |
| ✗ Dominican Republic | ✗ Sioux Indians | ✗ Bulgaria |
| | ✗ Thailand | ✗ Russia |
| | ✗ Cuba | |



Prep school students may have years of loans to repay when they enter the ministry.

Help wanted: Encourage future ministers

Today in America, colleges compete for students. Our synod's ministerial education schools must compete, too.

Universities offer attractive financial assistance packages to entice students to their campuses. The amount of financial aid available often determines which school a student chooses. Young people may not prepare for the ministry when they can spend less to train for better-paying professions.

It would be a shame to lose potential pastors, teachers, missionaries, and staff ministers to other schools because of finances. It would be a shame for graduates to enter the ministry with large educa-

tional debts.

During this school year, students at our prep schools, colleges, and seminary will receive student assistance grants from our synod totaling \$115,740. What a blessing! But more is needed.

You can help. Send your gifts to the WELS Student Assistance Fund. Larger gifts and bequests can be given to the Student Assistance Endowment Fund.

For more information contact Ruth Rogahn, WELS Board for Ministerial Education, 2929 Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3236

—John M. Brenner

“The tape lady”—a missionary for Jesus

The people she visits in Wonewoc, Wis., affectionately call Ellen Busch, 84, “the tape lady,” says her pastor, Kenneth Wenzel of St. Paul church. He calls her “a missionary for Jesus” and “an example of personal ministry.”

Each week, in the recreation room of her apartment complex, Busch plays a tape of the St. Paul

service. Several building residents meet regularly to hear the tapes. The church has gained some mission prospects

Ellen Busch—
ministry through tapes



and regained several delinquent members, Wenzel reported.

“In addition,” he added, “Ellen began making copies for other people and started to deliver them to shut-in members. The regular visits developed into Christian friendships and a personal tape ministry. People look forward to the coming of ‘the tape lady.’”

Mass Media Ministry offers ads for gospel outreach

“The Baker’s Dozen”—a set of 13 newspaper advertisements—can help your church with gospel outreach. Produced by WELS Mass Media Ministry, the ads are designed to expand a congregation’s presence in the community and show its concern for spiritual needs.

The ads, depicting contemporary scenes, point to faith in Jesus as the key to coping with life’s trials. Six of

the ads feature coordinated radio spots. Each advertisement and radio spot includes information about the sponsoring congregation.

For more information contact WELS Mass Media Ministry, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3280.

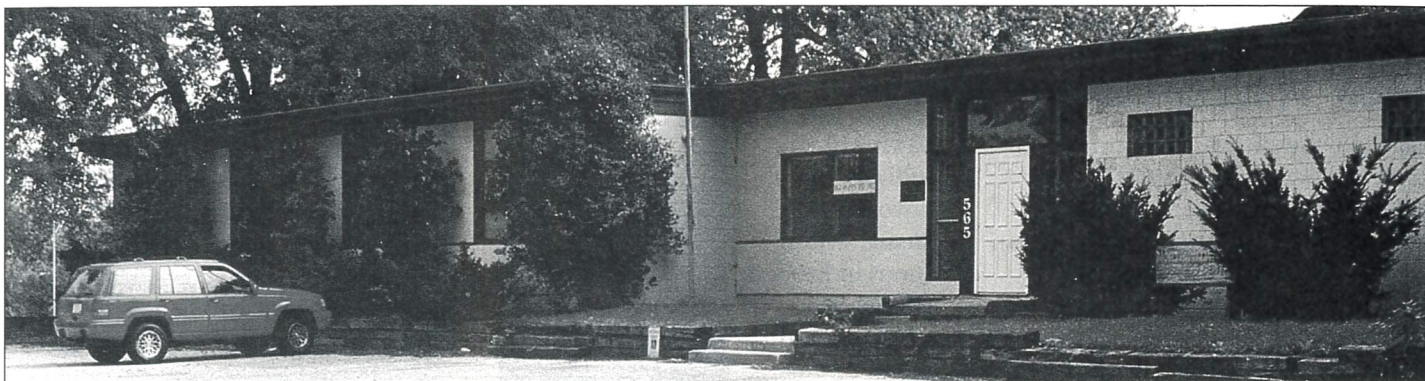
One of “The Baker’s Dozen,” a set of 13 ads to help congregations with gospel outreach.

**The only
Long-distance
Carrier with a
Lifetime
Guarantee...**

**Jesus
Christ!**

You are invited to call on
the one who always
listens, answers and blesses.





Calvary Academy, a residential school near Lake Geneva, Wis., will offer Christian therapy for troubled children.

Calvary Academy steering committee buys building

The vision of a Christian school to help children in crisis has moved one step closer to reality with the purchase of a building. The steering committee for Calvary Academy, planned as a residential school offering Christian therapy for troubled children, has acquired a former public school building in rural Walworth County, Wis.

"Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will use Calvary to help kids who are heading for serious trouble," said Pastor Paul Scharrer,

a member of the committee. It will be "a home for children and teens in our own WELS who are in need of the Christ-centered counseling, discipline, and schooling which Calvary Academy will offer."

In October the committee purchased a school building near Lake Geneva, Wis., about an hour from Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago. "These facilities will accommodate up to 70 students," reported Scharrer. "Calvary will work best with a small student body."

He anticipates that students will stay an average of six to 18 months. "Our goal is to help them, bring them back to their Savior, and enable them to be reunited with their families as soon as possible."

When Calvary will open depends on funding, Scharrer said. "We have a good start, but far more is needed before we can begin operations."

For more information about Calvary Academy, contact St. John Lutheran Church, 501 W Park Ave, Libertyville IL 60048.

Home missions: Some begin, others end

Although dwindling funds hamper the growth of new missions, the Board for Home Missions gave mission status to one congregation and planned for exploratory work in other areas.

At its September meeting, the Board for Home Missions granted mission status to the exploratory work in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The board also granted exploratory status to work in Las Vegas, Nev.; Denver, Col.; Peoria, Ill.; and approved a one-time grant to Grace, Oskaloosa, Iowa, for the start of a daughter congregation.

However, exploratory efforts in Oak Creek, Yampa, and Eagle, Colorado, and Pierce County, Wash., were discontinued.

The board also approved requests for 19 Travel-Canvass-Witness teams of college student

volunteers to help mission congregations find prospective church members.



The Lutheran Church in Bulgaria—Five Bulgarians and three Zambians are the first members of the Lutheran Church in Bulgaria, reports missionary Kirby Spevacek. From left are Steven Bota, Mildred Stephenson, Lucas Chembo, Spevacek, Konstantine Toshkov, Elie Toshkova, Ludmila Popova, Latchezar Popov, and Slavcho Gigov. The Zambians, on the left, are recent graduates of the university in Sofia.

French pastor welcomed into WELS fellowship

How do you discuss Scripture with someone who speaks another language? When representatives of WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (ELF) faced that challenge, missionary John Sullivan came to their aid.

