

# LUTHERAN



Christmas is for grown-ups too!

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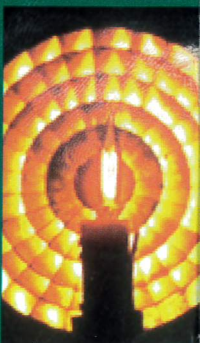
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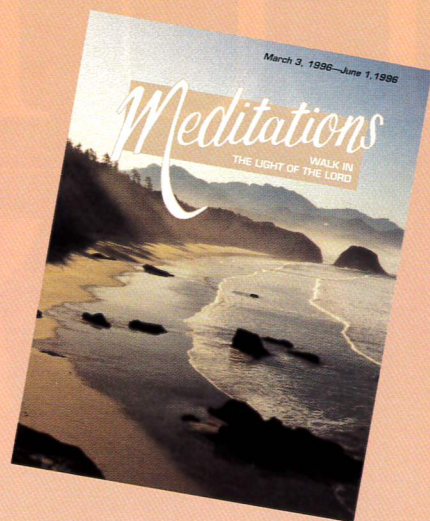
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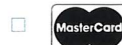
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# Room for a stranger?

*We have plenty of straw and fodder as well as room for you to spend the night. Genesis 24:25*

Robert H. Hochmuth

With those words, Rebekah invited Abraham's emissary, in search of a wife for Isaac, to her family's home.

## Servant on a mission

Rebekah's hospitality answered the chief servant's request for help in carrying out Abraham's bidding. The servant concluded God was guiding the outcome. On a practical note, it couldn't have hurt the man's request when he displayed his master's gift of precious jewelry for the prospective bride.

Customs have changed, but hospitable people still find ways to make room for guests. They take the sofa for themselves or get out sleeping bags for the children so the travelers can have comfortable beds.

What a contrast at Bethlehem. In an uncaring world, Joseph and the mother-to-be—evidently without jewelry to impress potential hosts—were relegated to the crudest of makeshift arrangements.

The servant of God "neither crib nor cross refuses" (CW 45) when he comes into our land to carry out the Father's mission. He comes into a world preoccupied with self and status—with people insecure in their attempted independence from the Savior.

This servant's role is not to over-



whelm us. He humbly takes his place beside us, to eat, walk, and sleep under circumstances that draw us closer so we will realize he is our brother and yet our divine Redeemer.

If it's hard to forget people who have unfolded a futon on the floor so you could have their comfortable bed for a while, who would want to forget that the Son of God humbled himself for us all. Through his life, beginning at the manger-bed, he always kept the Father's will for fulfilling our need his supreme concern.

## Ultimate mission

With that record, he qualified to substitute his righteous life for our guilty record. He gained the pardon that makes it possible for the Father to open his house to sinners like us. We won't be strangers.

Through Jesus, heaven has become our home. His Scriptures assure us we will appear in his presence, moving us to sing: "Now there is room and welcome there for me" (CW 54). With that assurance and with his humility and his saving love impressed on us, we at Christmas now invite him: "Let my heart your manger be."

Yet, while we are contemplating the lowliness of his first advent and the ultimate tri-

umph at his second, there is a further appropriate response. He indicated it in his own description of the life of grateful believers: "I was a stranger and you invited me in."

What is called for is more than portrayals of the search for room in Bethlehem in pageants and posadas. Christmas is a time for reflecting our Savior's concern and mercy in real life. Our children need to witness that we do not only sing carols about making room in our hearts for the infant Jesus, but worshiping him also prompts us to reach out in his name with a heart for the neglected, the lonely, the wandering—even strangers.

*Robert Hochmuth is interim pastor at Good Shepherd, Pleasanton, California.*



■ This Christmas, we invite you to grab a cup of coffee, relax, curl up with NL—and spend some time, alone, with Jesus. Here's our choice for Christmas reading this year:

- ✓ Room for a stranger?, p. 3
- ✓ Christmas is for grown-ups, too!, p. 6
- ✓ Precious is the child, p. 29
- ✓ All I want for Christmas, p. 34
- ✓ Treasure and ponder, p. 36
- ✓ The story of Jesus' birth, Luke 1:26-2:20

■ Three series end with this issue. We thank author Tom Trapp for shedding some light on the hard sayings of Jesus. We also thank Jim Aderman, author of the fruit of the Spirit Bible study. Finally thanks to our five authors who penned and delivered our WELS convention essays.

