

No pleasure in hell p.16

NORTHWESTERN

February 1995

LUTHERAN



Not
necessarily
angels

p.6

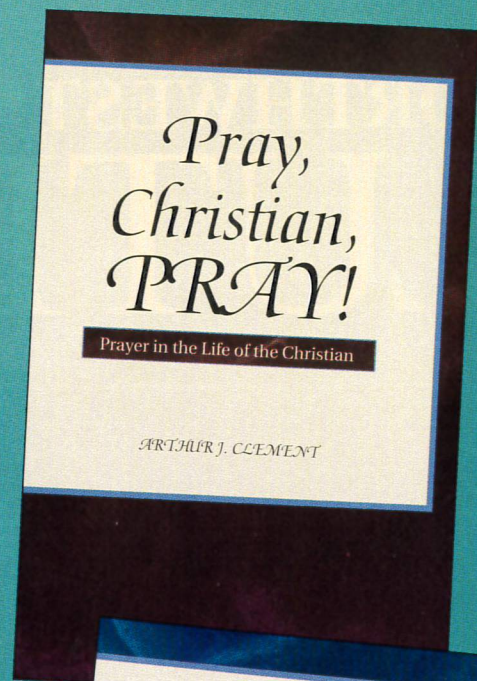


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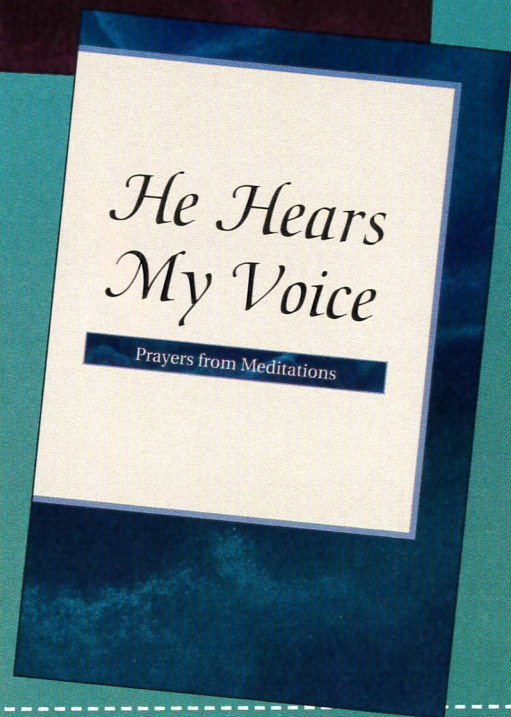
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“If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Satan’s insinuation threatens to overwhelm the young man from Galilee.

How can a starving Savior gain a following when people’s desires and decisions are dictated largely by physical wants? What good sense it makes to demonstrate that he has the power to supply bread. What a noble cause! What an effective way to launch your ministry, Jesus! Satan sympathizes with human needs to undo God’s plan for redeeming and restoring sinners.

Wielding the truth, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God,” Jesus overcame the temptation. He focused on the will of the Father and sustained his perfect righteousness to substitute for us as our Redeemer from sin. What’s more, his words bolster us when Satan seeks to entangle us.

Luring with logic

Failing to dominate Jesus and wreck mankind’s salvation with one sweep, Satan seeks to get us into his grip one by one, at times with the same logic he employed against Jesus in the wilderness.

None of us is Jesus, but Satan is aware we too yearn to extend God’s kingdom and that our wish to reach people can set us up for temptation by what seems desirable—even noble.

Turning stones into bread is no temptation, because it’s impossible for us. For Jesus it was a possibility, and a real temptation. It is in the devil’s interest to dangle actual possibilities before us—likely and plausible.

Deceiving with the desirable

Therefore he plants thoughts like these: “When



MRS. KEVIN SCHIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Beguiled by bread

Robert H. Hochmuth

*“If you are the Son of God,
tell these stones to become bread.”*

Matthew 4:3

the tempter proposes: “When you have a family God wants you to provide for, no one can really be expected to be rigid about principles. If godliness endangers bread—well, a person’s got to have bread.” What a struggle!

Jesus stood on that spot for us, and he will not leave us or forsake us. What relief, what satisfaction to stand with him—putting bread second, because life with God is number one.

you provide people’s necessities, it’s easier to change their religious ideas and lead them back to God.” Or, “You’ve got to offer a religion that makes discipleship a paying proposition. ‘Daily bread’ is, after all, a religious subject. If you want to be more effective in serving God, pay more attention to bread.”

Such ideas contain elements of truth that make the logic more deceptive. If Satan were to come on with: “I’ll lead you into something evil,” we would not be susceptible. Rather, he attempts to get a hold on us from behind the desirables.

To be sure, the Christian heart will not ignore people’s physical needs, yet we need to maintain God’s priorities so that we are not drawn into an ultimately futile crusade directed at temporal needs. We do well to stand close to our Lord and his Word, remembering people’s prime need, and making sure our efforts help them regain life with God.

Squeezing the struggler

Satan tempts us also in another way. When a child of God has to choose between conscience and job,

Robert Hochmuth is interim pastor at Good Shepherd, Pleasanton, Calif.

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

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BITS & PIECES

■ **Not necessarily angels** (page 6)
—America is preoccupied with angels, it seems. A check of the best-selling books list or a visit to any gift shop is evidence. But the interest doesn't mean America is turning to God. Instead, suggests Paul Kelm, it may show that "Americans are becoming more spiritual. Not religious. Spiritual." In fact, he suggests, the popularity of angels may be an attempt to be spiritual without facing God.

■ **American prayer** (page 18) — School prayer has become a hotly debated issue. The trouble is, says Vernon Gerlach, that the kind that many of its supporters are advocating is the one-size-fits-all American prayer. He calls it bland, generic, characterless, and selfish, because it centers on man instead of God.

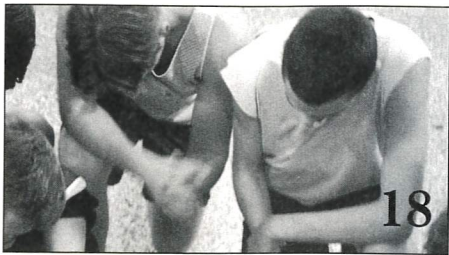
■ **Amazing Grace** (page 12) begins a tour of WELS churches with a visit to one of the synod's founding churches—Grace, in downtown Milwaukee. From there we'll crisscross America, telling—and showing—the story of other congregations. We'd like to hear from you, too. Tell us about your church. And don't forget to send pictures.

■ **The sheep and the goats** (page 30) ends a series on parables of judgment. We thank author Mark Braun.

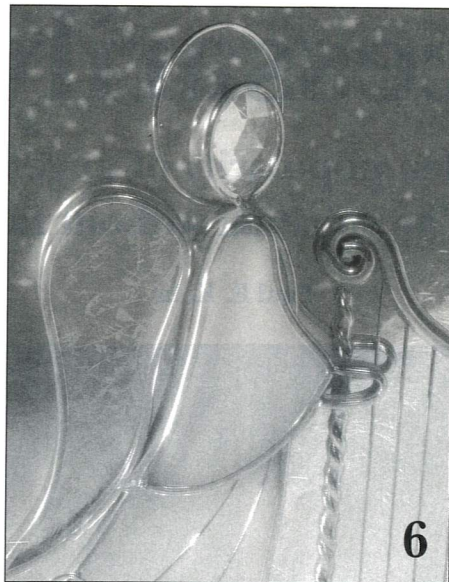
Dorothy Sonntag



Amazing Grace



American prayer



Not necessarily angels

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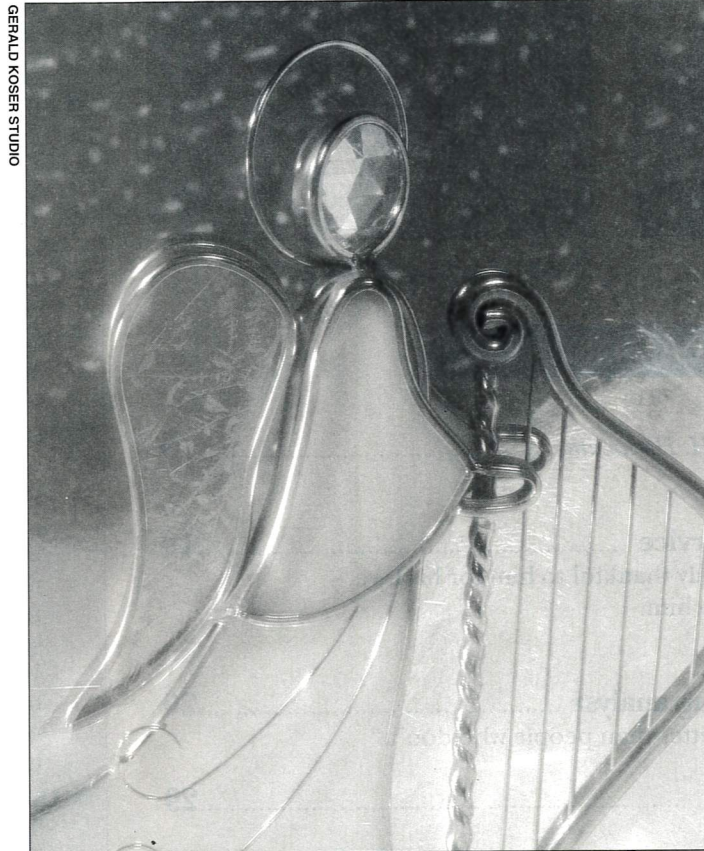
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Not necessarily angels

Is the sudden popularity of angels the latest attempt to be spiritual without facing God?

Paul E. Kelm



GERALD KOSEH STUDIO

As we approach the turn of the millennium, Americans are becoming more spiritual. Not religious. Spiritual. "Spiritual" describes something personal. It can be Buddhist, Muslim, Native American, or an eclectic experience all one's own. It can even be Christian. "Spiritual" defines the search for the supernatural amid disillusionment with the material world. It may mean looking deep within or groping for something way out. It need not be rational and, therefore, is not subject to verification. A November 1994 *Newsweek* poll reported: 58 percent of Americans feel the need to experience spiritual growth, 33 percent have had a religious or mystical experience, 20 percent have had a revelation from God in the last year, and 13 percent have seen or sensed the presence of an angel.

All sorts of angels

An angel? One of those powerful protectors Jesus linked with little ones? A member of that glorious choir in heaven that John reported? An awe-inspiring messenger such as those who announced Jesus' birth and resurrection? Well, not necessarily.

Maybe one of those endearing cherubs that popu-

late Renaissance art. How about stately, winged seraphs whose statuary likenesses identify cathedrals and cemeteries? Or the noble warriors who defend God's people in the contemporary warfare of a Frank Peretti novel? Not necessarily.

Sophy Burnham, author of three recent books about angels, finds comfort in the fact that nearly all religions have angels of sorts. "I didn't care about angels at the birth of Christ," she says.

"I wanted to know if there were angels for me. If all cultures have angels, then it means something." Angels have become the latest argument for combining all religions into one mystical *mélange*. Self-styled theologian Matthew Fox claims, "Angels are unifying forces of different religions."

Angels are intermediaries. The name means "messenger." The sudden popularity of angels may just be the latest attempt to be spiritual without facing God. Saints were the medieval intermediaries that assuaged guilt and interceded with the Almighty, but obscured Christ. People have looked to gurus and prophets for answers because they couldn't conceive of a God who is personal and loving—not a distant force—because they didn't know the Savior who is

both God's revelation of himself and God's sacrifice to reconcile us to himself. Sophy Burnham says, "Our Judaeo-Christian or Muslim God is very removed. Therefore we have angels as intermediaries." People pray to angels for help and look to angels for answers, investing in them the attributes reserved for God.

New Age angels

It appears that angels are the latest effort of the New Age movement to entice Christians. "Angel" becomes just another name for "spirit guide" or "exalted master"—a subjective source of individual revelation on the path to personal divinity. Musician Carlos Santana, who invokes angels at the beginning of a concert, claims: "My goal is to awaken people to their fullest potential. Angels help me enhance life on this planet."

Leia Stinnett claims the Archangel Michael came to her with the mission she has translated into a meditative "Circle of Angels." From her home in the New Age mecca, Sedona, Ariz., she says:

"My greatest gift from the angels to this planet is the ability to help people recognize that we are all truly one people, in one family of light." She, like Sally Sharp, author of *100 Ways to Attract Angels*, has experienced the occult phenomenon called "automatic writing."