On May 31 Gerhard Wilde, president of ELF, and Wilbert Gawrisch, chairman of the synod's Commission on Interchurch Relations, met for a colloquy—a theological discussion to determine whether the participating parties agree on doctrine and practice—with Pastor Jean-Pierre Blanchard, an evangelist in Vitry, France. Blanchard speaks only French, a language unfamiliar to Wilde and

Gawrisch. Sullivan, of Novosibirsk, Russia, who is fluent in French, translated.

After a full day of discussion, the three agreed that Blanchard is in doctrinal agreement with WELS, ELF, and their partner churches.

Blanchard had been a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church—Synod of France and Belgium, a body with which WELS is not in fellowship.



Jean-Pierre Blanchard

Don't keep this magazine!

Leave your copy of *Northwestern Lutheran* —

- ✓ in your doctor's office
- ✓ on a bus
- ✓ in a hotel room

Share your copy with others—

- ✓ family members
- ✓ friends
- ✓ co-workers

Write or call to let us know how and—if you want—why you shared your copy. We'll send you another.

Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3232.

Youth news

Teens help prevent child abuse

Manitowoc Lutheran High School students are helping children learn to protect themselves from abuse. Working with the Sheriff's Department and the Domestic Violence Center, teens in Donna Kappelman's parenting and child development class wrote stories for primary-grade children. Deputy Phil Kinzel, the county's crime prevention officer, uses the stories in Manitowoc County schools in Wis.

Kappelman and Kinzel have described the program at seminars in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Green Bay.

"I feel the Christian background of our students helped them be sensitive and aware of a young child's needs," said Kappelman.

German students visit Shoreland

Shoreland Lutheran High, Somers, Wis., hosted 20 German students for two weeks last October. The students attended classes, toured other Wisconsin sites, and celebrated Shoreland's homecoming.

Their school in Darmstadt has an exchange program with Shoreland and Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis. Students from those schools will visit Darmstadt next summer.

Youth news capsules

Jessica Stoering, student at Minnesota Valley LHS, and **Christopher Rodenbeck** and **Ronald Collier II**, both from St. Croix LHS in West St. Paul, Minn., are semifinalists in the 1995 National Merit Scholarship program. **Peter Anthony**, St. Peter, Minn., winner of a National Merit scholarship, is using it at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.

The **Lutheran Vanguard** band, made up of students from eight Lutheran high schools in Wisconsin, won eight awards—seven firsts and one second—in five states last summer.

Angela Mickelson, New Ulm, Minn., will be part of a drill team

performing at the Orange Bowl game on January 2. Also participating are the **Saint Croix LHS Saderettes** danceline and their coach, Jessica Pieper.

Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel carriers **Philip Cox**, Northwestern Prep, and **Daniel Nolte**, Manitowoc Lutheran High, won \$1000 scholarships for customer service and sales performance.

Felicia Lacapa, a student at East Fork Lutheran High School, Whiteriver, Ariz., was named to the Nike volleyball camp all-stars team.

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

Students learn disabled aren't so different

How do you operate a computer if you can't use your hands, or shoot a basket if you can't walk? A disability

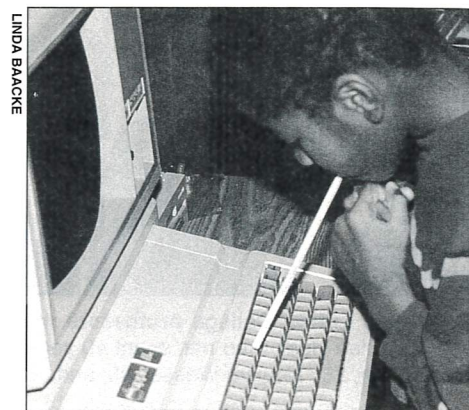
DEFINING RELIGION

MATINS: A service of praise conducted in the morning. Early Christians held a service around midnight that extended into the early morning hours. The name matins became attached to this first service of the day. *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Christian Worship* include an order of matins, also called "Morning Praise."

awareness program at Garden Homes school in Milwaukee gave students a taste of the challenges disabled people face.

Students operated a computer without using their hands, ate peach slices and walked a balance beam blindfolded, and played basketball from wheelchairs.

Teacher Janet Wesenberg, who planned the program, told the children, "People who can't walk or see can do the same things we can, only they do them in a different way. God loves a person in a wheelchair, and we can love that person too." Alexandria Smith, 7, knew what she had learned: "If people are in wheelchairs, we can help



Dominique Greer tries no-hands operation of a computer during a disability awareness program at Garden Homes School, Milwaukee, Wis.

them get around. God wants us to help them."

"Greatest Show of All" brings greatest news of all

It has clowns, jugglers, and lively music, but "The Greatest Show of All" is more than entertainment. The original Christian musical centers on the gospel, shows children how to talk about their faith, and gives them a chance to do it.

"The show takes place at a carnival," explained Jan Nelson. "Some Christian kids meet a bunch of people and share the good news." She is one of four WELS members who wrote the play. Also participating were Margaret Krieser, Mary Lippert, and Jim Wade.

"The Greatest Show' could be put on by an elementary school, Sunday school, or Lutheran Pioneer group," said Jerry Kastens, administrator for the WELS Commission for Youth Discipleship (CYD). "You can produce it with a large group or small—it's very flexible. You could use it to kick off vacation Bible school, for a festival of friendship, or for any community outreach event. You might even videotape it and play it on public TV."

Kastens said the idea for a musical "came from a brainstorming ses-



Wisconsin Lutheran College children's theater presented "The Greatest Show of All," a Christian musical, in November. Jan Nelson directed the play.

sion on how to promote evangelism by and for children."

In January every WELS Sunday school and elementary school will receive information about the musi-

cal in a packet that tells about "Let the Children Come," a multimedia resource from CYD to help congregations promote their ministries for children.



Dr. Martin Luther College professors who celebrated anniversaries in October are (from left) Beverlee Haar, who has spent 40 years in ministry; Mark Lenz, 25; Roger Herman, 25; Lyle Lange, 25; Howard Wessel, 40; and Francis Schubkegel, 40.

Congressman confesses Christian convictions

Congressman Mark Neumann opened his desk drawer, pulled out his well-thumbed Bible, and read from James: "... the testing of your faith develops perseverance." That's the lesson he learned during three political campaigns.

Neumann, the newly-elected Republican representative for Wisconsin's first congressional district, says he developed that perseverance by losing his first two races for office.

A member of St. Matthew in Janesville, Neumann acknowledged that religion was an issue in the campaign. When he ran for office, he said, "I was crushed to learn all the things I thought were good and right were supposedly wrong: go to church, believe in God, raise a family with Christian values."

In his first two election attempts, Neumann followed his campaign managers' advice to avoid talking about those values—and he lost the elections. "That taught me you have



When opponents called him a conservative Christian, Mark Neumann said, "Thank you for the compliment."

to be strong enough to stand up and say what you believe," he said.