■ As our gift to you, we are putting our Christmas issue in color. We hope you enjoy it. And from all of us on the NL staff—Merry Christmas. God be with you.

—LRB

Cover photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel Photography.

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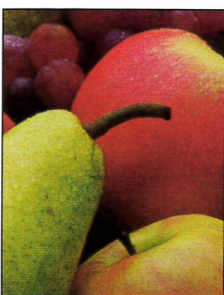
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You may be missing the best part of Christmas if you don’t spend some time all by yourself.

It's easy to buy into the belief that "Christmas is for children," but when we consider the mystery—God appeared in a human body—we realize that

## Christmas is for grown-ups, too!

Paul O. Wendland

“The mystery of godliness is great: he appeared in a body” (1 Timothy 3:16). What happened that first Christmas is far too big for any mind to grasp. Though the Spirit opens our hearts to believe it, a truth this huge will never be wrapped up neatly into one little package of thought.

If you're with me so far, then maybe you share with me the sense that something disturbing has been happening lately in the church's celebration of this holy day. I'm talking about the "cute-sification" of Christmas. We surround Mary with adorable little angels, clean straw, and a stable oh-so-cozy; there's a scattering of shepherds to complete the blissful scene. We view the birth through a romantic mist.

Apparently we are blind to the danger that, if we turn Christmas into just one more precious moment, we rob weak and weary Christians of something they need in this broken world. We need to know how far God's love will go to save us.

Why do we do this to Christmas? Have we grown so weary of the Word that we lack the spiritual energy to deal in any truth incapable of expression in a five-second jingle? Salvation by sound-byte never set anyone free. Perhaps we avoid serious discussion of the mystery of God made flesh because we have bought into the world's idea that Christmas is, after all, "for children."



Of course, Christmas is “for children,” if you mean that I must daily kill off my grownup penchant for doubting everything I cannot touch, taste, or see. Kingdom-truths only make sense to ear and heart made childlike. But Christmas is not “for children” if you mean that it is kids’ stuff, a holy toy to keep little ones busy. If anything, grownups will find in it even more to wonder at.

### **Christmas shows us what matters**

How strange that God becomes a man, stranger still that he enters our world in such a way. He clothes his almighty power in complete helplessness, and wraps the inexhaustible wealth of his grace in the most wretched poverty. We are moved to pity when we hear the stories that cluster about Christmastime of children who must suffer a holiday with no presents. But when the Son of God goes without a decent place to lay his infant head, we barely notice. Why does God choose such a birth for his Son, and what does he say to us about our ideas of wealth and power by that choice?

There is in me that which longs to cling to this world, to hold onto its passing good and to make it last for more than its brief hour. I think of all the categories of power and distinction that humanity has pursued down through the ages, until death pried them all at last from the clutch of greedy fingers. In the birth of his Son, God will have none of it, and so pronounces sentence on those who waste their lives chasing clouds.

### **Christmas is the antidote for modern despair**

Increasingly, I hear people talk of faith in wistful, almost nostalgic tones, as people do when they know they’ve lost something precious

they feel they can never regain. “I don’t believe in anything, and I want to be someone who believes,” run the words of a current song.

What can counteract this “deep despair that strangles our reluctant breath?” “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John firmly declares God’s answer in words inspired by the beauty of what he had seen in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the perfect expression of the Father’s love, and his grace perfectly defines us now. By his love we are reborn into the ranks of those who will sing with joy forever before God’s throne.

---

*Christmas is not  
“for children”  
if you mean that  
it is kids’ stuff,  
a holy toy to keep  
little ones busy.*

---

### **Christmas is a powerful inducement to love**

As the people of the late twentieth century huddle about their television sets, they hear their weathermen explain to them the howling winds that blow outside. New lows are expected daily; the barometer of morality remains in free fall. With a forecast like this, it’s not hard to see why Christians might become hopeless of seeing any earthly good. Scripture passages promising the new world order are read perversely as if they called upon us to surrender to evil. The result is that Christians give up trying to right

the wrong around them.