Artist Karyn Martin-Kuri identifies angels with the muses of creativity, then offers: "Classical representations of angels often reflect biblical warnings about the dangers of sinning. Modern artists often focus on creating angels that ask us to protect the environment and our fellow man. . . . The heavens are asking us to create a new place." Healings and out-of-body experiences, staples of New Age mysticism, are identified with angels by spiritual mentors like Daya Mata, personal guru to Robin Williams and George Harrison. Sightings of angels have almost replaced UFO sightings in the media realm of "unsolved mysteries."

Perhaps the ultimate irony comes from singer/song-

writer Rickie Lee Jones, who never goes to church or prays, but believes in angels. "Maybe our believing in them, conceiving of them, gives them existence," she suggests. Poor angels. They now owe their being, not to the Creator, but to mortal mystics who perceive them into existence! That is the pseudo-theology typical of this subjective, relativistic generation.

Scripture's angels

What is missing in this current preoccupation with angels is their testimony to Jesus Christ. The appearance of angels in Scripture is part of God's salvation story. Not many people in Old or New Testament saw angels, and—unlike modern objects of angelic atten-

tion—most who did were terrified by the experience. The angels of Scripture renounce attempts to glorify them (Revelation 22:8-9), and they share our wonder at God's saving grace (1 Peter 1:12). God's angels are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14), not inspirers of anti-Christian sentiment and patrons of

one-world religious mysticism. Psalm 103 describes angels as "You mighty ones who do God's bidding, who obey his Word." Whatever won't square with God's Word cannot come from God's angels.

There is another explanation for this rash of angelitis. Paul wrote: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light," he adds (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Thank God that he sends angels to guard you, but trust only God's Word to guide you. Look forward to the day when God's angels will escort you into his presence for Jesus' sake; but don't let any so-called angel take you anywhere else.

Paul Kelm is campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

*What is missing in this
current preoccupation
with angels is their
testimony to Jesus Christ.*

MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

“You do not want to leave too, do you?”

Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered

him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

JOHN 6:66-69



Stand up and be counted

Be rocklike in confessing Jesus. . . . Jesus has the words of eternal life

Gary P. Baumler

A natural born leader, a faithful follower, Simon Peter was the disciples' disciple, the confessors' confessor. He was the Rock. When others wavered, he stood firm. While others stammered, he spoke up. When he made a point, the eleven other disciples nodded in approval.

So Peter shines in the account before us. Other so-called disciples were leaving Jesus and going back to the way things were before Jesus hit the scene. The fad was over, the expectations unfulfilled. They had concluded that they could not accept Jesus' teachings. They had wanted to make him their king, but he disappeared into the hills. They looked for a sign. He offered bread from heaven. They said, "Give us this bread." And he said, "I am the Bread of life."

"From that time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." What, then, about the twelve, the disciples closest to Jesus? "You do not want to leave me too, do you?" Jesus asked.

Peter speaks up

The desired answer came back without hesitation and with a comforting confession to boot. The twelve remained loyal, though one, Judas, was a hypocrite. They knew Jesus and they believed. Peter, steadfast, ready-to-be-counted Peter, put it into words for all of them. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" he responded. "You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Peter spoke up and confessed his faith in Jesus.

Oh for the strength of conviction of a Peter! You and I need all of his kind of spirit we can find. More and more you and I see fewer and fewer people who wish to stay loyal to the Jesus Peter knew. We are a part of a Christianity whose growth has rarely if at all

matched the growth of the population in recent years. We're losing ground. The Christian Church does not enjoy widespread popularity in our society. Again in our day people want bread, but they are rarely satisfied with the Bread of life. They want money but ignore the riches of heaven. Furthermore, they want you and me to believe they are right and to follow their ways.

Speak up like Peter

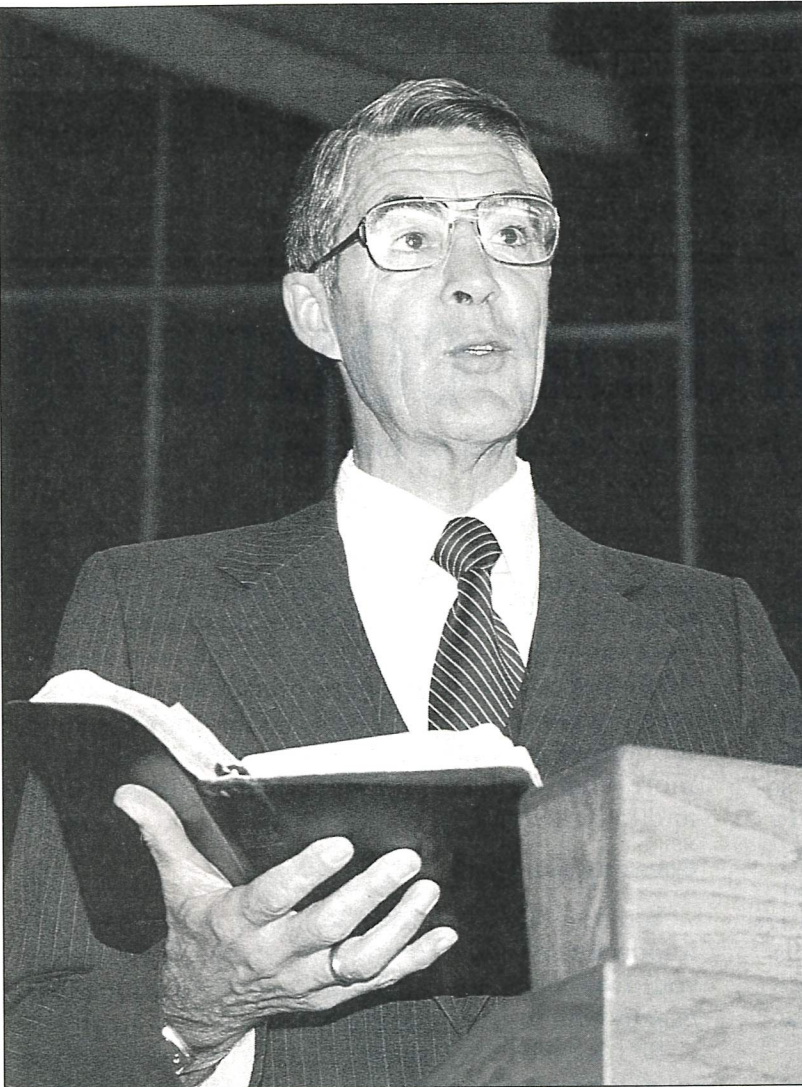
You do not want to leave Jesus too, do you? Equally important, you do want to speak up like Peter, don't you? Don't you want to put into words for all to hear exactly who Jesus is whom you follow?

Be rocklike in confessing Jesus. Where else can you go to get what Jesus gives? Who else cares a whit about you beyond this life, if at all in this life? Jesus cares. Jesus has the words of eternal life. Whoever believes in him, he promises, has everlasting life.

He promises eternal life? How can he do that? His words give eternal life? How can they do that? They can and he can because he is, as Peter said it, "the Holy One of God." God chose him, his own Son, to live a holy life as a human being in our place. God selected and consecrated him, his own Son, for the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Then God told us about Jesus with his own words. Trust his words and you will trust him. Trust him, the Lord Jesus, and you have—with Peter—eternal life. Confess and tell others his words and you become an eternal spokesman like Peter.

Gary Baumler is editor of Northwestern Lutheran and the synod's Director of Communications.

JIM WHITMER PHOTOGRAPHY



Public ministers deserve respect

Wayne D. Mueller

“Do we have to call you pastor?” The question about how to address public ministers often comes from those who do not want a title to stand between them and their spiritual shepherd. A desire to feel close to our pastor isn’t bad. We want our spiritual leaders to be friendly, approachable, down-to-earth.

God doesn’t want his representatives to be officious, either. Public ministers are not to covet titles and worldly respect. Jesus condemned the Pharisees’ desire to be called “Rabbi” because it

stemmed from false motives. Peter warned elders not to lord it over their flocks. Paul told overseers not to be overbearing.

Honor

Still, even with today’s casual attitudes, few of us would think of calling our doctor “Chris,” or the judge in traffic court “Lynn.” So why do some want to address the man who represents God in their life by his first name? Before we can get at that question, let’s look at the larger issue. The question behind the question is, “How does God want me to honor his representatives?”

There is no question that God wants us to honor our public ministers. And the more closely the work of our called servants is connected to the Word, the greater the honor is to be. In regard to those who held positions similar to our modern pastors, Paul

wrote: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17).

Titles

It is wrong for public ministers to seek honor for themselves. Yet the Bible makes it clear that those they serve are to respect them willingly. A part of that respect is the title by which we address them or the name we give to their form of ministry. Scripture uses many different titles of respect to honor public ministers. Among these are prophet, apostle, teacher (rabbi), evangelist, pastor, overseer, elder, and deacon.

Notice how respectfully the apostle Paul speaks of the men who went along with Timothy to gather offerings from the Corinthians: "As for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it" (2 Corinthians 8:23,24).

The current anti-authority mood in America must not dictate how we honor God's public ministers. In fact, societal disrespect for authority provides an added incentive for Christians. As salt and light, we will look for ways to contrast our open respect for church leaders with the casual impiety of the world.

Physical support

Honor, of course, is more than a title. In real life, it must have a working definition. Ministerial titles are only symbols of the respect for church leaders that Scripture defines in more practical terms.

Paying our ministers is one very practical way of honoring them. The Small Catechism's Table of Duties cites Galatians 6:6: "Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor."

Preachers should not be out to pad their own nests. Those who pursue dishonest gain and lovers of money don't belong in the public service of the church.

At the same time, congregations must occupy themselves with what they don't want their ministers to be preoccupied with. That means honoring their

public ministers by providing adequately for their physical needs. The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. A fair salary provides a living that allows the minister to share all good things enjoyed by those he serves.

Obedience

Another way to honor spiritual leaders is to obey them. In the last terrible days "People will be lovers of themselves . . . disobedient . . . without self-control" (2 Timothy 3:1-3). We are not surprised that pagans hate the word "obey." But those who call Jesus Lord are not put off by God's call to obey their public ministers.

We cannot divorce honor from obedience. God asks his representatives to point out sin, correct, discipline, and call us to repentance. That's why he asks us to obey them: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Our daily lives register the respect we hold for our public ministers. To obey those who teach the Word is to obey the Word itself. So obedience means following the example of our leaders, especially their example of faith in the Word. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7).

The highest honor

When Jesus sent the 72 disciples out to evangelize, he told them: "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16). The highest honor we can give to Jesus' representatives, then, is to listen to what they say about Jesus.

So the real issue is not what title we assign to our public ministers. The titles, salaries, and obedience we give to public ministers serve a higher goal. When these called servants speak God's Word to us, it is really God who is talking. The respect we have for the message rubs off on the messenger.

Wayne Mueller is administrator of Board for Parish Services.

*The highest honor we can give to
Jesus' representatives is to listen
to what they say about Jesus.*



Amazing Grace

An old congregation gets a new start

Dorothy J. Sonntag

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has over 1200 congregations in 50 states. Join us for a visit to one of them.

Although many urban churches are struggling to survive, Grace, in downtown Milwaukee, Wis., is thriving. Its formula for success: committed members and ministers, urban renewal, and grace—God’s amazing grace.

Pastor John Muehlhaeuser started the congrega-



Line up for food

Helping hands at a pancake breakfast



PHOTOS BY FRITZ HORN

tion in 1849, a year before the Wisconsin Synod’s beginning. In its early years the church flourished. In 1875, for instance, there were 132 baptisms and 52 confirmations.

Membership declined, however, as the area around the church deteriorated. Bea Groskopf, a lifetime member, recalled that for many years there were no baptisms.

She attended the congregation’s school before it closed in the ’30s. “We were surrounded by the Blatz brewery,” she remembered. “It was a scary neighborhood. They closed the school because no one would send their kids down there.” Downtown Milwaukee was dying, and Grace appeared to be dying with it.

In 1954 the congregation nearly closed. “Membership had dropped significantly,” Pastor James Huebner explained. “They had no money. They had to relocate or disband.” Instead, they decided to stay.

God blessed that decision. In the late ’60s, the city began an ambitious urban renewal project. The old tenements surrounding Grace were replaced with apartment buildings that attracted urban professionals. Milwaukee School of Engineering, across the street, expanded. A performing arts center, new office



Pastor Huebner teaches during Bible study week



Juliann Jornt presides at an OWLS meeting

buildings, and a shopping mall made downtown Milwaukee an inviting place to work and live.