He ran his third campaign without professional help. This time, when opponents called him a conservative Christian, he said, "I just smiled and said, 'Thank you for the compliment.'"

Neumann believes he represents the majority of Americans. "I'm not an ultraconservative. I'm right in the middle of the road. Most people believe the same thing I do," he said. "I look at society, see it crumbling, see Christian values pushed aside. Nobody wants politics to take over in churches, but we have to recognize that if we don't stand up and be counted, our values will be taken away."

Neumann's wife, Sue, and three children will remain in Janesville while he is in Washington. Andy, 17, and Tricia, 16, attend Lakeside Lutheran High School. Matthew, 12, goes to St. Matthew School.

"They're excited right now, but it's going to be hard," Neumann said of his children. "They're used to having Dad at every basketball game. But they understand I have a commitment to my country. I'm doing this because I care about my country."

Festival offers Christian contemporary music

Alive '95—The Christian music experience, March 25 at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, is for young people—of all ages.

The event will feature Christian contemporary music and will include performances by ExCorde and Malachi. In addition to the music, the program will offer seminars to help teens discuss problems they face.

Group rates will be available. For more information, contact Wisconsin Lutheran College, Spiritual Life Committee, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226; 414/774-8620.

DEFINING RELIGION

GRACE: God's undeserved love or kindly disposition toward sinners. God's grace caused him to punish his own Son for the sins of the world. Roman Catholics incorrectly understand grace as a quality God pours into humans to enable them to do meritorious works.



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.

Obituaries

Wilbur F. Dorn 1910-1994

Wilbur F. Dorn was born Sept. 6, 1910, in Hendricks, Minn. He died Oct. 13, 1994, in Hendricks.

A graduate of Concordia, St. Louis, Dorn served parishes in North Carolina, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Missouri, and Texas, and on the synod's world mission board.

He is survived by his wife Margaret (nee Hjelle), daughters Deborah Hoenecke, Mary (John) Lippert, sons Michael, Wilbur Jr. (Jacquiline), and Peter (Susan). He is also survived by twelve grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, brother Eldon, and sister Dorothy Ewy.

Ruth E. Hatzung 1930-1994

Ruth Elaine Hatzung was born Aug. 16, 1930, in Rhinelander, Wis. She died Aug. 28, 1994, in Juneau, Wis.

A 1950 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she taught for 38 years at Lutheran elementary schools in Waukesha, Milwaukee, and Kenosha, Wis.; in Crete, Ill.; and in Monroe and Owosso, Mich.

She is survived by her husband, Wilbur; daughter, Mary (Dale) Raether; sons Mark (Cheryl) and Mike (Debbie); her mother, Evangeline Huebner; sisters Heloise (Walter) Baehman, Amelia (John) Rosek, and Sally (George) Huizinga; brothers Duane (Mary Ann) Huebner, Roger (Margaret) Huebner, Dennis (Georgette) Huebner; and ten grandchildren.

WELS Connection videotapes

January topics

- Student financial assistance
- Missionary Paul Waldek of Africa

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

Camp Phillip plans anniversary weekend

Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis., will celebrate 20 years with a weekend of family activities June 9-11.

Family Fest '95 will offer at least nine Christian contemporary concerts, including performances by Malachi, Witness, ExCorde, and Shining Star. A juggler and a clown

will entertain children. The weekend also includes a three-mile fun run and a volleyball tournament.

For information contact Steve Huhn, Camp Phillip, Rt. 3 Box 190-4, Wautoma WI 54982-9330; 414/787-1085.

On the bright side

How to find Joshua's house

WELS chaplain Dan Balge received an invitation from 5-year-old Joshua to visit him and his family in Munich, Germany, a city of 1.5 million. Pastor Balge reports that Joshua offered these directions: "First you drive to Munich. Then you drive around in Munich. When you see a house with a little boy who looks like me in the front yard, that's where we live."

"It looks like God is coming"

At a campground on the eastern shores of Lake Huron, a thunderstorm had washed the haze from the skies. The sun glistened gloriously on clouds of every hue. Waves stirred up by the storm roared onto the beach.

Two brothers, about eight and ten, were leaping off the top of a dune and tumbling down the sandy slope. They stopped to view the spectacular scene, and the older one said, "It looks like God is coming."

When I told another camper about the incident, he said, "I have a couple of boys about that age. I hope they were mine."

—*Rolfe Westendorf*
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Memory verse

The kindergartners had reviewed their memory verse—1 John 4:19—and were ready to recite it individually. Bryant could hardly wait. He blurted out, "We love because he first loved us. First John . . . uh . . . uh . . . 1994."

—*Donna Marie Bickel*
Toledo, Ohio

Thank God for volume controls

Retired pastor Wilmer Valleskey and his wife live in a retirement complex in Hazel Park, Mich., and receive videotaped worship services from the WELS Taped Services Committee. Most of the residents in the assisted living center join them for worship.

Preaching a sermon when a tape was not available made Pastor Valleskey appreciate the taped services even more. "I had to shout, because 75- to 97-year-olds are hard of hearing," he said. "I could not talk normally for a week and a half. Thank the Lord for volume controls on TV sets!"

(For information about taped services, contact the WELS Board for Home Missions, 414/256-3286.)

Do you have a brief story or thought that will brighten someone's day? Please send it to *BRIGHT SIDE, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398*; or *FAX to 414/256-3899*.

Michigan District

Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, added Jose Jimenez to its community of international students this year. Jose is from Nuevo Leon, Mexico. He is interested in pursuing the pastoral ministry.

MLS also continues to serve five Lutheran high schools with first- and second-year Latin via its distance learning program. In addition, seven home-schooled students are using the program. A third year of audiovisual instruction will be added in the 1995-96 school year.

Michigan Lutheran High School, St. Joseph, received the Fruitbelt Official's Association sportsmanship award. The school has won the award three years in a row and six times in the last 12 years. The honor acknowledges the athletic director's administration, the players' sportsmanship, and fans' conduct. John Eggert is athletic director.

MLHS began the 1994-95 school year with an enrollment of 144, an increase of 23.

Camp Lor-Ray, a WELS/ELS member-owned campground near Muskegon, recently announced plans to double its campsites from 30 to 60.

Emanuel First, Lansing, dedicated its new school and day care facility and renovated Centennial Hall on November 20.

Lamb of God, Columbus, Ohio, celebrated its 25th anniversary November 13.

—David M. Zahn

Manuscripts requested

Northwestern Lutheran welcomes unsolicited manuscripts. These must be typed and double-spaced. Please send one copy only. Manuscripts not accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope cannot be returned. Although there are excep-



Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill., celebrated groundbreaking for its new church on Sept. 11. The 103-year-old congregation, which relocated in 1991, has been worshipping in its school gym.