Granted, in this life we only build shantytowns. But even temporary shelters are better than none at all. An even worse result is that the church gives up on the one thing God has given us to do: preach the good news. Selfish sin urges us instead to retreat to some comfortable shelter where we can ride out the storm, cocooned away from a fractious and frightening humanity.

Again the birth of Jesus sets our thinking straight. We are children of a Father who was unwilling to let the world go to its ruin. He acted: he sent his Son. The Eternal Word became part of our time and space. He walked dusty roads, and shared in all the clamor, bustle, and variety of day-to-day existence. His Father’s will led him to walk up Calvary’s hill. Though he appeared as helpless on the cross as he was in the manger, the same Lord was powerfully active in both places to set us free from everything that stood against us.

Jesus, in turn, does not immediately translate us into heaven. He leaves us here to do his will. He will not permit us to cower behind locked doors in some upper room. He sends us out—out there to spend our lives in love for the lost world he saved. That’s where we live, that’s where we must die. We are as vulnerable to hatred and scorn as he was, yet we are always protected by the power of his name. For us, that name is the eye of peace in the center of the storm, and gives a joy no one can take from us. Jesus gives birth to a restless love in us that rests only in his love.



*Paul Wendland is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.*

# True peace to a troubled place

In a politically shaky country of over 35 million people, missionaries are working to reach the lost and teach the saved.

Linda R. Baacke

In a country where political wars are constantly waged, missionaries are working for peace—a peace that truly lasts. To those living in Bogota and Medellin, Colombia, WELS missionaries are reaching out with the message of Christ.

Similar to other WELS missions, the goals in Colombia are to reach those who don't know Jesus, and to train national workers to take over the ministry.

## Working

To reach the lost, missionaries witness to prospects, members invite friends and family, and the Christian Information Center offers basic law and gospel audiovisual presentations and courses. "Many people have responded to these courses," said Philip Strackbein, missionary at Most Holy Trinity, Medellin.

Geoffrey Kieta, missionary in Bogota, shares how one member even used an earthquake to witness. "On Jan. 19, the first—and strongest—of a series of week-long earthquake tremors hit. Shortly after ground stopped shaking, Gonzalo reached his office in downtown Bogota. Because he personally knows God's grace, Gonzalo did the only thing he could think of to calm down some friends—he told them about Jesus.

"Six days later, through Gonzalo's witness, seven people sacrificed their lunch hour to listen to a mis-

## Sharing the gospel in Colombia:

Chris & Rachel Cordes  
Geoffrey & Rebekka Kieta  
Philip & Kathryn Strackbein

Confessional  
Lutheran  
Church of  
Colombia



sonary. The need to get back to work cut the session short. But they agreed to meet every Wednesday at noon to study how God healed his relationship with us."

Gonzalo added, "I think God did all this with the earthquake just so that these people could hear."

## Growing

Success was abundant this year. In July, 10 people were confirmed on the same day in Medellin. "This was one of the highest numbers of people confirmed at the same time in the history of our mission," said Strackbein.

In August, the congregation in Bogota moved to a new location. There was no longer room for them in their Christian Information Center. Attendance at the first service in the new location was 106—97 Colombians—an all time high.

"Our Colombian mission serves a total of 187 people: 113 baptized

souls, 54 other regular attendees, and 20 others who attend classes," said Philip Strackbein, missionary to Most Holy Trinity, Medellin.

## Serving

To serve people in Medellin, congregational work is handled by national pastor Gabriel Alvarez and two assistants, Jorge Bastidas and Tony Quintero. Other trained members conduct some Bible classes. Missionary Strackbein trains the national workers and accompanies them on visits. He also teaches most of the classes at the Christian Information Center.