“People working downtown found our church. Now they’re bringing friends,” said Huebner. “God did it—we didn’t.”

A four-part plan

So that those people and their friends will want to return, Huebner plans carefully. “We work at worship—at the liturgy, the music, the message,” he explained. “That’s number one.

“Then we also work at adult education. The key emphasis is on Bible class, which is very carefully planned—curriculum, method, setting—everything.

“The third thing,” he continued, “we make sure to include fun and fellowship. We’ve done stuff that’s pretty wacky, like a 1940s radio show. Our talent show is an annual event, also our golf tournament and bowling outing.”

“Finally, we involve people in service. The sooner we can get new members involved, the more they’ll feel like part of the congregation.”

Grace, Milwaukee, Wis.

Organized 1849

James Huebner, *pastor*

Frederic Horn,

minister of discipleship

569 members, 475 communicants



An urban ministry

Grace tailors its evangelism to its urban ministry. “We’re surrounded by apartment buildings,” noted family minister Fritz Horn, “and we can’t go into them to hang flyers on doorknobs. So we put a board out on the sidewalk advertising services, and we send out posters to surrounding businesses on holidays. And we have an active evangelism follow-up program for visitors.”

“A key thing is that people want to feel welcome when they come to church,” Horn continued. “We try to do that.” He believes making people feel at home is especially important because many of Grace’s members are single.

“Nobody’s related to anybody else, and nobody knows anybody else,” Huebner explained, “so we plan activities that will draw Christians together.”

Paul Beck, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, joined Grace four years ago. “Most congregations cater to families,” he said. “Grace appeals to singles, to students and urban professionals, to the divorced and widowed—people who might not fit into another church. It’s a very friendly church. You’re immediately accepted.”

Longtime members also accept newcomers. “It makes me feel so good to see young people come to church—you have to welcome them,” said Bea Groskopf, “and we’re glad to see more people, after going through a time when our membership was very low. Besides, we’re just a friendly bunch.”

Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor of Northwestern Lutheran.

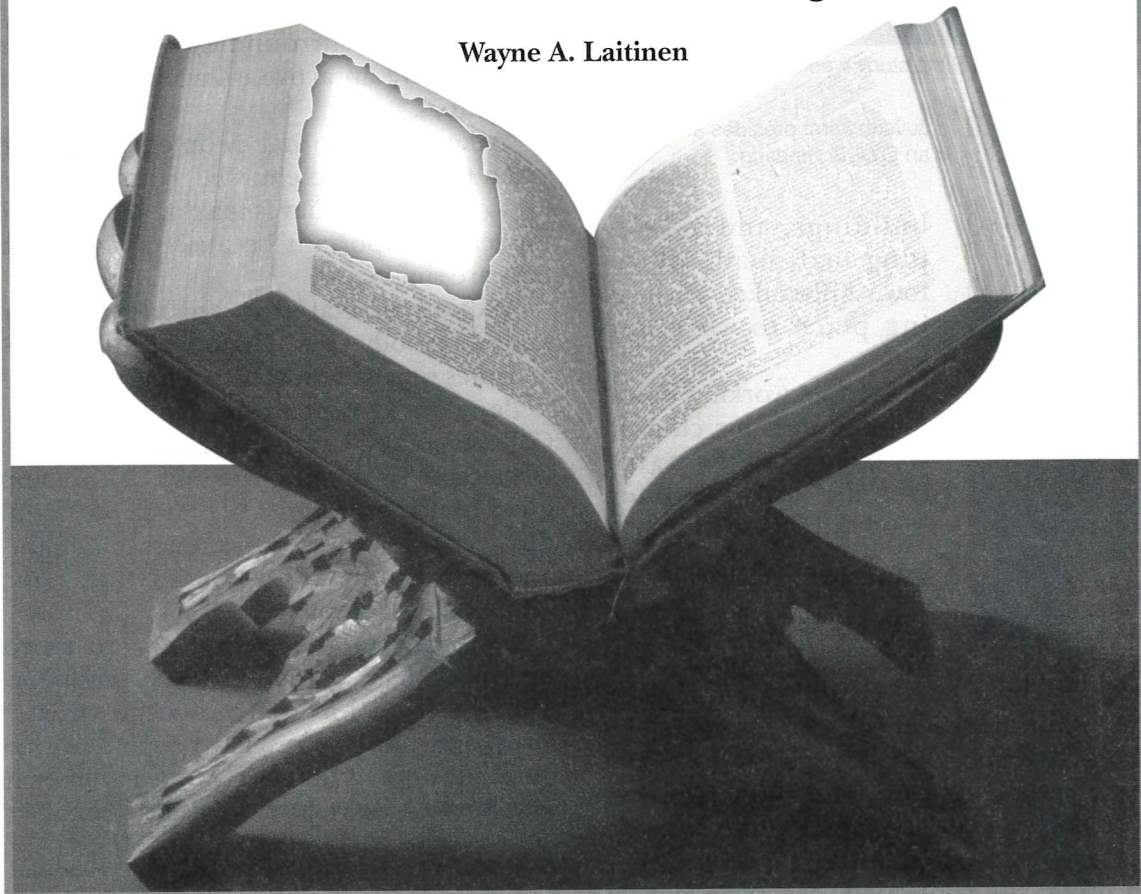


Tug-o-war at the church picnic

To tell the truth

We misuse God's name when we change his truth

Wayne A. Laitinen



Our church in Toledo has a stone wall on the sides of the steps leading up to the church. One morning, I noticed a stone from the wall lying on the sidewalk. I picked up the stone and put it back into the vacant socket.

The next morning I discovered that half of the stone facade had been dismantled. All the pieces lay in a heap upon the sidewalk.

Apparently someone waiting at the bus stop was removing the removable. First the loose stone, then the mortar socket became vulnerable. Then another stone, and so forth, until a fair portion of the wall was reduced to rubble.

Disregarding truth

It reminded me of a man who contended that the

plain words of Genesis, chapters one and two, are offensive to intelligent people. He preferred to understand the creation narrative as symbolic rather than historical. "After all," he asserted, "it's faith in Jesus that saves, not faith in the six-day creation."

When he was asked if Adam and Eve were only symbolic people, he answered, "Likely."

"How about their son, Seth?"

"Maybe."

"And his descendent, Noah?"

"I wouldn't rule it out."

"And Abraham?"

"Perhaps."

"And King David?"

"Perhaps."

"And what about the son of David? Is he only a symbolic figure?"

Destroying truth

To think that the demise of the wall outside of the church began with a stone the size of my fist! That was one repair we made quickly. The wall, you see, was attached to our church.

The father of lies may not ask for much at first: only a small stone or a bit of mortar. His objective, at any rate, is to remove the chief cornerstone.

By destroying God's Word, his good name, Satan destroys us. He plants darkness where there is light; doubt where there is faith; offense where there is pardon; discord where there is unity; death where there is life, and despair where there is hope.

Creating truth

The general anesthetic which seems to work best on our generation is the notion that truth is neither something "from above" nor absolute. Truth is human perception. Truth is my interpretation. Your interpretation, though it may be the opposite of mine, is no less true. And so our world drifts towards the waterfall, each on his own little plank, refusing the anchor and ignoring the safe harbor.

When it comes to leading us away from God's truth, Satan's devices are legion.

If I don't like the truth that I've broken God's law, the adversary will lead me away from the foot of Jesus' cross. In his estimation, all I may need is a second opinion from a spiritual defense attorney who can compassionately plead that the defendant is the real victim.

For those whose beliefs are governed by the feelings of others, Satan offers a loophole: God's law may be invalidated by the way it was presented—similar to the way an airtight, criminal case is thrown out of court because the defendant wasn't read his rights.

Many, like Judas, never stop accusing themselves, "Look what you've done!" long enough to hear the comforting truth of the gospel of Jesus' forgiveness.

Questioning truth

Pragmatists, like Pontius Pilate, ask, "What is truth?" In the nuts and bolts kingdom of this world, truth belongs to the one holding the gun, the most

votes, the convincing sound bite, the best spin doctors, the highest office, or the most cash. If a man spends his whole energy building his kingdom in this world, should it come as any surprise that he can look the Son of God straight in the eye and ask out loud, "What is truth?"

Some may be confused by all the different religions which claim the Bible as the source of truth. If they do not test the spirits against Scripture, the cloud of confusion will never clear.

In a similar vein, there is that scholastic snobbery that views the truth as the unattainable higher ground. Unpopular or uncomfortable passages of the Bible are approached with the ancient question, "Did God really say . . . ?" They find refuge in the perverse humility which shrugs and says, "Seven out of ten Bible scholars disagree."

The devil is not too proud to accept charity, either.

If a Christian wrings his hands and apologizes in advance for the offense of the gospel, the world is led to believe that offense is a legitimate response. To be sure, it is the natural response. But natural man dare not chart our course.

Jesus is the real truth

Jesus assures us that truth is beyond and independent of us. He says, "I am . . . the truth." He also tells us where it may be found: "If you hold to my teaching . . . you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31,32).

Free from what? Free from everything that shackles me! Free from the demonic blindness which asks, "What is truth?" Free from confusion. Free to see my sin. Free to confess my sins and run to the Rock, which is higher than I. Free to believe that God's righteous wrath against me was poured out upon my dear Lord Jesus Christ. Free to call on the name of the Lord, to cry out, "Abba, Father!" Free to be buried with him in baptism and rise with him to live forever in joyful service to him!

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

Second Commandment
You shall not misuse the name
of the Lord your God.
What does this mean?
We should fear and love God
that we do not use his name to curse, swear,
lie or deceive, or use it superstitiously,
but call upon God's name in every trouble,
pray, praise, and give thanks.

Hell!

I don't take pleasure in preaching about hell

Carl R. Henkel

In my earlier years, I relished the chance to preach about hell. That's where all those wretched, godless, wicked, sinister, depraved, and corrupt degenerates of our world deserve to go, right? Let's flush the globe of all deviants so that we hallowed folks can piously praise the Lord!

That may not be what I said, but it may, regrettably, be close to what I was thinking. A good number of folks delight in such preaching: "Great sermon, Reverend! You really told 'em this morning!"

Hell is real

I don't take pleasure in preaching about hell anymore.

—Not because I have changed my view about its existence. Hell is real. It is clearly taught in the Bible.

—Not because I no longer believe that hell is all that bad. It's worse than we imagine. The Biblical pictures of it are frightful and horrendous. Just the sound of "gnashing of teeth" causes me to wince.

—Not because I consider it to be nothing more than the "hell on earth" we view on the evening news. As bad as life may be on earth, it is not hell. Earth's "hell" ends at death. Then the real hell's torment begins.

—Not because I have become desensitized to the consequence of living and dying in unbelief. The consequence is eternal separation from God in hell. Those living in chronic pain in this lifetime can look forward to the end of misery. But there is no escape from the anguish of hell. No second chance. No relief. No drop of water to quench the fevered thirst and intolerable heat. No amount of crying or begging, screaming or pleading, wrenching or writhing will ease the pain. God will not be there. And this

dreadful, frightful condition will never end.

No, it is not because I have lost sight of its appalling reality that I no longer take pleasure in preaching about hell. It is because, through the Scriptures, I have been led to see just how horrifying and gruesome hell really is. There is no pleasure in speaking of the horrendous suffering that awaits millions of people who die without faith in Jesus. Those who wish others to "go to hell" surely do not fathom the seriousness of their statement.

Hell is deserved

But there is another reason why I no longer take pleasure in preaching about hell. Regular exposure to God's Word—combined with some years on this planet—has awakened me to the reality that I deserve to go there. I'm one of those wretched, godless, wicked, sinister, depraved, and corrupt degenerates. And so are you! Now there's a sobering thought.

Hell is not a welcome subject when the one speaking about it becomes acutely aware that he deserves it. Such an awareness—the awareness that we are all guilty before God and deserve the same hell—is a somber but imperative insight. It silences the most arrogant of us and reduces to ashes our flawed illusion of spiritual superiority.

Hell calls for tears

A man said he wanted to hear only one pastor preach about hell, because whenever he talked about hell, the pastor cried. That man knew he would hear how Jesus suffered our hell for us. He would hear about a God with a heart so big and so overflowing with love that he sent his Son to suffer unspeakable

I'm one of those
wretched, godless,
wicked, sinister,
depraved, and
corrupt degenerates
who deserves hell.

justice and bitter death on a cross. He would hear that Jesus' death had brought complete forgiveness for all sins. That same Jesus invites each of us to come and find quiet rest for our troubled souls.