Southeast Wisconsin District

While most congregations enjoy their largest attendances on Christmas and Easter, **Siloah, Milwaukee,** a central-city congregation, has the most people on Black History Sunday and on Friendship Sunday. A recent friendship service filled Siloah with 487 souls, including nearly 200 visitors.

Two Milwaukee congregations, **St. Philip and Jerusalem,** are sharing a church building. Both groups will keep their own identities, holding services at separate times. For

many years the two congregations have operated a joint school, Beautiful Savior.

Congregations giving thanks for past blessings include **Trinity, Union Grove (125); Our Savior, Zion, Ill., (40); Christ, Palatine, Ill., (25); Redeemer, Cedarburg, (25); Resurrection, Aurora, Ill., (25).**

Last fall **St. Jacobi, Greenfield,** dedicated a building expansion, and **Christ, Palatine, Ill.,** dedicated a new organ.

—George A. Ferch

DEFINING RELIGION

SYNCRETISM: Combining beliefs and practices of different religions. The Bible forbids religious syncretism when it says, "Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them" (Romans 16:17).

Americans curtail charitable giving

Americans are giving less money and time to charity, a survey by a Washington-based coalition of charitable groups indicated recently.

The survey by Independent Sector found an impressive 73 percent of American households—71.5 million—reported charitable contributions in 1993. But it also found that the average amount given declined from \$978 in 1989 to \$880 in 1993, an 11 percent drop in current dollars.

Historically, those reporting membership in religious denominations have given more of their time and

money to charity than those with no religious affiliation.

But the survey found that Roman Catholics who reported donations gave an average of \$508 in 1993, about 1.2 percent of their household income and down from the \$758 given in 1991. That compared with \$848, or 1.8 percent of household income, given by those with no religious affiliation.

Protestants, on the other hand, gave \$969 in 1993, 2.5 percent of household income but still down significantly from the \$1,014, or 2.7 per-

Charitable giving declining

Religious affiliation	1991	1993
	Average household	Average household
Catholic	\$ 758	\$ 508
Protestant	\$1,014	\$ 969
Jew, Muslim, other	\$1,078	\$1,406

cent of household income, in 1991.

Jews, Muslims, and those reporting other religious affiliations gave the most, with an average of \$1,406—2.8 percent of household income—in charitable contributions in 1993, up by \$328 from 1991.

Religious speech issue reaches US Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has agreed to decide a case involving two First Amendment guarantees: free speech and church-state separation.

At issue is whether a state university must subsidize a student-run religious publication if the school subsidizes non-religious ones.

The court said it would review lower court rulings that have upheld a ban on the use of student activities funds for a religious publication at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Students at the university pay a \$14-per-student activity fee that supports a wide variety of student organizations and publications. School policy prohibits use of the money for fraternities, sororities, political organizations, and religious activities. A group of students seeking printing money for their religious magazine in 1991 were turned down and filed suit, arguing the university's policy discriminated against religious speech.

Jesus Seminar scholars continue attack on Bible

Just in time for Christmas, 27 scholars affiliated with a controversial liberal group known as the Jesus Seminar concluded unanimously that Mary was not a virgin when she bore Jesus.

The conclusions were part of a series of antiscriptural pronouncements from the California-based Jesus Seminar, which in 1993 claimed Jesus said only 18 percent of the words attributed to him in the Bible. Seventy to 80 academicians comprising the seminar meet twice yearly and vote on aspects of Scripture, using paper ballots or colored beads dropped into a ballot box.

A majority of the academics also concluded that:

◆ Jesus probably did not descend from King David, and the genealogies purporting to show the Davidic lineage are inventions of the author of the Book of Matthew.

◆ Jesus probably was not born in Bethlehem, and the visit of the Magi, or Wise Men, is a fabrication, as is the account of the flight of the family into Egypt.

◆ Jesus probably was not born during a census as described in the Book of Luke, and the slaughter of the infants described in Matthew did not happen.

Do people read the Bibles they own?

Most Americans own a Bible and most profess to read it.

But in a recent national poll by the Barna Research Group, 10 percent of those polled said they thought the name of Noah's wife was Joan of Arc, 16 percent said the New Testament includes a

Book of Thomas, and 38 percent said the entire Bible, including the Old Testament, was written several decades after Jesus' death.

Each of those statements is false and supports other evidences of growing biblical illiteracy in the United States (cf. NL, Aug., p. 25).

Baby poses ethical dilemma

For two years now, Baby K, as she is known in the federal courts, has survived on a ventilator, although she is missing most of her brain. She was born with only a brain stem, a condition known as anencephaly, and cannot see, hear, think, or feel. Normally, anencephalic babies live only a handful of days.

The health-care professionals at Fairfax (Va.) Hospital have wanted

to discontinue using the ventilator. However the baby's mother, a devout Christian, has opposed the move. In October 1994 the US Supreme Court let stand a Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that sided with the child's mother. The 2-1 decision declared Baby K's brain defect is not the issue when the baby has respiratory problems.

Pope's book on best seller list

Pope John Paul II's new book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, tops the best-seller list, beating out Faye Resnick's "raunchy tell-all book about Nicole Brown Simpson," according to *Newsweek* (Nov. 28). The pope's unprecedented book trailed Resnick's at first but, having passed it, is expected to sustain buyer interest longer than the Simpson volume. In it, the pope offers his views on issues such as

"Does God exist?"

Initially, says William T. Loverd, director of publicity for Alfred A. Knopf, the publisher, Knopf shipped 1.25 million of *Crossing the Threshold*. Reorders were arriving within a week of the book's release. "That we are already getting reorders is a strong signal on how well it's doing," Loverd said, "because you don't usually put out so many books right away."

Catholic high school seminaries dying

The Los Angeles Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church recently announced it will close its 68-year-old high school for prospective priests next year. The number of so-called minor seminaries in this country then will be down to nine, compared to 133 in 1968.

The church has used these high schools as a major source of teenage candidates for the priesthood. Now, says the Rev. John Klein of Chicago,

who recently hosted a meeting of the Association of High School Seminaries, "they certainly have been a dying breed." The church looks increasingly to its Catholic high schools to find its future priests.

News reported in this section is derived from Religion 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*.

Eight million Bibles for China from China

The Amity Printing Press in mainland China printed its eight millionth Bible last September. It published a million Bibles from April 25 to September 27. In 1993 Amity published 1.6 million Bibles. Founded in 1987, Amity hopes to print its 10 millionth copy of the Bible sometime in June or July and to upgrade its production capacity to do more than four million copies a year from 1996 onwards.

The Bibles are sold in China for as little as one US dollar, and many are given away.

British clergy join trade union

Do the clergy need a trade union? Some 150 Church of England clergy think so. Worried about job security, benefits, and employee rights, the clerics have signed up to join the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union, which in September launched the first trade-union section specifically for clergy.

One clergyman backing union membership, the Rev. Stephen Trott, said his fellow ministers believe 3,000 clergy could join the union in the first year, though some observers regard a figure of 300 as more likely.