In Bogota, missionaries Chris Cordes and Geoffrey Kieta are in charge of the Christian Information Center and are pastors of the yet-to-be-named congregation. There are two national pastoral assistants—brothers, Fernando and Gonzalo Delgadillo. Although there is no national pastor yet, one seminary



student is active in the congregation. He has brought most of the current members to the congregation.

“Geoff went on furlough in August and I had only four months of language training, so Colombians carried on services and Bible studies earlier than anticipated. A benefit is that we discovered some real talent,” said Cordes. “These men are getting early experience, so it will be easier to turn work over to them when we reach that point.”

### Coping

Cultural differences pose challenges for American missionaries. “It’s sometimes frustrating because people don’t seem to be as organized as they are in the U.S. Appointments are often not kept or people arrive late,” said Strackbein. Plus, Kieta said, “The government is shaky; political problems are ongoing.”

The language barrier, especially for new missionaries, is always a problem. Cordes, who moved to Bogota in April with his wife, Rachel, and their children, said, “My wife’s musical ear helps in learning the language and pronunciation—she helps me constantly.”

“For the most part,” Cordes continued, “family life is the same, but we don’t have as much freedom to get out and about. There aren’t as many sports programs for the children. The positive side is that life is a little less complicated.”

### Planning

As they face challenges associated with foreign mission work, missionaries plan for the future. They will continue current services and classes in Medellin and Bogota. They also hope to open new congregations in other cities. As Strackbein said, “We would also like to turn more and more work over to the nationals so the national church becomes self-administering. We’d still make frequent visits to see how the national church is doing.

“Then we can leave Colombia in good hands and begin missions elsewhere.”

NL

*Linda Baacke is communications assistant for Communications Services and Northwestern Lutheran.*

*Carl and Connie Leyrer spent seven years in Colombia. They returned to the U.S. in June.*

Born in Puerto Rico, Connie grew up in New York. When she was 20, her family returned to Puerto Rico where Carl Leyrer was a vicar. After he graduated from the seminary, the Leyrers married and moved to Corpus Christi, Tex., to start a Hispanic congregation. Later they moved to Bogota, Colombia.



*Connie Leyrer worked as a school counselor at the American school in Bogota.*

Connie worked as a school counselor at the American school in Bogota. Her work offered opportunities for evangelism. “Many people needed someone to talk to. Women came to me, and I had opportunity to witness to them.”

Even for Connie, a Hispanic with a bilingual education degree, moving to Colombia was difficult. “Puerto Rico is Americanized,” she said. “Colombia is different.”

The greatest difference is violence. Bogota has been the scene of drug wars. “Sometimes bombs would go off as often as 10 times a day,” Connie said. “One day my daughters had just left a store when a bomb went off in it.”

Americans especially can be in danger. “The U.S. interfered with the drug lords, so their strategy is to capture North Americans,” said Connie. “We were afraid sometimes. But the Lord had his angels protecting us.”



*Tony Quintero, one of the assistants to the missionaries, leads a Bible study. A goal of the mission is to train more people like Quintero to take over the work of the church.*



# From generation to generation

We're always passing the baton of faith—sharing the promise—to the next generation.

Laurie Biedenbender

It's been compared to a relay race. The most critical moment is when both runners are in the passing zone, and the baton is firmly placed in the hand of the next runner.

As a church, we're in a perpetual passing zone. We're always passing the baton of faith—sharing the promise—from generation to generation.

That baton, God said, had to be held in plain view. "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts," he said in Deuteronomy 6. "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. . . . Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates."

## Parents impress them on their children

Families like the Yahr's and Ninman's, members of St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., may not have

Scripture passages on their door frames, but they make sure God's words are talked about in their homes as well as out.

Devotions and prayers—sometimes in the kitchen at snacktime, sometimes in a child's room at bedtime—have been a normal part of the day since their children were toddlers. Discussions of Sunday's sermon on the way home from church and finding applications for confirmation class lessons are ways these families impress God's words on their children.

"We don't want to give kids the impression that God is only for Sundays and he doesn't fit in anywhere else," says Todd Ninman. Steve Yahr adds, "We want to be sure God's presence is recognized as an everyday thing."