That man would also sense that behind the pastor's words was a heart filled with compassion. Compassion for fellow believers who know Jesus but who are weak, struggling with sin, and burdened with guilt. Compassion for those who do not know their Savior and are heading for a Christless eternity. Compassion for the victim and the perpetrator, the innocent and the guilty, the friend and the enemy, the lovable and the unlovable. Compassion for massive multitudes steeped in paganism, bowing down to wood and stone. Compassion for those who hurt, grieve, mourn, carry a heavy burden, struggle with failure, live with the consequence of an indiscretion. Compassion that finds its source in Jesus.

Hell calls for heaven

There are only two ways to preach about hell. One says, "Sure glad it's not me! You sinners had your chance and blew it. Sorry about that."

The other says, "It should have been me! How can I ever thank you, Jesus, for going there in my place?"

Help me, with true and tender compassion, to share the message of your gracious love with those so desperately needing to hear it."

When people hear me speak of hell, my prayer is that they sense the tears, both Jesus' and mine. The

Lord does not delight in sending anyone to hell. He wants all to be saved—and salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. His heart goes out to all people regardless of who we/they are or what we/they have done. Heaven rejoices when, one by one, lost sinners repent of their sins, come to faith, and are saved.

I must continue to preach of sin and its con-

sequences, of Satan and his lies, of hell and its torment. God's law must be heard, for through the law is the knowledge of sin. To preach it is my solemn duty.

But to preach of grace and its beauty, of Jesus and his forgiveness, of heaven and its splendor, that I consider my highest privilege. To preach and teach the gospel is pure joy. The gospel frees, energizes, gives life. The gospel brings hope to the helpless and peace to the restless.

And the gospel will not allow me to preach about hell in any other way but through tears.

Car. Henkel is pastor at Mt. Olive, St. Paul, Minn.

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American prayer

It's a kind of cultural cosmetic that gives a pious nod toward some undefined theistic being

Vernon Gerlach

The board of education prohibits prayer at any school activity. But the coach of the Central High Cougars has decided that winning is everything. He isn't taking any chances. Praying might not guarantee Cougar victory, but it certainly can do no harm.

Before each game, the coach and his team ask the great Cougar in the sky to help them win. The coach emphasizes they do not close with an "amen," nor use the word "Lord." That, he contends, removes their prayer from that forbidden by the school board.

The American prayer

There is an American style of prayer, an art form, a kind of cultural cosmetic. It gives a pious nod toward some undefined theistic being. It's polite to be a little bit religious. And as long as the prayer is kept general, most people will be happy. All of us have seen it—at political functions, athletic events, graduation exercises. You name it; the American prayer is there.

That kind of prayer is not only bland, generic, characterless. It is—it has to be—selfish. A one-size-fits-all religion is always man-centered rather than God-centered.

W. H. Auden in his poem, *A Christmas Oratorio*, gives a prayer that fits a universal religion:

"O God, put away justice and truth, for we cannot understand them. Eternity would bore us dreadfully. Leave thy heaven and come down to the earth of highways and aeroplanes. Become our uncle, look after baby, escort madam to the opera, amuse grandfather. And please, O God, introduce Muriel to a handsome naval officer."

Auden meant to shock his readers and perhaps rightfully. That prayer reflects the "God-is-my-errand-boy" mentality that characterizes American prayer. It covers one's flanks just in case there is a god who can help. God or no god, that prayer is an effort to have one's personal wishes gratified.

The essence of prayer, however, is faith, not wants and desires. Peter wanted to come to Jesus, but his weak faith let him look at the waves. And that look started him toward the bottom of the lake.

How we should pray

In Matthew's account of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says, "This is how you should pray."

Jesus' prayer is praise-centered. My wants and needs take second place. I praise his holy name. I praise the coming of his holy kingdom. I praise his holy will. Only then do I get to what I want and need: bread, forgiveness, a leading away from temptation, and a deliverance from evil. And then? Praise again—praise his kingdom, his power, his glory. Every petition is bound up with praise.

He gives bread so that he might be praised. He grants forgiveness so that he might be praised. He leads away from temptation, delivers from evil—all so that he might be praised, so that I might praise him. Pray in his manner: praise God when you, as a believer, talk to him.

Whenever you hear an American prayer, don't join the crowd, but recall how Jesus says we should pray. And then pray—his way.

Vernon Gerlach is a member of Emanuel, Tempe, Ariz.

Cherry pie, honesty, and service

February reminds me of cherry pie and the story of George Washington cutting down his father's cherry tree. Not that one has anything to do with the other, but I think of them and of Washington's example of honesty and of a thought for honest Christians.

Honest, that's what God wants us to be, honest with him, honest with each other. In our words and actions, honesty is to become the grateful application of the faith in our hearts to our daily lives.

Some may say, for example, thinking they are being totally honest with us, "I love God; it's just my brother or sister I can't stand." God, who is always honest with us, says, "Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

Love and hate are opposites. An honest person will not claim love for God while hating another person. Loving God is incompatible with hating someone. The love God has for us prompts us to love others. God's pardoning love, forgiving the hatred in us, allows us to shower love upon others daily.

Such reflected love on our part is to be more than just cosmetic or verbal. It's to be honest and have a handle on it that others can grab and hold.

You and I show love when we live in love: lives of Christian service for the Lord, his church, and his world. Love can be measured in congregations when their programs actually touch the lives of people with the love of God in Christ. A synod shows love, by not just talking about but actually doing mission work.

All of this takes the concerted efforts of every one of us. It requires the combined time, treasure, and talents of all of us. God's forgiving love motivates us to give of ourselves for the good of others.

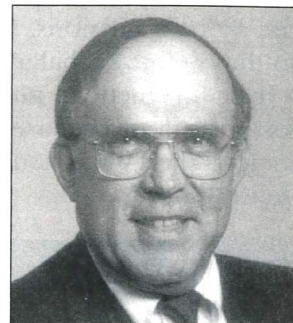
If we are honest with God, truly thankful to him for his love, we won't return cherry pits to him. We will want what is done for him to be as pleasing to him as a freshly baked cherry pie may be to us.

Are we honest about our love for God when our service for him, his church, and the world is more like the pits than the pie? Jesus demonstrated his honest love for us on a tree, hanging on a cross in our place. Do we have any better reason to want to serve him with all that we have and are?

Jesus planted the tree of faith in our hearts. Shouldn't he be entitled to fruits of faith growing there?

Let's give him a bigger piece of the pie; he surely deserves it!

Karl R. Gurgel



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

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

Mission of the WELS

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

Objective four—To encourage and equip each other for the application of our faith in lives of Christian service, for the Lord, his church, and his world.

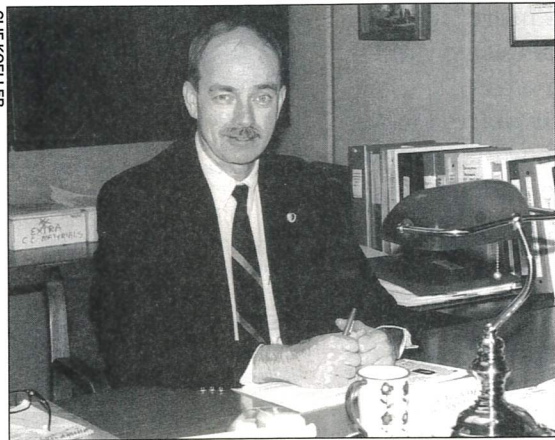
The WELS program planning analyst

Doug Wellumson answers questions about his position as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's program planning analyst.

What does a program planning analyst do?

I support the Coordinating Council, which prepares the proposed budgets for the synod's divisions. Our job is to allocate resources so that we have a balanced budget.

I do projections and analyses to make long-range forecasts, and prepare assessment documents: What's society like? What issues will we face? What strategies do we have?



Doug Wellumson has been the WELS program planning analyst since 1990.

Your position is only a few years old. Is the synod doing better at reaching our objectives since your job was created?

I think so. I do know that people who plan perform better than people who don't.

I keep the synod's mission and vision statement—"as men, women, and children of the WELS . . ."—posted on my office wall to remind me what we're trying to do: nurture our own people and reach the lost.

Each year we keep updating our goals. Will we ever attain them? Who knows? It's what we shoot for. God will give the results.

How does the Coordinating Council allocate funds?

We evaluate the contribution each division is making toward the synod's objectives, and then recommend programs and budgets.

At certain times, we may have to give more manpower and money and prayer to one area than to another. That's the kind of thing we have to decide.

Does this mean a small group of men decides how to spend our offerings?

The Coordinating Council just makes recommendations. Those go to the Board of Trustees, and then to the synod convention for approval.

The division administrators on the Coordinating Council speak up, but the voters are the laymen and the division chairmen. And they're very active and concerned. They don't sit passively.

We [the WELS] are a consensus-driven organization. It takes longer, it takes more work. You go to more meetings, take more phone calls, talk to more people; but you satisfy more people.

Why are synod mission offerings declining?

The typical parishioner is giving as much as ever, but more is staying home for important needs on the local level and for para-synodical organizations—WELS Lutherans for Life, for instance. People give to local causes. That's projected to continue.

People need to remember that the basis of a synod is doing together what you can't do separately—world missions, ministerial education, home missions.

What will happen if synod offerings continue to go down?

We will have to cut one-fourth of our programs in the next 10 years if something doesn't turn around. But we build projections in the hope they won't come true. I'm confident we'll get out of it, for the long term. We pray it will be turned around.

How can we turn around the financial problems?

We're trying to find ways to economize, to consolidate so things are done by only one division. Right now we're trying to concentrate on alternatives. Sometimes we have to do things differently. God's Word is changeless, God's plans for his people are changeless, but how we execute that plan can be changed.

Not enough money—that's always been the case in the church. Consider the alternative. What if we had all the money we needed and couldn't figure out ways to use it?

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

Clergy TALKS not just talk

Fifty-one talks in 60 days all around the country. That's the marathon WELS President Karl Gurgel ran last fall to see all of the synod's pastors face-to-face in a program called Talk About the Lord's Kingdom Spreading (TALKS).

Now that it's over, was it worthwhile?

"Yes," believes Gurgel.

Talk and listen

Gurgel pointed to the sense of cooperation evident in the meetings. "I didn't just tell the pastors about the synod's concerns," he said, but "listening was a very important part of this whole process."

As District President Vilas Glaeske of Houston, Texas, put it: "President Gurgel was open to anything the people had to say. He allowed plenty of time to listen. There were a variety of concerns. He took note of them."

Pastor Brian Ewings of Kansas City, Missouri, felt it was valuable to hear the message of "what's going on in the synod. That's good for us who are somewhat isolated," he said. "We also had the opportunity to be heard and to know that our ideas were taken back."

Listen and learn

"We had a tremendous amount in common both as to our fears and our aspirations," Gurgel explained. He saw the shared concerns falling into three categories:

▲ *Preservation*—"Preserving the purity of God's Word, not sacrificing in any way, not compromising in any way."

▲ *Preparation*—"We cannot sacrifice any of the essential ingredients for training our pastors and teachers," with emphasis on doctrine, and the biblical languages for pastors.

▲ *Presentation*—"We need to present God's pure Word to our own



Southern hospitality—Pastor Daron Lindemann (left) and Harriet Buchmann, of Hope, Irmo, S. Car., gave synod president Karl Gurgel a jar of southern barbecue sauce when he met with pastors in the South Atlantic District Oct. 4. Members of Hope hosted the conference.

people and to the world."

Others gained, too, in other ways. Ewings explained that he sometimes gets "discouraged by the rumor mill." TALKS helped squelch rumors and clarify issues. "We really are all looking in the same direction," he noted.

"The pastors' pastor [Pres. Gurgel] desired to sit and just chat," Glaeske emphasized. "Now he's not just a picture on a paper or a signature on a newsletter. People realize he's real—a genuine person. These meetings helped polish our fellow-

ship, our oneness."

The effort was worthwhile and bears repeating, but not so intensively, all agreed. "The kingdom is well served as a result of it," said Glaeske.

"This one-on-one communication is vital—that we stay on the same wave length with each other," Gurgel concluded. "We can feel optimistic, not because of ourselves, but because of the message we proclaim and because of our God, who stands behind us and goes before us."

Clergy TALKS were funded by a grant from Lutheran Brotherhood.

WELS choirs on national TV

Two WELS choirs—United Voices of Praise, made up of singers from St. Philip, St. Marcus, Garden Homes, Wisconsin Lutheran College, and Wisconsin Lutheran High School, all in Milwaukee, and the choir of St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.—are part of a Public Broadcasting System television program about music in

religion.