NOTICES

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

CAMPUS MINISTRY ALUMNI

We'd like to hear from alumni of the Wisconsin Lutheran Student Center. Write, phone, or drop by for a visit. 2215 E Kenwood Blvd, Milwaukee 53211; 414/963-2047.

POSITION AVAILABLE: THE LUTHERAN HOME

The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn., seeks a director for mission advancement who will be responsible for philanthropic development, public relations, and association relations. The Lutheran Home is owned and operated by 171 WELS congregations across the United States. It provides services for the elderly, developmentally disabled, and chronically mentally ill in nine locations in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Interested candidates should forward a letter of interest and resume to Louis G. Lieske, CEO, The Lutheran Home Association, 611 W Main St, Belle Plaine MN 56001.

GIFTS TO WELS

Individual contributions for the mission and ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, above congregational giving, are welcome. You may designate a particular program or fund. Please make checks payable to WELS. Designate the work you wish to support on the memo line of your check or on an attached note. Send to Ministry of Planned Giving, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

NOTICES

REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS LUTHER PREPARATORY SCHOOL Girls' Physical Education

The Luther Preparatory School Board of Control seeks nominations of qualified women for professor of physical education. The individual called will teach girls' physical education, with additional teaching responsibilities in another area in keeping with her background and experience. She should also be qualified to coach girls' basketball and/or volleyball and assist the athletic director in planning and implementing the women's athletic program. Calling is subject to funding approval by the Coordinating Council.

Religion and History

To fill a vacancy, the LPS Board of Control seeks nominations for professor of religion and history/social studies. Candidates should be qualified to teach in these areas and be willing to receive additional education. Candidates should be synodically certified or willing to attain such certification. Additional non-classroom duties will be assigned. Calling is subject to final approval by the BME and funding by the Coordinating Council.

For both positions, please submit nominations and accompanying information by Feb. 15 to President Mark Schroeder, LPS, 1300 Western Avenue, Watertown WI 53094.

TEEN RETREAT

- ✓ For students grades 8-12—WELS members and their friends
- ✓ March 24-26 at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.
- ✓ Activities: campfire programs, songs, skits, stories, joust, fellowship, ropes course, Bible study, worship
- ✓ Contact Steve Huhn, 414/787-1085

FLORIDA VACATIONERS

- Please join us for worship!
- ◆ New Life Lutheran Church (ELS), 3725 Hammock Rd., Sebring
 - ◆ January-Palm Sunday: 8:30 and 10:45 AM; Bible class and Sunday school, 9:30 AM
 - ◆ Easter-Christmas: worship 10 AM; Bible class, 9 AM
 - ◆ Pastor Joel Willitz; 813/385-2293

Financial report WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

SYNOD MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Nine Months ended September 30, 1994

Twelve Districts	Subscriptions			Offerings Received		
	Communicants 12/31/93	Total Amount for 1994	Year to Date Projected	Nine Months Offerings	Percent of Subscription	Annualized Average per Communicant
Arizona-California	16,389	\$ 916,596	\$ 611,348	\$ 590,664	96.6	\$ 48.05
Dakota-Montana	9,276	425,465	243,820	242,525	99.5	34.86
Michigan	37,338	2,037,058	1,237,641	1,286,593	104.0	45.94
Minnesota	45,160	2,434,440	1,545,357	1,511,967	97.8	44.64
Nebraska	9,975	540,488	335,134	306,388	91.4	40.95
North Atlantic	3,576	327,633	223,108	219,831	98.5	81.97
Northern Wisconsin	61,367	2,447,009	1,464,351	1,475,212	100.7	32.05
Pacific Northwest	4,673	278,826	174,644	164,631	94.3	46.97
South Atlantic	6,228	390,697	275,135	268,262	97.5	57.43
South Central	3,947	298,376	201,524	204,746	101.6	69.17
Southeastern Wisconsin	58,542	3,198,090	1,948,376	1,825,309	93.7	41.57
Western Wisconsin	60,277	2,946,178	1,804,923	1,790,813	99.2	39.61
Total — This Year	316,748	\$16,240,856	\$10,065,361	\$ 9,866,941	98.2	\$ 41.62
Total — Last Year	317,119	\$16,498,781	\$10,095,068	\$ 9,742,830	96.5	\$ 40.96

BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of Changes in Fund Balance

	Three months ended September 30, 1994		
	1994 Actual	1993 Actual	1994 Budget
Revenues:			
Synod Mission Offering	\$ 3,379,046	\$ 3,182,973	\$ 3,191,000
Gifts and Memorials	39,753	96,085	38,000
Bequest/Planned Giving Income	154,355	135,387	94,000
Tuition and fees	2,273,701	1,618,692	2,484,000
Other Income	11,263	16,754	22,000
Transfers — Endowment/Trust Earnings	45,289	44,331	56,000
Transfers — Gift Trust	1,769,248	1,783,170	1,927,000
Transfers — Continuing Programs	555,984	318,507	497,000
Transfers — Other	-	-	-
Total Revenues	\$ 8,228,639	\$ 7,195,899	\$ 8,309,000
Expenditures:			
Administration Division	\$ 660,655	\$ 727,318	\$ 682,000
Home Missions Division	1,380,655	1,370,368	1,484,000
World Missions Division	1,898,238	1,825,332	1,782,000
Ministerial Education Division	4,912,665	4,462,161	4,626,000
Parish Services Division	296,123	253,214	324,000
Fiscal Services Division	436,687	391,077	395,000
Total Expenditures	\$ 9,585,023	\$ 9,029,470	\$ 9,293,000
Net Change for the Period	\$ (1,356,384)	\$ (1,833,571)	
Fund Balance — Beginning of Year	\$ 155,746	\$ 1,075,572	
Fund Balance — End of Period	\$ (1,200,638)	\$ (757,999)	

Randy E. Matter, Controller

NAMES WANTED

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

PEACHTREE CITY / FAYETTEVILLE / NEWMAN / SHARPSBURG, GEORGIA—Pastor Tim Wempner, 154 Cobblestone Cove, Sharpsburg GA 30277; 404/253-0593.

ROWLETT, TEXAS—Divine Peace. Pastor Dan Voigt, 2519 Larkspur Ln, Rowlett TX 75088; 214/475-6389.

AVAILABLE

COMMUNION WARE—with common cup. Northdale Lutheran Church, 15709 Mapledale Blvd., Tampa FL 33624; 813/961-9195.

DEVOTIONAL MATERIALS—for WELS members living in Europe. Send names and addresses to Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.

MANNA IN ENGLISH—Daily family devotions by Carl Manthey Zorn, translated by Dr. John Sullivan. Hard cover, 695 pages. \$12.50 + \$2.50 postage and handling. Quantity discount. J.J. Sullivan, 2608 E Newport Ave, Milwaukee WI 53211; 414/964-6931.

ORGAN—Gulbransen electronic theater; 2 manuals, 25 pedals. Free to mission church. 414/563-7002 after 6 PM.