## The church is responsible too

Parents don't carry the responsibility alone to nurture their chil-

dren. The church as a whole is responsible too. Most congregations reach children through elementary and Sunday schools. Some also provide family ministry.

They offer Bible study for moms or dads, Bible-centered parenting classes, Bible story/playtime for moms and tots, and resource centers with parenting books and tapes members can borrow. They subscribe to *Lutheran Parent* and *Lutheran Parent's Wellspring* to encourage home devotions.

"The Spirit will do his job," says Pastor Randy Hunter of St. Andrew, "but we have to keep getting families into the Word."

Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis., offers Bible study opportunities specifically for parents. Parents of kindergarten-age children are invited to a doctrine review class. Pastor Bruce McKenney says, "If we're going to work together to bring

their children up in the nurture and training of the Lord, then we have to be on the same page.”

Parents of fourth graders attend a Family Life in Christ class that includes parenting assistance.

Then, when children begin formal confirmation instruction, the parents take a catechism review class.

McKenney sees increased participation in all regular Bible classes and a closer relationship with parents. “They’re not so hesitant to come to the church when problems arise,” he says, “because we’ve talked about these issues in class.”

Children have the most to gain, as family and church work together to share the promise. “Parents assist us as we assist them,” says McKenney.

### Church and home work together

The new religion curriculum, *Christ-Light*, due for publication in 1998, builds on that cooperative spirit. It involves parents at every level of instruction. After children learn the lessons in elementary or Sunday school, parents read, review, and discuss them with their children. Assignments can be done together. The easy-to-use materials “will give willing parents an opportunity to review as they help teach their own children,” says Gerald Kastens, project director and youth discipleship administrator.

Luther emphasized parents teaching their children: “As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.” The Yahrs, Ninmans, and other parents of confirmation class students at St. Andrew pay more than lip service to those words.

In the “Parents Equipped to Teach” program, they meet with Hunter once a month to learn three

lessons. Then they teach those lessons to their children.

At the end of the month, the pastor and the children meet, have a meal, and discuss the lessons they’ve learned. He also hears recitation of their memory work, gives a review test, and writes up six-part evaluations to send home to parents.

“The Bible speaks very clearly to parents about their responsibility to teach their children,” says Hunter.

“The Bible also speaks very clearly to the church about its responsibility.

“There’s really nothing renegade or innovative about this method. It’s biblical. It might not work

everywhere, but here we can do it.”

Hunter adds, “I hope that when these kids start having kids themselves, they’ll remember Mom and Dad opening the Bible at the kitchen table, talking about God, and praying with them. And then they’ll think, ‘I should be doing this too.’”

So the baton of faith is passed on again and again. As parents—and as a church—we continue to share the promise of Jesus Christ from generation to generation.

NL

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

## 7 simple ideas for parents to nurture young children's faith

### 1. Teach hymns and spiritual songs.

Start with “I am Jesus’ Little Lamb” (CW 432), or play Bible song tapes at naptime.

### 2. Share a Bible story everyday.

After dinner read a simplified version from a children’s Bible, or tell the story in your own words. Refer to the story later: “Look at that big, bright star. Do you remember who followed a bright star right to Jesus’ house?”

### 3. Make prayer a priority in your home.

Pray regularly. Children can easily memorize mealtime, morning, and bedtime prayers.

Pray for others. Post pictures of family and friends who need their prayers.

Pray spontaneously. There’s no need to stop and fold hands. Just talk together to God. Thank him for the sun—or the rain. Ask him to

help them play nicely with the neighbors. Help them ask for forgiveness when they’ve done something naughty—then assure them they’re forgiven.

### 4. Memorize short Bible passages.

Write simple ones like “Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12) on flashcards and keep them on the refrigerator or in a dresser drawer.

### 5. Share stories about your family’s life in Christ.

Tell how Grandpa and Grandma met at Bible class when they were 16. Remind them of the day everyone came to church to see them baptized. Relate how God answered a particular prayer for you last week.

### 6. Read your Bible where your children can see you.

### 7. Go to church and Sunday school regularly.

# Jesus came to bring a sword?

The Prince of Peace brought a message that puts the world in conflict.