The program, "To Thee We Sing: Music in American Religion," examines the nation's growing interest in religious music. United Voices sings gospel songs, and St. John's choir presents traditional church music.

The program is being shown nationally on PBS.

WELS divisions squeeze budgets

Short on funds and facing uncertain future budget constraints, all divisions of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod have cut deep into their budgets to balance income and spending. At the WELS Coordinating Council meeting in December, each division administrator announced cuts for the short term and alternatives for the long term.

For the short term, divisions reduced staff positions, cut meet-

ings, and delayed desired improvements in technology. The Board for Parish Services has cut or deferred the equivalent of 3 1/2 administrators and a secretary. The Board for Ministerial Education reduced maintenance staff at synodical schools, did not replace some professors who retired, and held two professors' positions as tentative. World missions downsized, not replacing all missionaries who returned to the States.

All divisions are bracing for even more severe measures if current budget trends continue.

Meanwhile, although service to the church suffers some delays, lack of growth and flexibility, division heads are finding alternate ways to get the job done. Teleconferences are replacing some meetings, the world missions office is using more volunteers, and the home missions division is encouraging more local involvement in mission starts.

Providing ministers for the 21st century

Your synod mission offerings are an investment for the future. They support the training of the pastors and teachers who will serve your children and grandchildren in the years to come. They help finance the education of the students who will be missionaries in the 21st century.

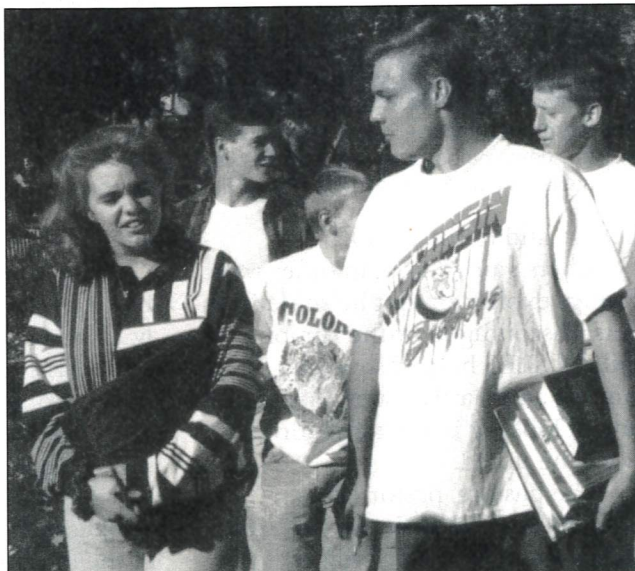
The synodical budget supplies about half of the cost of the education of each student in our ministerial education system. Student fees and

tuition provide the rest.

When offerings fall short, tuition rises. The tuition increase at WELS ministerial schools in 1995-96 will be 7 percent—about twice the rate of inflation.

As student costs increase, scholarships and student assistance become more important.

You can help in two ways. Your continued financial support for the entire work of our synod will help keep tuition increases in line. You can also consider special gifts to the



Synod mission offerings support the training of future pastors and teachers.

WELS Student Assistance or Student Assistance Endowment Fund.

The endowment fund stands at \$400,000. The Board for Ministerial Education has set a minimum goal of \$1,000,000. Earnings from this fund will provide scholarships and grants-in-aid for years to come.

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

—John M. Brenner

Lutheran Home adds ninth facility

When the Sauk County (Wis.) Association for Retarded Citizens needed a care provider for its group home in Baraboo, the organization chose the Lutheran Home Association. The home for the developmentally disabled is the ninth facility operated by the Lutheran Home Association, headquartered in Belle Plaine, Minn.

"We were selected based on our experience and the abilities of our dedicated staff," said chief operating officer Michael Klatt. "We are truly excited about this opportunity. Throughout our 96-year history, our Lord has continually opened doors to reach people with diverse needs."

Besides Belle Plaine and Baraboo, the association operates residential facilities for the elderly, disabled, or chronically mentally ill in Mankato and Caledonia, Minn., and in Cataract, Cochrane, Hillsboro, Reedsburg, and River Falls, Wis.

District capsules

MINNESOTA—The football team at **Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School**, New Ulm, ranks second in the state in academic achievement. The team's grade point average is 3.53 out of a possible 4.0. . . . MVLHS has a new 20,000-square-foot addition, made necessary by a rising enrollment. The 1993-94 school term closed with 246 students. The school now has 274 students.

St. Croix Lutheran High School, St. Paul, grew by 60 students this year. The enrollment of 283 is the largest in the school's 36-year history. . . . Three Japanese students are attending St. Croix this year as part of an exchange program.

St. John, Centuria, Wis., celebrated its centennial last September.

NORTH ATLANTIC—**Hope, Markham, Ontario, Canada**, celebrated its fifth anniversary Oct. 16. **Faith, Pittsfield, Mass.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary on Oct. 2.

WESTERN WISCONSIN—When **Immanuel Ladies Aid, Marshall**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 23, **Laura Michaelis** noted an anniversary, too. She has been a member of the Ladies Aid for all those years. . . . **St. Matthew, Warrens**, celebrated its centennial Oct. 9. On June 26 **St. Michael, Fountain City**, and on Sept. 18 **St. Matthew, Stoddard**, dedicated building additions. . . . **Oliver Lindholm**, pastor at St. Matthew, Winona, Minn., celebrated 25 years in ministry Sept. 18. **St. John, Watertown**, dedicated its renovated organ Nov. 27.

Encourage a friend to read *Northwestern Lutheran*. Use the order form on page 5.

School enrollment grows

The synod's six ministerial education schools have nearly 300 more students this year than five years ago, reports the Board for Ministerial Education. Enrollments should meet projected needs for pastors, teachers, and staff ministers, and provide for "venture" ministries such as mission fields.

Also encouraging, said the report, is a higher number of freshman from public and Lutheran high schools at Northwestern College, which prepares students for pastoral ministry. In the past, most freshman have come from preparatory schools.

WELS ministerial schools	1989-90 enrollment	1994-95 enrollment
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.	143	123
Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.	219	203
Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.	442	571
Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.	296	345
Martin Luther Preparatory, Prairie du Chien, Wis.	189	199
Northwestern Preparatory, Watertown, Wis.	181	313
Total	1470	1754



WELS wins—In a basketball tournament that pitted future pastors against each other, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's team won for the twelfth time. Teams from Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., Ancilla College, Ancilla, Ind., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, met Nov. 4 for the annual tournament in Fort Wayne, Ind.

DEFINING RELIGION

CHASTISEMENT: The imposition of pain or penalty for the purpose of improving or correcting. The pain and problems that Christians suffer in this life serve as chastisement from God. They remind us of our sins and frailties, and our dependence on God for everything.

Book notes



Barbecue on the beach—Stanley Cole (left) and Douglas Weiser were head chefs at a picnic on the beach for pastors and teachers from the Pacific Northwest. Over 200 ministers from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Synod met for a conference at Cannon Beach, Ore., Oct. 5-7.

High schools start new programs

Three WELS high schools are beginning innovative programs, thanks to grants they received as part of a high school enrichment program.

Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis., received \$10,200 to develop a 14-acre wetland on the school campus. It will serve as an outdoor classroom for environmental studies.

Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., will use its \$5,000 grant to create grants of its own to provide release time and financial resources for teachers to improve their courses or teaching techniques.

At Northland LHS, Wausau, Wis., the \$6,890 grant will help teachers improve their teaching strategies. They will share their new techniques with local elementary teachers.

Aid Association for Lutherans, a fraternal society based in Appleton, Wis., awarded the competitive

grants to 12 Lutheran high schools across the nation, choosing from 55 schools that applied.

Obituary

Margaret Beisel Bradtke 1902-1994

Margaret B. E. Bradtke, nee Beisel, was born June 22, 1902, in Canistota, S. Dak. She died Sept. 27, 1994, in Florissant, Missouri.

A 1922 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she served for 47 years at Lutheran schools, including Maribel, Princeton, Kenosha, and Iron Ridge, Wis.; Jenera, Ohio; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Nicollet and New Ulm, Minn.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Edward, and son Martin. She is survived by sons Edward and Robert.

Thy Strong Word: The Enduring Legacy of Martin Franzmann, by Richard N. Brinkley; Concordia Publishing House.

The synod's new hymnal, *Christian Worship*, includes eight hymns by Dr. Martin H. Franzmann, an extraordinarily gifted poet, scholar, and theologian. The most popular of the eight surely must be "Thy Strong Word" (CW 280), a beautiful summary of his faith and hope. Pastor Kurt J. Eggert, project director for CW, called its last stanza "one of the finest trinitarian doxologies in English hymnody."

Franzmann's roots were deeply embedded in the Wisconsin Synod. Born in one of the synod's parsonages, he attended our ministerial schools and was called in 1936 to teach at Northwestern College. In 1947 he accepted a call to teach at the Missouri Synod's Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. While there he published in the neighborhood of a dozen theological and devotional books. He died in 1976.

Brinkley has done a great service by publishing this 141-page memorial. It contains a short life of Franzmann (20 pages), all his hymns and translations, a bibliography, an extensive appraisal of his hymns, and 14 pages of poetry he wrote at Northwestern College for the *Black and Red*, the student magazine.

If you like his hymns, you will want to read this book about a modest, shy, brilliant man.

—James P. Schaefer

Softcover, \$9.95

This book may be ordered from Northwestern Publishing House by calling 1-800-662-6022. In the Milwaukee area call 414/475-6600. Phone from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM on weekdays.

Don't keep this magazine!

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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.



L. J. NIEFELDT

The Siebel quintuplets—Alex, Olivia, Evan, Catherine, and Andrew—turned two last August. Their parents, Andy and Debbie, are members of St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis. They are all normal 2-year-olds," Debbie reports. "Sometimes when I get exasperated in keeping track of them as they run and climb, I pause and remind myself how blessed we really are."

On the bright side

Friends go to church

Several years ago we introduced an evangelism program to our congregation in which we asked our members to give us the names and addresses of their unchurched relatives, friends, neighbors. One family turned in their form with no names on it. They had written at the bottom, "Unfortunately, all our friends go to church."

*Allen Lindke
Nepean, Ontario, Canada*

Talking to Jesus

Early one morning, 3-year-old Brian crawled into bed with us. Relaxing on our pillow, I told him, "You know, we can talk to Jesus in the morning."

Brian asked, "What should we say to him?"

"We can thank him for watching over us during the night," I suggested, "and thank him for dying on the cross to take away the naughty things we do."

"Yeah, he makes the naughty go

away," he told me.

Later, as I was sitting at the table with some paperwork, Brian came flying into the room. "Mom," he said breathlessly, "we have to call Pastor right away, because I want to talk to Jesus."

"Brian, we can talk to Jesus anytime, wherever we are." I explained.

"Can we talk to Jesus right now?"

"Sure," I said. "What do you want to tell him?"

He folded his hands.

"Jesus, you are nice. You died on the cross for me." He paused. "I don't want Jesus to die on the cross!"

"Jesus had to die on the cross so we can go to heaven," I explained. "But Jesus isn't dead anymore. He's alive again. What else should we say to him?"

Brian's blue eyes shone. He folded his hands. "You are my best friend, Jesus!"

*Wendy Enter
New Ulm, Minn.*

Just an old book

A man whose hobby was collecting old books was talking to a friend who mentioned he'd just thrown out an old tattered Bible while cleaning the attic.

"Who printed it, do you know?" the book lover asked.

"Oh, someone named Gutenberg," he replied.

"Gutenberg!" the collector gasped. "You threw away a Gutenberg Bible? Do you realize one just sold for over \$400,000?"

His friend was unmoved. "Maybe so, but this one wouldn't have been worth anything. Some guy named Martin Luther had written all over it."

*Tom Quick
Kent, Wash.*

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.

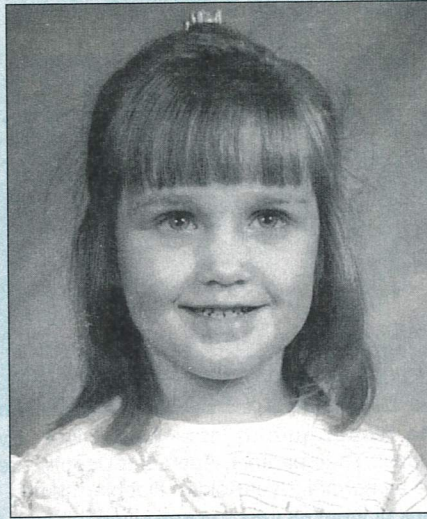
Young evangelist brings six to be baptized

Ashley Wachholz is only 7, but she says evangelism is important: "You do mission work so people can learn about God." Her mission work brought six children to baptism last year.