ORGAN—Wurlitzer, 3 manuals. Free. Kaye Borkowski; 414/529-0691.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

PASTORS:

Balge, Daniel, from civilian chaplaincy, Germany, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Franzmann, Thomas B., from Our Redeemer, Santa Barbara, Calif., to WELS gift planning counselor, Milwaukee, Wis.

Gieschen, Norbert A., from St. John, Fremont, Wis., to retirement.

Kant, Timothy E., from Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis., to Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.

Kolterjahn, Darrick P., from Our Savior, Holidaysburg, Pa., to St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Lau, David B., to Christ Our Savior, Angleton, Tex. (shared time)

Purdue, Guy R., from Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.

Schaewe, Paul E., from Our Savior, Perry, Mich., to St. John, Bay City, Mich.

Schaffer, Dale H., to Faith, Austin/Trinity, Dexter, Minn.

Schamber, Stephen P., from Faith, Tacoma, Wash., to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.

Schmugge, Karl M., from Redeemer, Pembroke, Ontario, to Christ, Columbia, Md.

WELS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING HOLIDAYS

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod administration building will be closed on these dates in 1995:

January 2—New Year's Day

April 14—Good Friday

May 29—Memorial Day

July 3-4—Independence Day

September 4—Labor Day

November 23-24—Thanksgiving

December 25-26—Christmas

You can leave messages on voice mail, 414/ 256-3888, or FAX 414/256-3899

The talents

Matthew 25:14-30

Mark E. Braun

Thomas Jefferson considered it a self-evident truth that “all men are created equal,” but one look around is enough to convince us we aren’t equal in likes or looks or skills. God gave us our minds and abilities, but not the same abilities, and not in equal amounts.

So too with the Holy Spirit’s gifts. There are different kinds of gifts, Paul said. Like parts of the human body, we don’t all have the same function. (We’d be in a bad way if we were all one big eyeball.) Each one of us has received grace as Christ has apportioned it.

A generous gift

The man going on a journey gave talents to his servants “according to their ability.” To us, “talent” sounds like an aptitude, but in the parable it was a sum of money—a huge sum; by one estimate, the equivalent of nineteen years’ worth of work. Five talents could be a lifetime’s wages.

Who wouldn’t be thrilled to get that much venture capital? The five-talent man put his wealth to work and earned five talents more, the two-talent man two more. Different gains from different gifts, but a 100 percent return for both, and identical words of praise from their master when he returned.

But it’s risky business putting big money on the line. Wouldn’t it be better just to hold on to it? A popular bit of rabbinical wisdom, which Jesus and his listeners probably knew, commended burying one’s

*Those of us raised to be
cautious in matters of finance
might admire the one-talent man
for playing it safe.
But this servant wasn’t
operating out of prudence.
He never wanted that talent.*

money as one of the safest ways of protecting it. Those of us raised to be cautious in matters of finance might admire the one-talent man for playing it safe. At least the master would get his money back.

An unwanted gift

As it turns out, however, this servant wasn’t operating out of prudence, but out of fear—and mistrust. He never wanted that talent. Having it was a burden,

and he couldn’t wait to give it back. He called his master a “hard man,” but would a “hard man” really entrust thousands of dollars to servants, with no other command but “Do your best”? Of course this servant hadn’t done his best. If safety was his biggest concern, he should have put the money in a passbook account—hardly a shrewd investment strategy. But three percent is still better than none.

The one-talent man didn’t fault his master, “You gave me more than I could handle.” He didn’t complain, “Why didn’t you give me five talents, like the other guy? Then I could have really done something with it.” He hadn’t blown his allowance on fast women or slow horses. He just did nothing.

The heart of the gospel is that God asks us to do nothing to be saved. But the message of this parable is that God is not pleased when the people he has saved do nothing with his gifts.

Next: The sheep and the goats.

Mark Braun teaches at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

Embraced by the Light: spiritual nonsense

Joel C. Gerlach

Finally! On October 23, after a 76-week run, Betty Eadie's *Embraced by The Light* dropped from the New York Times' bestseller list. The book's immense popularity is evidence that the public's appetite for spiritual nonsense is insatiable.

Eadie, a former hypnotherapist, claims that during surgery 20 years ago, she began to hemorrhage, died, went on a tour of heaven, and came back to life again five hours later. Her tour began with a loving embrace from Jesus. Hence the title: *Embraced by The Light*. After the embrace she met an assortment of angels and several departed friends with whom she communicated "telepathically."

Perceptive readers would appreciate an explanation as to how Jesus, who rose bodily from the grave and ascended bodily into heaven, could embrace a disembodied spirit. Eadie offers no explanation.

Eadie also claims that Jesus told her that her death was premature, and that she would have to return to earth again to complete her mission. She agreed to do so after making Jesus promise to take her back again after she completed her mission.

Those who are familiar with God's Word know that his people have every right to hold him to his promises. They also know that it is spiritual arrogance of the worst sort to think that God gives anyone the right to exact promises from him as Eadie says she did.

Embraced by The Light is a blend of New Age beliefs and Mormon doctrines. Eadie professes to be a Mormon. Her visit to heaven confirmed her Mormon belief that all people existed as "spirits in the pre-mortal world." While in heaven she also learned that Eve did not "fall" into sin. She made "a conscious decision to bring about conditions for her progression" (toward becoming a god) including "the conditions necessary for having children—but also to die."

Another confirmation Eadie received in heaven is that God and Jesus are two different beings, not one divine essence. She denies the doctrine of the Trinity, yet claims to have been embraced by *The Light*.

In addition to her distinctively Mormon beliefs, Eadie peppers her book with New Age buzz words, such as "energy fields," "spirit guides," mind control, and the achievement of "harmony" by means of "energies" we control.

Eadie surmises that she was embraced by *The Light*. I believe she was, but she is mistaken about which "light" embraced her. Paul says "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). The revelations she received, which flatly contradict the Bible, certainly did not come from the Holy Spirit.

What a commentary on contemporary society's spiritual poverty that Eadie's book could sell more than two million hardback copies before the paperback edition hit the bookstores—just in time for Christmas.



Joel Gerlach is pastor at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Betty Eadie denies the doctrine of the Trinity, yet claims to have been embraced by The Light.

Should a school sell tickets to a play?

John F. Brug

Our Lutheran elementary school presented a play at a community auditorium. To pay for the costs, money was solicited from outside our church. Literature distributed made it clear the play was put on to entertain, not to proclaim spiritual truth. Our church bulletin claimed it was a financial success. Does that make it God-pleasing?

Presenting secular plays or athletic events is not part of the mission of the church. If a church's school presents such events, open to the public, there is nothing wrong with selling tickets to those who attend. The audience is simply paying admission as they would for any other event they might attend.