"I told them about God, that he is our Savior," Ashley explained. "I told them if you get baptized you'll be God's sons and daughters. I tell them good stuff—that Jesus is nice."

Ashley, who lives with her mother and stepfather, regularly visits her grandparents, Ray and Gloria Wachholz, members of Grace, Oshkosh, Wis. Their son Mark is Ashley's father.

"When she was three," said Larry Zessin, pastor of Grace, "Grandma and Grandpa enrolled



Ashley Wachholz

her in Sunday school. Grandma taught her to pray 'Now I lay me down to sleep' and sing 'Jesus

loves me.' When Ashley went home, she taught the prayer and song to her six half-brothers and sisters."

Last year Ashley enrolled in kindergarten at Grace and shared the lessons she learned in school. At Ashley's urging, all six were baptized.

In spite of the baptisms, Ashley's mother and stepfather do not attend church regularly. Ray and Gloria Wachholz are trying to change that. They are sponsors for three of the children.

"If we continue to make contact, maybe eventually the family will come around," said Ray.

"If you show enthusiasm for your faith," added Gloria, "it's bound to influence others."

Court says God motto can stay on money

US coins and currency may continue to carry the motto, "In God We Trust," a federal judge in Denver has ruled.

US District Judge Daniel Sparr dismissed a suit brought by the Freedom From Religion Foundation challenging the use of the motto as a violation of the separation of church and state. Sparr ruled the national slogan is of historic, patriotic, and ceremonial rather than religious significance.

Nearly half of Americans believe Jesus "committed sins"

Most Americans believe Jesus was a real historical figure but a large proportion—42 percent of those responding to a recent survey—also believe that while he lived he was "human and committed sins, just like other people."

According to the nationwide poll by the Barna Research Group, 25 percent of adults who believe they will have eternal salvation because of their commitment to Christ also say Jesus committed sins during his life on earth.

New policy for National Council of Churches

The National Council of Churches has taken a turn toward evangelism.

Made up of 32 mostly mainline Protestant and Orthodox denominations, the council has been best known in recent years for its position on controversial social issues.

But at the council's recent governing board meeting, delegates

adopted a new policy statement, "An Invitation to Evangelism: Jesus Christ and God's Reign," which declares that council members "look for an evangelism that is centered in Christ, biblically and theologically sound, and respectful of our various histories and traditions."

Postal Service reverses plan to kill Christmas stamp

The US Postal Service has reversed a decision to stop producing its popular Madonna and Child stamp series in 1995.

Early in November, postal authorities disclosed they would end a long-standing tradition of producing the popular Christmas-season religious

stamp. The 1995 lineup would, instead, include a stamp bearing the image of a Victorian-era angel and ones featuring Santa Claus and children with holiday gifts.

But Postmaster General Marvin Runyon now says the Postal Service will produce the series after all "because

the Madonna and Child has occupied such an important place in our stamp program for so many years and is so meaningful to so many Americans."

The Postal Service began the Madonna series in 1966 and has produced it each year without interruption since 1978.

Italian Communists distribute New Testaments

What the Italian communists have been doing of late seems totally out of character. For six weeks, the official paper of the Communist Party has been distributing New Testaments.

Every Wednesday, the readers received not only a newspaper at the kiosk but also a volume of the New Testament approved by the Italian Bishops Conference.

Some see the move as evidence the rift between the church and the far left is closing; others see merely the communists courting Catholic voters.

Case keys on printer's religious rights

Can a commercial print shop refuse to produce material the owners believe violates their religious beliefs?

The question is at the heart of a case before the Vermont Supreme Court. It pits the Vermont chapter of Catholics for a Free Choice, an advocacy group that backs abortion rights, against the owners of Regal Art Press of St. Albans, Vt.

Both sides say they are seeking to exercise their First Amendment right of religious freedom.

Malcolm and Susan Baker, own-

ers of Regal Art Press, claim printing literature from an abortion-rights group would violate their religiously grounded anti-abortion beliefs. "I'm a Catholic," Malcolm Baker said. "Catholics don't believe in abortion . . . and I don't plan on lending a hand to help anyone do it."

On the other side, Catholics for a Free Choice contends the Bakers violated the religious rights of one of its members when they refused to print the organization's literature.

A decision on the case is not expected until sometime this summer.

Germany eyes Lutheran tourism

The Evangelical Church in Germany is joining with government tourist agencies to promote the 450th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther in 1996, aiming to

bring tens of thousands of Scandinavia's 20 million and North America's 8.6 million Lutherans—and their money—to the birthplace of the Reformation.

Lutherans differ on ecumenism

The 5.2 million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is studying a proposal to enter into "full communion" in 1997 with three church bodies of the Reformed tradition: the Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, and United Church of Christ. Officials of the 2.6 million-member Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod voiced their concerns with the proposal during a

meeting of the two church bodies' Committee on Lutheran Cooperation in St. Louis in October.

The discussion "highlighted the essential difference between the LCMS and ELCA on how we approach the resolution of long-standing theological disagreements," said Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, executive director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The LCMS

requires complete agreement in biblical teaching before fellowship among church bodies.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which was not part of the meeting, believes, too, that full agreement on the teachings of God's Word must precede church fellowship. The Reformed bodies in question have not agreed historically with the biblical and Lutheran teachings of the sacraments.

Archbishop blasts media for biased reporting

Cardinal-elect William Keeler, archbishop of Baltimore, opened the fall annual meeting of US Catholic bishops in November with harsh words for the news media.

He accused reporters of using a "fabricated story line" in their coverage of the church's anti-abortion stand at a population conference in Cairo, and he blasted the media for asserting that the bishops are at

odds with the Vatican over the role of women in the church.

"... I am once again profoundly struck by the differences between this church as I know it, serving its own people and all of humanity, and the church I see reported in the news media," said Keeler. He accused reporters of relying on a "pre-packaged story... of a church of confrontation, entrenched in the

past and resisting the aspirations of ordinary people today." The reporting, he said, described "a myopic church imposing outdated values on the world."

"The true issues, of course, were the dignity of women, the value of the family, and the sanctity of human life," he said.

Downward trend in church contributions continues

Church members in 29 denominations directed a smaller portion of their resources to their churches in 1992 than in 1968, according to a study published by Empty Tomb, Inc., Champaign, Ill.

Constant dollar gifts: In current dollars, per member giving increased slightly from 1991 to 1992. However, when inflation was factored out, per-member giving decreased.

As in past years, giving to benevolences (missions, ministerial education, etc.) declined proportionately faster than to congregational finances. In 1968, the per-member contribution to benevolences was \$65.07 in constant 1987 dollars. By

1992, this amount had decreased to \$63.92.

Giving as a percentage of income: Giving as a percentage of income also decreased. Total contributions, and the subcategories of congregational finances and benevolences, posted a decrease from 1991 to 1992. In 1968, per member giving as a percentage of income was 3.14 percent. By 1992, the average per-member gift was 2.52 percent of income.

Lifestyle costs: The average household today compared to 1968 contains fewer people and more square feet. More comforts, such as air conditioning and cable TV, are taken for granted. While church members

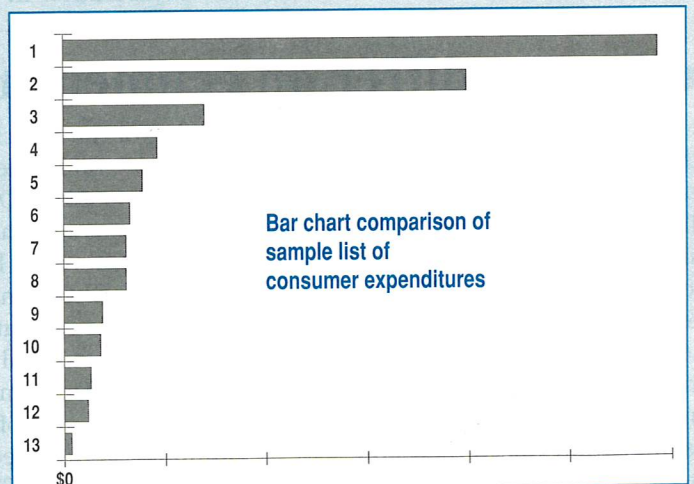
were giving a smaller portion of their incomes to their churches between 1968 and 1992, Americans were buying on credit, paying more than an estimated \$30 billion in interest charges alone in 1991.

Current purchases helping absorb the American public's dollars include \$20 billion on cosmetics, \$18 billion on pets and pet care, and an estimated \$40 billion on leisure travel (see chart below).

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.

1992 CONSUMER SPENDING IN U.S.

Sample list of consumer expenditures	Total current dollars spent	Amount spent per person
1 Legal gambling	\$300 billion	\$1,174
2 Purchased meals/beverages	\$204 billion	\$ 798
3 Alcohol	\$ 71 billion	\$ 280
4 Cigarettes	\$ 48 billion	\$ 186
5 Leisure travel	\$ 40 billion	\$ 157
6 Credit Card interest	\$ 33 billion	\$ 132
7 Sporting goods	\$ 32 billion	\$ 125
8 Diet industry	\$ 32 billion	\$ 125
9 Cosmetics	\$ 20 billion	\$ 78
10 Pets	\$ 18 billion	\$ 73
11 Toys	\$ 14 billion	\$ 55
12 Cable TV (basic)	\$ 12 billion	\$ 49
13 Craft sales	\$ 4 billion	\$ 16



The deadline for submitting notices is six weeks before publication date. To place a notice please call 414/256-3231.

ANNIVERSARIES

N. FORT MEYERS, FLORIDA—Bethany (25). Feb. 12, 3 PM. 813/995-0988.
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA—Redeemer (25). May 7, 9 AM and 4 PM. Meal at noon. Luncheon at 5:30 PM. Pastor Dan Reich, 803 W Sibert Place, Pierre SD 57501; 605/224-5201.
HORTONVILLE, WISCONSIN—Bethlehem (125). Feb. 26—Committee members' Sunday. April 30—Education Sunday (former teachers invited). June 11—Confirmation Sunday. Aug. 13—Looking to the future (church picnic). A meal follows each service; 414/779-6761.

AVAILABLE

BIG BOOKS—activity-filled evangelism program for children pre-school to grade 3. Kit includes 16-page Big Book, reproducible mini-version, teacher resource material, music. WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship, 414/256-3224.
DEVOTIONAL MATERIALS—for WELS members living in Europe. Send names and addresses to Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.
TEEN SUICIDE VIDEO WORKSHOP—Adapted from a Bible study presented at the 1991 international youth rally. Can be used with youth or parent groups. Tape and leader's guide, \$15 plus \$4.50 for shipping. Commission on Youth Discipleship, WELS Parish Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3274.
THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL—100 available. Free for cost of shipping. Contact Peace Lutheran Church, 440 Lake St, Green Lake WI 54941; 414/294-6593.
WURLITZER ORGAN—Series 20, German reed, two manual, full pedal. Speaker cabinet with four speakers. Drew Lambrecht; 414/923-5613.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

PASTORS:
Cordes, Chris A., from New Life, Buffalo Grove, Ill., to Bogota, Colombia.
Gumm, Thomas R., from King of Kings, Kennewick, Wash., to Grace, Seattle, Wash.
Hanson, Virgil E., Jr., from Living Hope, Omaha, Neb., to Our Savior, Daytona Beach, Fla.
Headrick, Victor L., from St. John, Pardeeville, Wis., to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.
Holtan, Jeffrey O., to St. John, St. Clair, Minn.
Huebner, John P., from Ascension, Sarasota, Fla., to NE region mission counselor.
Meier, Norbert R., from Trinity, St. Paul, Minn., to Cameroon.
Russow, William H., from Mountain Valley, Yampa, Colo., to St. John, Tappen, N.D.
Schlomer, Lloyd C., from Redeemer, Big Rapids, Mich., to Ascension, Moorhead, Minn.
Spaude, Martin P., from St. Paul, Appleton, Wis., to Calvary, Chandler, Ariz.

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.

COMING EVENTS

CHURCH LIBRARIANS—WELS Church Librarians Organization, April 29, 9 AM, at St. Paul, Slinger, Wis. Workshop topic: Videos, magazines, and audiocassettes. Registration \$7.00. 414/256-3222.
HYMN FESTIVAL—with choir, brass, and congregational singing. Feb. 12, 3 PM, at St. John, 68th St., Milwaukee.
LUTHERAN PIONEER NATIONAL CONVENTION AND PINECAR DERBY—April 29, 8:45 AM, at St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn. Call the national office, 414/763-6238.
SPIRITUAL RENEWAL WEEKEND FOR WOMEN—April 21-23, Radisson Downtown, Rochester, Minn. Speakers: Julie Quist, Jill Maasch, Linda Evenson. Approx. cost \$95. For information call Bev, 507/931-1866.
TEEN RETREAT—for grades 8-12. March 24-26 at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Contact Steve Huhn, 414/787-1085.
TOUR ITALY—The Latin department of Michigan Lutheran Seminary invites Latin students and adult WELS members to join a study tour of ancient Rome and the early church May 29-June 13. Contact Dr. Glen Thompson, 2777 Hardin St, Saginaw MI 48602; phone/fax 517/893-1788.

NEW FROM AUDIO/VISUAL LIBRARY SERVICES

WILLIAM BRADFORD: THE FIRST THANKSGIVING (Code 8215)
 1994 30 min. 1/2" VHS color PIJ
 This animated video describes the miserable winter that nearly destroyed the colony, and the gratitude of the pilgrims as they faced the following winter well supplied.
Rental: \$7.50
ESTHER (Code 8233)
 1994 25 min. 1/2" VHS color PIJ
 The story of Esther is retold, but with additions not found in the Bible.
Rental: \$7.50
OUTREACH IN THE WEST INDIES
Antigua: WELS Mission in the Caribbean (Code 5158)
 1994 14 min. 1/2" VHS color PIJSCA
St. Lucia: WELS Mission in the Caribbean (Code 5159)
 1994 13 min. 1/2" VHS color PIJSCA
Rental: \$7.50 each
THE STRANGER (Code 8234)
 1994 30 min. 1/2" VHS color SCA
 A woman meets the man who raped her and fathered her child before he turned his life around. Can she forgive him as Christ has forgiven her? The question is not answered. Viewers are left to wonder if they would be able to forgive under similar circumstances
Rental: \$7.50

PASTORS INSTITUTE TAPES—1994
Issues in Parish Education (Code 3131)
 1994 C Prof. Kuske CA
 1. Crises in Parish Education
 2. Staffing in Parish Education
 3. Funding Parish Education
 4. Methodology & Means of Grace in Parish Education
 5. Dealing with Sexual Abuse in Parish Education
The Spirit Speaks on Missions (Code 3132)
 1994 C Prof. Johne CA
 1. Genesis through Psalms
 2. Isaiah through Old Testament Summary
 3. Matthew through Acts 10
 4. Acts 11 through Act 28
 5. Romans through Revelation
Rental: \$7.50 per set

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

NAMES WANTED

PEACHTREE CITY / FAYETTEVILLE / NEWMAN / SHARPSBURG, GEORGIA—Pastor Tim Wempner, 154 Cobblestone Cove, Sharpsburg GA 30277; 404/253-0593.
FORT KNOX/RADCLIFF/ELIZABETHTOWN, KENTUCKY—Faith, 655 Knox Blvd, Radcliff KY 40160; 502/352-4545.
LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK—Grace of God, 510 Deer Park Ave, Dix Hills NY 11746; 516/499-3140.
ROWLETT, TEXAS—Divine Peace. Pastor Dan Voigt, 2519 Larkspur Ln, Rowlett TX 75088; 214/475-6389.
CAMPUS MINISTRY ALUMNI—from Wisconsin Lutheran Student Center, 2215 E Kenwood Blvd, Milwaukee WI 53211; 414/963-2047.

NEEDED

POSTER SIZED CONCORDIA BIBLE HISTORY PICTURE SERIES—for mission congregation. Abiding Word, Maineville, Ohio; 513/677-9357.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

CANDIDATE POOL—The WELS Human Resources Office is developing a candidate pool for future professional or clerical openings at the synod administration building. Individuals with backgrounds in finance, accounting, office support, education, real estate, or general business will be considered. When an opening occurs, qualified candidates will be contacted. Most positions require a working knowledge of computers. All require the ability to interact with coworkers, called workers, or the general public. Contact Human Resources Office, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398, 414/256-3269, to request an application or submit a resume.
CHRISTIAN THERAPIST (Michigan)—Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service is expanding its services into Michigan and seeks a Christian therapist. Requirements: master's degree, counseling experience, and the ability to apply Biblical truth in individual, family, and group therapy. Send resumes to Fred Matzke, WLCFS Social Services, PO Box 23980, Milwaukee WI 53223; or call 414/353-5000, ext. 44.
SUMMER JOBS—Camp Phillip, a ministry of the Milwaukee Federation of WELS Churches, needs counselors, waterfront director, lifeguards, adventure coordinator, cooks, junior staff director, family programming specialist. May 30-Aug. 16. Room and board plus \$1350-\$2000. Contact Steve Huhn, Camp Phillip, Rt 3 Box 190, Wautoma WI 54982-9330; 414/787-1085.
VOLUNTEERS—Bible study leaders, crafts leaders, cooks, and maintenance workers for youth camp this summer at Camp Phillip. Also registered nurses or EMTs for one-week and half-week sessions. Contact Camp Phillip, c/o Steve Huhn, Rt 3 Box 190, Wautoma WI 54982-9330; 414/787-1085.

WELS Connection videotapes

- February topics**
- Witnessing to Mormons
 - WELSNET
- March topics**
- Staff ministry in Sacramento, Calif.
 - Missionary Paul Waldek of Africa
- April topics**
- Mother-daughter mission at Rib Mountain, Wis.
 - President Gurgel's Easter message

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

The sheep and the goats

Judgment Day will be the happiest day of our lives

Matthew 25:31-46

Mark E. Braun

In one of his poems, Robert Frost described a man who had “nothing to look backward to with pride, and nothing to look forward to with hope.” How do you see your life? Do you see your best days still ahead? Or have you come to the autumn of your years, when just about everything good in life seems to lie behind you?

The last parable our Lord told promises that no matter what our age, we have something wonderful to look forward to. Judgment Day will be the happiest day of our lives.

We'll see Jesus' glory

“We live by faith, not by sight,” Paul said; that was true for Jesus' first followers too. Born in lowly state, without wealth or worldly acclaim, Jesus must have looked like just another man, even to his friends.

What a contrast between his first coming and his return. He will come in his glory, with all his holy angels, and every man and woman who's ever lived will stand before him as he sits on his throne. Jesus' picture recalls the vision Daniel saw, in which “one like a son of man” came with the clouds of heaven, and all peoples and nations of every language worshiped him.

We'll hear Jesus' verdict

But even Christians may shudder to think of Judgment Day. Will the Judge put all our sins on public display? Notice that Jesus separated sheep from goats first. He knows his own. He lived and died for the world's sins, and the Holy Spirit gave his sheep faith to believe that God accepted them as “not guilty”

for his sake. On the last day they'll get to hear that verdict. Jesus never mentions their sins, but he praises the lives they lived to show their faith. Believers know they haven't earned this generous verdict, and they're startled at the simple acts of kindness the Judge recalls from their lives.

Sadly, those on his left reveal that they still don't get it. They voice no regret, no repentance, no plea for mercy or forgiveness. Even then they disagree with God's verdict, still claiming they weren't such bad people. But their lives gave evidence that they'd failed to serve him by failing to serve others.

We'll join Jesus' kingdom

Jesus will tell all those on his right: “Come, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” Sinners, of

course, already entered his kingdom in baptism. Long ago he rescued us and brought us into “the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” We've already received “the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.”

Then, we'll enjoy all the blessings of his eternal kingdom to the full.

You and I can expect gloomy days in this life, when we'll throw up our hands and say, “Things have to get better than this!” We'll see happy days, when we'll say, “It doesn't get any better than this!”

But, of all our days, Judgment Day will be the happiest day of our lives.

Mark Braun teaches at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

*You and I can expect gloomy days,
when we'll say, “Things have
to get better than this!”
We'll see happy days, when
we'll say, “It doesn't get
any better than this!”
But, of all our days,
Judgment Day will be the
happiest day of our lives.*

Don't be intimidated

Walter F. Beckmann

Children can be cruel, especially to someone who looks, thinks, or acts differently. If a child shows respect for his parents or dedication to school work, his peers may ridicule him. They may laugh at him for wearing a cap and scarf to school on a cold winter morning. They may call him teacher's pet for having his homework done.

Sometimes kids can be intimidated by mockery and will try to please their peers by disobeying their elders. When children cave in, they may suffer unpleasant consequences. If they stuff caps and scarves into backpacks in an effort to look "cool," they may find themselves in bed a few days later with a fever, ear infection, or sore throat. Or they may fail a test because they tried to impress a classmate instead of following the instruction of the teacher.

Some people never outgrow their need to mock others. We adults can expect to be the butt of sarcasm when we, as children of God, try to follow what our heavenly Father has told us is his will for us.

I realized that again the other day when I listened to a radio talk show. The host ridiculed every scripturally-based moral value. He seemed bent on belittling the entire Judeo-Christian ethic. When one of his callers suggested to him that Jesus Christ was our only hope of salvation, he cut her off and shouted that anyone that narrow-minded didn't deserve another second of his time.

Often critics ridicule what we believe by carrying our beliefs to the extreme and even to the absurd. A husband who believes God has given him the right to be abusive is presented as typical of all who believe what God says about the relationship of husbands and wives. Anyone who finds abortion morally unacceptable also advocates bombing clinics. If you suggest homosexuality is sinful, you're a "gay basher" or a "homophobic." In TV programs, it's not the hero who holds moral values, it's the nerd or the eccentric. This is just the adult version of grade-school intimidation.

Everything God tells us about moral values and the way to heaven is for our good. If you doubt this, listen to some of the guests on those TV talk shows. Many of them are self-centered, have made a thorough mess of their lives, failed in a number of marriages, and produced children as confused as they are. They didn't get that way by following the directions of our heavenly Father.

Let's not be intimidated by ridicule. Let's stand up and speak out for what our Father has told us, for our own good and for the good of others.

And when we do, let's not sink to the spiteful ways of the world, answering ridicule with ridicule. Let's imitate our Savior who came to seek and to save the lost, who didn't retaliate when they hurled insults at him. Like the Savior, let's lovingly and patiently call sinners to repentance.



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

*Let's stand up
and speak out
for what our
Father has told
us, for our own
good and for the
good of others.*

Excommunication

John F. Brug

Under what circumstances is a person excommunicated? Should members be disciplined by taking away communion privileges?

Congregations must excommunicate members who have sinned and refuse to repent even though their fellow Christians have

The congregation excommunicates a person in the hope that this drastic step will lead the sinner to repent. Excommunication, therefore, is an act of love for sinners.

warned them according to the steps described in Matthew 18:15-18. An excommunicated person cannot attend the Lord's Supper or exercise any rights of membership in the congregation.

A member can be excommunicated only if his (or her) action is clearly against God's law, if it is proven that he is guilty of sin, and if he has refused warnings to repent. Scripture says an impenitent person has no forgiveness of sins. Excommunication, therefore, does not simply exclude an individual from membership in the

congregation, but declares that the offender has excluded himself from eternal life since no impenitent person has forgiveness of sins and no unforgiven person can enter heaven.

The congregation excommunicates a person in the hope that this drastic step will lead the sinner to come to his senses and repent. The excommunicated person will then be welcomed back to the congregation.

Excommunication, therefore, is an act of love for sinners, aimed at saving them from the eternal consequences of impenitence.

When the case has not yet proceeded to the point of excommunication, a pastor who knows that a person is impenitent should warn him or her not to come to communion, since it offers forgiveness only to the repentant. Those who come without repentance bring harm upon themselves by misuse of the sacrament. Exclusion from the Lord's Supper has the same evangelical purpose as excommunication: to bring the sinner to repentance. The pastor can take such action only if the guilt and impenitence of the person are clearly established but the congregation has not yet had an opportunity to act on the case.

Jesus gave us an example of service by washing his disciples' feet. Please explain how this applies to us today.

You have already answered your own question with the words "example of service." Washing guests' feet before they reclined for a meal was a practical and nec-

essary service in the days when people walked along dusty roads in sandals. By washing their feet, Jesus gave an example of how we should serve others.

Some churches have made foot-washing into a rite. There would be nothing wrong with this if the ceremony were used as an object lesson that reminded the members they should gladly serve others.