If sponsorship is solicited from businesses or individuals in the community, it should be clear that it is not support of the gospel mission of the church, but of a community event that happens to be affiliated with the church. Care should be taken that those outside the church do not receive the impression that they are being asked to subsidize the activities of the church because its members are unwilling to do so.

Your question makes it sound as if this was a fund-raising project of the church. Perhaps you misun-

Care should be taken that those outside the church do not receive the impression that they are being asked to subsidize the activities of the church.

derstood its intention. In general, the aim of such undertakings is entertainment, not fund raising. Undertaken in such a spirit, it would simply be an adiaphoron, a matter neither commanded by God nor displeasing to him.

Will there be animals in heaven?

Since animals do not have immortal souls, we might think the answer is no.

Several facts, however, make one hesitant to be satisfied with a simple "no." Our eternal home is a new earth (Isaiah 65:17ff, 2 Peter

3:13, Revelation 21:1). Isaiah 65:25 speaks of it as a place in which the wolf and the lamb live together peacefully.

This may be figurative language, but one other passage suggests animals might be in our eternal home. Romans 8:21 says that "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage." In this present, sin-cursed world, we inflict suffering on animals, and they inflict suffering on us. At Christ's coming, when this world is freed from the effects of sin, animals too will be freed from suffering.

That text also says the creation will be "brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." That might mean there may be plants and animals in the new earth as there were in the first earth. If there are animals on the new earth, they will be good creatures of God as the animals of the first earth were.

In short, the answer is a cautious "maybe."

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 only through this column.

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

READERS FORUM

Difficult subjects

I wish to express my appreciation for the articles in *Northwestern Lutheran* in the last year on difficult subjects such as child abuse, alcoholism, and homosexuality. Our Lord did not hesitate to openly address such subjects.

Christians need to expand their knowledge and understanding so they can deal with such matters with discipline but also with love.

We fear what we do not know. We cannot have compassion for those we do not understand. Thank you for

blessing your readers in such a way. May the Lord bless you as you guide your publication in its efforts to deal with difficult subjects.

*Marilyn Warskow
Tucson, Ariz.*

The rise and fall of the papacy

"Fading power: The rise and fall of the papacy" [Oct.] points out that the papacy came into existence about 500 AD. Eusebius' *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* indicates that the Bishop of Rome was not preeminent among bishops during the first 300 years of the church. In fact, Eusebius states, "After the martyrdom of Paul and Peter the first man to be appointed bishop of Rome was Linus." Peter may have been the first bishop, but it may also have been Paul, despite his being in prison.

Eusebius never refers to anyone as pope, but he quotes from a letter written by a bishop of Alexandria who refers to his predecessor as "our blessed pope Heraclas." A footnote on the word "pope" in C. A. Williamson's translation reads: "This title, identical with our own 'papa,' was not reserved for the Bishop of Rome, to whom we first find it applied two generations later." From the context, one gathers that a pope was a learned and orthodox student of theology, with an aptitude for teaching others.

*Richard H. Engelmann
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Use nouns instead of adjectives

Regarding Mrs. Sonntag's encouraging article, "Sarah's struggle" [Nov.], I believe strongly that we Christians serve those who listen to us better when we use nouns and verbs, instead of adjectives, to describe the sin of homosexuality. To say that Sarah "learned her husband was homosexual" or that someone "is gay" minimizes this sin's sinfulness. Let's say, "Her husband was a homosexual," or "her husband was committing homosexuality," or "my Christian friend struggles against homosexuality." We don't say someone is "thief-ish" but "is a thief"; not "you're truthfully challenged," but "you lied."

When the law's sharp edge cuts through all of Satan's tricks, the gospel of full forgiveness for every sin truly heals us. Let's all love thieves, homosexuals, liars—each other—with

clear diction so the news of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection brings maximum joy and restoration to the penitent.

*Nathan Cordes
Mason, Ohio*

Statistics' sources

Shame on *Northwestern Lutheran!* The article on Americans abandoning their family's religion (Nov., p.28) cited no source for the statistics quoted. Neither did the article mention who drew the conclusions. Knowledge of sources determines credibility of conclusions.

I see no way the statistics quoted in the article can cause anyone to conclude that ecumenism is the cause for people leaving their family's faith—particularly Jews. How can Christian denominational sameness possibly affect a non-Christ-believing religion?

One might consider what percentage of the population has moved from the vicinity in which they were raised. That could account for the people who have left the church they were born into.

*Darlene Stern
Fredonia, Wis.*

Sources were "*The Presbyterian Presence: The Twentieth-Century Experience*" (Westminster/John Knox Press) and "*The Restructuring of American Religion*" (Princeton University Press).

Misleading headline

It was with some dismay that I read the headline "No need to worry about keeping teens out of trouble" [Nov.]. Lakeside Lutheran Honor Society members should not be portrayed as "trouble makers." While I understand the message conveyed in the article, a casual reader might perceive these youth as something other than what they are, redeemed children of God who are using their talents in service to their Lord. I suggest that in the future the headlines be more carefully scrutinized so the proper focus be given. What a blessing that these Lakeside youth gave of their time and effort in

August to assist in mission work in the Rib Mountain area.

*Paul M. Hartwig
Appleton, Wisconsin*

In the interest of conciseness, letters are edited. 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.*

February '95

- 1. Luke 1:1-25
- 2. Lk. 1:26-38
- 3. Lk. 1:39-56
- 4. Lk. 1:57-80
- 5. Lk. 2:1-20
- 6. Lk. 2:21-40
- 7. Lk. 2:41-52
- 8. Lk. 3:1-22
- 9. Lk. 3:23—4:13
- 10. Lk. 4:14-30
- 11. Lk. 4:31-44
- 12. Lk. 5:1-11
- 13. Lk. 5:12-26
- 14. Lk. 5:27—6:11
- 15. Lk. 6:12-36
- 16. Lk. 6:37-49
- 17. Lk. 7:1-17
- 18. Lk. 7:18-35
- 19. Lk. 7:36—8:3
- 20. Lk. 8:4-21
- 21. Lk. 8:22-39
- 22. Lk. 8:40-56
- 23. Lk. 9:1-17
- 24. Lk. 9:18-36
- 25. Lk. 9:37-56
- 26. Genesis 1, 2
- 27. Gen. 3
- 28. Gen. 4, 5

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

Born that way

What are little boys and girls made of?
Snakes 'n' snails 'n' puppy dog tails?
Sugar 'n' spice 'n' everything nice?
Halos 'n' hugs 'n' tender heart tugs?
Secrets 'n' sins 'n' devilish grins?

No. No. No/yes. Yes.

It's been nearly a quarter of a century since I held a two-week-old child. Now that I have held and admired my two-week-old grandson repeatedly the past several days, I've had the chance to reflect on how we are when we are born.

The doting grandpa in me sees only good things. "He's sooo cute." "He's getting stronger each day." "Just look at him sleeping so peacefully." I've got tons of pictures to show.

The child of God in me praises God because Jacob is "fearfully and wonderfully made."