But the real way to follow Jesus' example is to provide practical ser-

The real way to follow Jesus' example is to provide practical service to others, such as caring for the sick.

vice to others, such as caring for the sick, cleaning up after them, taking out the garbage, and so on. Today some of these services, such as caring for the seriously ill, may be done by health professionals, but all Christians should be willing to serve each other in humble ways as needs and opportunities arise.

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, Wis.

Lutheran churches in Bulgaria

In the August issue it was reported that the Lutheran church in Bulgaria is a first. This is not quite correct. The Bulgarian language is probably being used for the first time; however, there were a couple of German Lutheran villages in Bulgaria before 1940. They were situated south of the Danube delta area, the *Dobrudga* just across the Rumanian border. The *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* also mentions there was a "German" church in Sofia.

*Horst Gutsche
Calgary, Alberta, Canada*

Ecclesiastical correctitude

Regarding "I'm not politically correct" (Nov.): Better "ecclesiastical correctitude" with open conflict and vigorous discussion than a church body that never refers to its problems and so experiences denominational drift.

*James B. Romnes
Federal Way, Wash.*

Public schools

In response to the question, "Can our schools compete with the public schools?" (Nov.): Public schools cannot match our Bible-based philosophy of education that forms a firm foundation for the discipline needed for teaching and learning; the overall personal character of our teachers as they teach by word and deed who and what they are; the inscription, as it were, above the entrance at each of our schools, "Not by bread alone."

*Robert P. Eberhardt
Milwaukee, Wis.*

Luther Prep seal

As a student at Dr. Martin Luther High School and graduate of Martin Luther Academy, I feel a sense of emptiness at seeing the new Luther Preparatory seal that acknowledges 1865 as the founding of Northwestern Prep and 1979 for

Martin Luther Prep (Dec., p. 20).

Martin Luther by its several names and homes has existed much longer than 15 years.

*Karen Kohls
Litchfield, Minn.*

Let's thank our pastors

We expect the pastor to come when we call, even if it means leaving his warm bed in the middle of the night. He is expected to prepare an inspiring sermon every Sunday; attend meetings of the council, voters, ladies, young people, Sunday school teachers; instruct children and adults; make sick calls and hospital visits. He is also expected to be a devoted family man and a good citizen. He is required to attend conferences and serve on all kinds of committees pertaining to the synod and church.

But who is there when the pastor has needs? How many times do we say, "Thanks for everything," or ask, "Where can I assist you, Pastor?" Why doesn't each of us make it a point to let our pastor know how much we appreciate his labor and concern?

*Elsie Patterson
Manassas, Va.*

A solution to violence

Why does violence seem to be such an "in" thing? People are jealous of what another person wears or has. They take another's property and sometimes their life. People also are afraid to walk on the streets, especially at night. They always carry a fear that something bad is going to happen.

Violence is not inevitable. We have choices. We are responsible for the decisions we make.

The solution to violence is to hold people responsible for their actions, and go to God's Word. We have to get out into society and preach God's

Word. Let's all help save another person's life.

*Suzy Wotruba
Milwaukee, Wis.*

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.*

March '95

- 1. Genesis 6
- 2. Gen. 7:1—8:19
- 3. Gen. 8:20—9:29
- 4. Gen. 10:1—11:9
- 5. Gen. 11:10—13:4
- 6. Gen. 13:5—14:24
- 7. Gen. 15
- 8. Gen. 16, 17
- 9. Gen. 18
- 10. Gen. 19
- 11. Gen. 20:1—21:21
- 12. Gen. 21:22—22:24
- 13. Gen. 23
- 14. Gen. 24:1-60
- 15. Gen. 24:61—25:34
- 16. Gen. 26
- 17. Luke 9:57—10:12
- 18. Lk. 10:13-24
- 19. Lk. 10:25-42
- 20. Lk. 11:1-13
- 21. Lk. 11:14-36
- 22. Lk. 11:37-52
- 23. Lk. 11:53—12:12
- 24. Lk. 12:13-34
- 25. Lk. 12:35-39
- 26. Lk. 13:1-17
- 27. Lk. 13:18-35
- 28. Lk. 14:1-24
- 29. Lk. 14:25-35
- 30. Lk. 15
- 31. Lk. 16:1-31

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

DEFINING RELIGION

HOMILETICS: The art of preaching. Students at seminaries study homiletics to learn how to write and deliver a sermon.

Note: The children pictured in NL's December article about special education (p.12) are not considered disabled. They attend a regular classroom most of the day.

All the people I know are dying

All the people I have known are dead or dying.

That thought was prompted, in part, by a report I clipped from *US News & World Report* on "Mysterious Increases in Cancer Rates." At a time when "fewer people are dying from heart trouble," according to the article, which was based on a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, "more older Americans than ever are dying of cancer." That's "cancer not related to smoking."

Understand, this is a complicated subject. The cancers are caused in part by the same things causing heart disease, which is decreasing. The researchers are at a loss to explain the phenomenon. Maybe other environmental factors are to blame? It's a "mystery."

Reading the article, I felt a sense of foreboding. The scientific voices seemed to be saying: "How can we ever stop people from dying? As we begin to solve one cause of death, another takes its place."

And I thought, "All the people I know are dying."

I don't take this subject lightly either. In the past few years, persons dear to me have died. My emotions go numb at the thought of it. Like many of you, I don't even want to say that word "die." "She passed away." "He's not with us anymore." When I go, I'll just "croak" and proceed to "pushing up daisies."

All right, that last remark was light-hearted. But it hides the stark reality that we can't stop people from dying. Death stalks the night—and the day. It strikes the young as well as the old. It comes in countless forms. But come it will. It's been that way since Eden's tragedy.

All the people I know are dying.

I spoke of a sense of foreboding. I was referring to those who feel somehow we can bring death and dying to an end. Find the right pill. Eat the right foods. Exercise. Eliminate pollution. Freeze bodies until we get it right. Many good things in that list, but the last one cries out in futility. It still says,

"All the people I know are dying."

Now don't fret. Only those who have no hope freeze their bodies in one last, fatal grasping for hope, or "freeze" their minds to avoid thinking about what must be. We have something better. We have the voice of God announcing the cure we're seeking. We have the Christ in whom death has lost its sting. We have the very substance of hope and the source of life in Jesus. We can say,

"All the Christians I know are living."

Gary J. Bauml



Gary Bauml is editor of Northwestern Lutheran.

We have something better. We have the voice of God announcing the cure we're seeking.

DEFINING RELIGION

CHRISTIAN: Any person who is baptized and believes in Jesus Christ as the only Son of God and Savior of the world. Some call themselves Christian who follow Jesus only as our example for holy living, or see in him a mere person like us. They take the name "Christian" but do not fit the definition.

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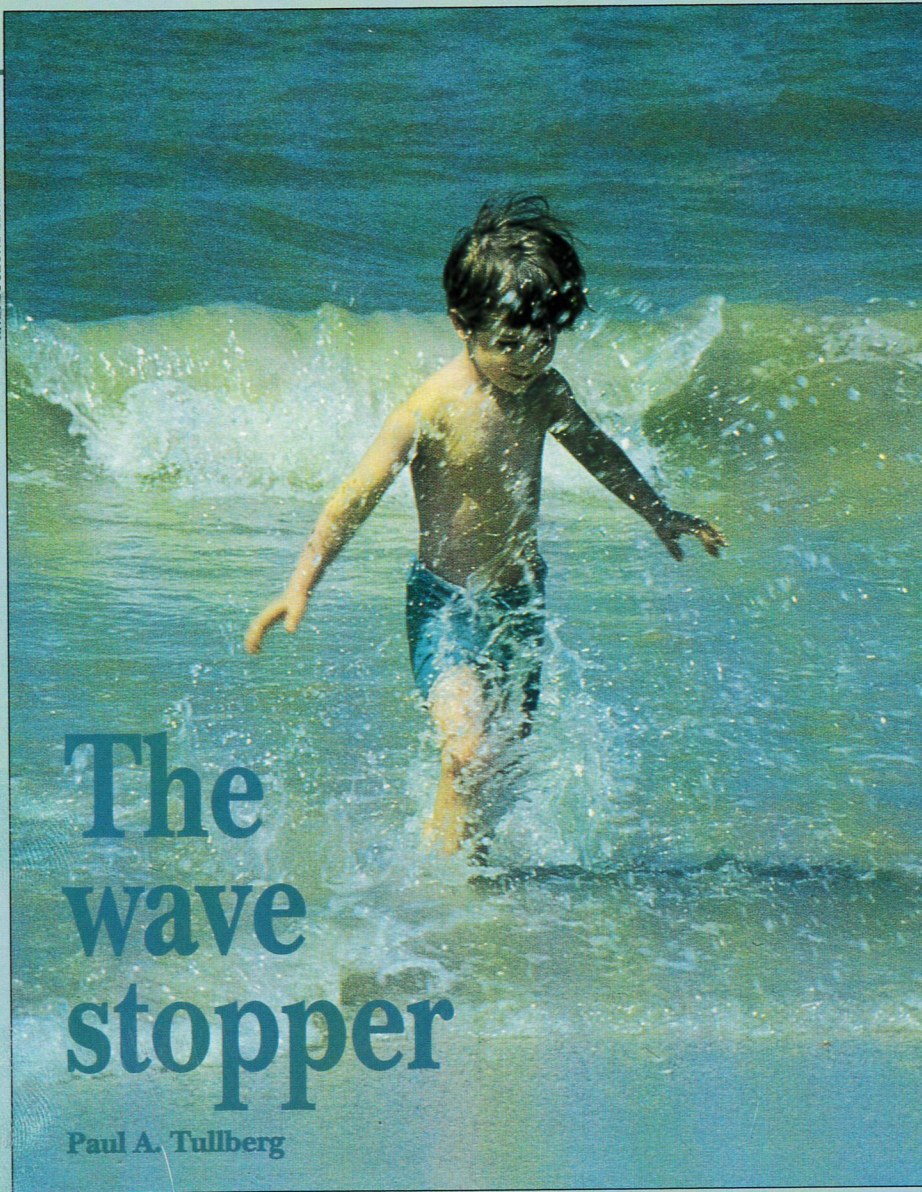
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The wave stopper

Paul A. Tullberg

There are a few things in life we simply can't do: juggle a baby hippopotamus, ride a snowflake, stop waves.

Stop waves? I remember a beach in Florida where I would run and throw my 9-year-old body into waves to try to stop them. They kept right on rolling and easily carried that giggling child back to the shore.

The power of waves

But waves can be anything but fun. History records that a Navy tanker, the *Ramapo*, was broadsided by a wave that crested the mast 112 feet above the deck. That's taller than a 10-story building. At Tillamook Rock, off the coast of Oregon, a wave lifted a 135-pound boulder and smashed it into a lighthouse. It left a dent 120 feet above the water.

In Alaska in 1968, a wave flooded the ground floor of a hotel 150 feet above high tide mark. The ore carrier *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank in Lake Superior in 1975

after pounding by 30-foot waves. Yes, history points out the power of waves and the foolishness of trying to stop them.

Power over waves

In spiritual matters, waves of sin and guilt keep us from the holy God. And those waves are too high, too deep, and too big for us to stop.

But, thank God, Jesus came to do the impossible. Does he have that much power? While Jesus and some of his friends were crossing Lake Galilee, a storm arose. Waves threatened to swamp the ship and drown everyone. Jesus stood up in the rocking boat and scolded the howling wind and deadly waves.

The sea became calm. The disciples, wide-mouthed, were filled with awe. Jesus Christ has power-plus! Even the waves and wind obey him.

But power without love is scary. Is God for us or against us?

God loves us. Jesus Christ lived for us—helping, loving, encouraging, exposing, and condemning

evil. Jesus Christ died for us—the innocent one for the guilty. Then he rose from the dead, as he had promised.

Power over waves of sin

God demonstrated his love for us: the complainers, gossips, guilty, lustful, lost, stubborn, lazy, and lonely. He stopped the wave of death and sin. He gives believers the calm of forgiveness, peace, and new life.

Waves of guilt, anger, doubt, or pain will still come into your life. When they do, don't try to stop the waves by throwing yourself into them. Go to the only one who can stop waves of any kind.

Christ Jesus has more than enough power to calm our stormy waves. When he stops them, you'll stand open-mouthed and filled with awe, like the first disciples. That's okay. The wave-stopper understands.

Paul Tullberg is pastor at Good Shepherd, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.