The realist in me knows that not all his cries are innocent and wonders what temptations and troubles lie ahead for him.

What brings me to write like this, however, is not some sudden urge to share my personal blessing and musings with you but to get you thinking about what comes along with being born into this world.

I'm thinking specifically of some letters and responses to articles in *Northwestern Lutheran* about homosexuality, in which some readers suggested or even insisted that people are born that way.

"I was born a homosexual, a bisexual, an alcoholic, a liar, a misfit."

The argument fits more than one human characteristic. Curiously, too, scientific research seems to be lending some support to the position.

I'm not sure about what science has or has not discovered on this score. Nor do I find it particularly helpful to know. God has told us clearly that we (all of us) were "born that way." Sinful is normal—from birth. Indeed, "I was . . . sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). "Flesh gives birth to flesh" (John 3:6). "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature [flesh]" (Romans 7:18).

Sinful is normal, but sinful is not right. Sinful is not excusable. Sinful is not how God meant us to be.

That's why the highlight of the days with my two-week-old grandson came on Sunday morning when I baptized him. He was born full of sin but now has been born again of water and the Spirit, washed clean of his sin. He is a child of God in Christ.

Now a struggle lies ahead for him as it does with all of us. We still live in our sin-tainted flesh in a sin-tainted world ruled by the sin-tempting devil. Daily we face the temptation to act out our sinful inclinations. Daily we fail to achieve the purity God demands.

Daily, therefore, we repent of our sins and rejoice in the reality of our baptism. We have burdens or "crosses to bear" as one person wrote who was "born that way." But also with him we "appreciate the love of the Savior for setting us free from this and all sins."

Set free by Christ, we will also learn to live free in Christ. We do this by the power of his gospel in Word and sacrament.

Gary J. Baumber



Gary Baumber, editor of *Northwestern Lutheran*, with his grandson.

*Sinful is normal
—from birth.
But sinful
is not right.
Sinful is not
excusable.
Sinful is not
how God meant
us to be.*

WHAT CAN I DO TO FILL THIS PULPIT?



*More than you ever
thought possible!*



Let your love for Jesus move you to fill pulpits, classrooms,
and help spread the gospel of Jesus Christ
through careful estate planning and tax-wise gifting.

Consider how you can further the Lord's work through . . .

- a bequest in your will or living trust
- a charitable trust or annuity that provides lifetime income
- life insurance
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There are ways to turn your Christian desires into reality!
Don't let another pulpit remain empty!

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Make an angel laugh

Eric S. Hartzell

It must be wonderful to hear an angel laugh. Head back. Mouth open. Eyes slit. Uncontrollable joy. It must be wonderful to see a group of angels celebrating together like school boys who just won the championship.

We can make them behave this way.

Jesus said, "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). Sinners who repent make angels laugh and celebrate.

Repenting doesn't make us smile

It takes more muscles to frown than to smile, but repenting doesn't make us smile much. To have to change our minds—that's what the word repent actually means—and admit we have changed. That's hard. The muscles tense in a frown—never mind the extra effort in frowning!

It's the admitting part that really gets us. To look down the barrel of the argument and realize that our strongly spoken point was wrong. To see the mess caused by harsh words or actions and realize past all the self-excusing voices to the contrary, "I caused that." It's hard to admit we are wrong. It's hard to do it out loud, to family or friends and particularly to enemies, and especially to God.

It's possible to say an "I'm sorry" that has icicles on it. It's also possible to say one that is red hot. But they don't make angels laugh, and no one else is happy either.

Repenting belongs to each of us

We have to wonder whether the angels are doing much laughing and celebrating these days. Sackcloth is out of style. Ash heaps are lonely places. Hearts get broken, but not many are torn in sorrow as the Lord suggested to his prophet Joel. Forefingers are uncon-

Angels' laughter is contagious. When they laugh, we end up laughing too.

trollable when guilt is suggested. Hackles go up. Messengers are shot.

It's easy to sit and wish piously that some derelict or drunk would get things turned around so the angels could laugh and rejoice again. The angels would rejoice! But the angels' joy would quickly be overcome by grief at our refusal to know that the "one sinner who repents" is each of us. We need to repent. Often.

Repenting makes angels rejoice

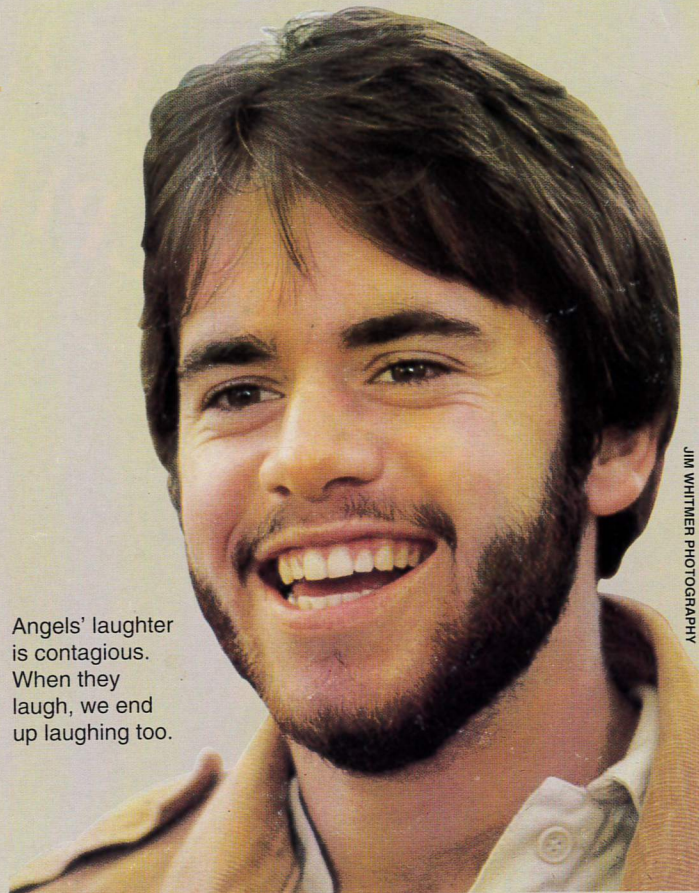
As the hymn writer penned it, when the angels looked at Jesus they "watched with sad and wondering eyes to see the approaching sacrifice." They carried the message of Christmas to our world. They carried Lazarus to heaven. They know about our sins and our weaknesses. They also know about our Savior's patience and mercy and love. They don't keep a tally of our sins and stop their celebrating when we reach the unforgivable number, whatever that might be. They simply rejoice when one sinner repents.

It really is wonderful when you think about it. We can affect the behavior of angels in heaven. We can make them laugh and celebrate.

Something else. Angels' laughter is contagious. When they laugh, we end up laughing too.

Try making them laugh, and you'll see.

Eric Hartzell is pastor at East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.



JIM WHITMER PHOTOGRAPHY