Thomas H. Trapp

*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword!*  
*Matthew 10:34*

**W**hat? The Prince of Peace brings a sword to earth? Didn't Jesus come to stop conflict, to stop division, to stop "the sword?"

## The message is peace

Jesus told Peter, "Put away your sword." "Peace on earth," the angels proclaimed when Jesus was born. Jesus taught his followers not to retaliate or resist evil when mistreated. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus preached. On his final visit to Jerusalem, he wept over the city with this plea: "If you . . . had only known on this day what would bring you peace. . . ." He told his disciples to proclaim the "gospel of peace"—peace with God, and peace with one another.

Jesus came to bring peace, not a sword.

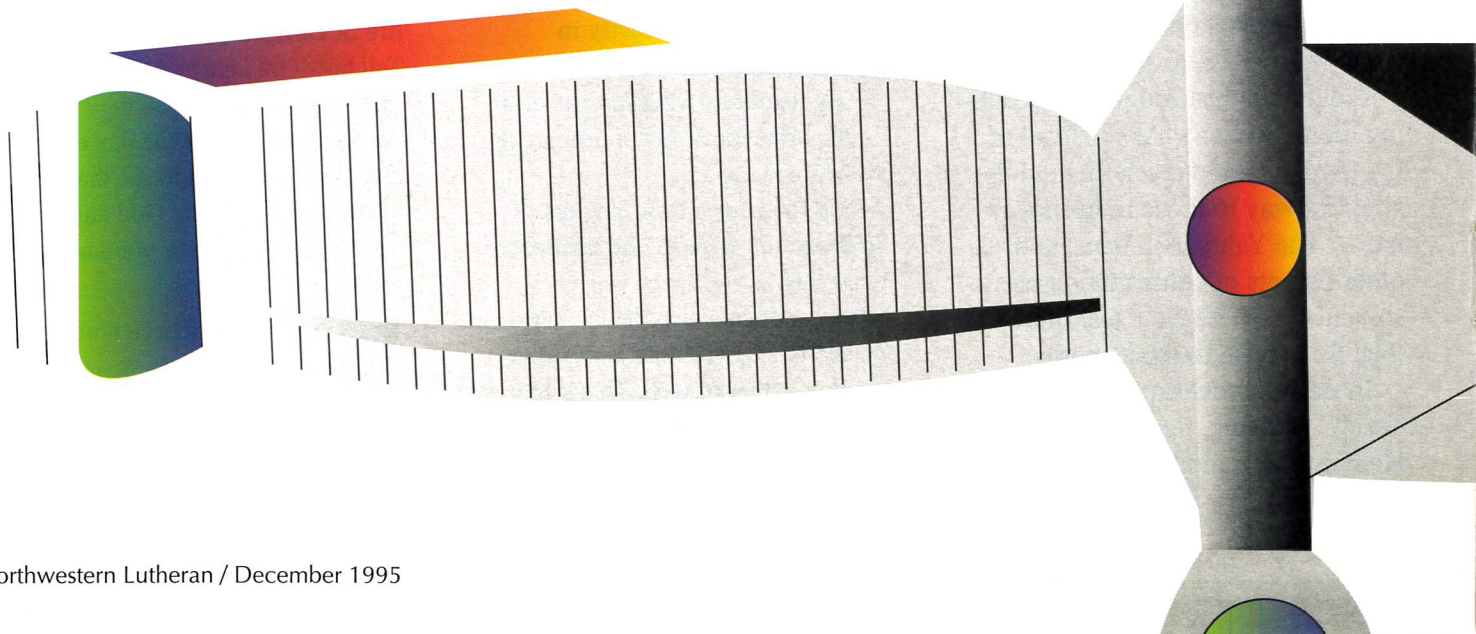
He came to break the bonds of evil. He came to make enemies of God into friends, and haters of God into his children. The holy life and substitutionary death of Jesus healed the broken relationship mankind had with its Maker, so that all who repent and believe the good news of Jesus can call God "Our Father." This is precisely the reason Isaiah called Jesus "the Prince of Peace."

## The reaction is mixed

So why did Jesus say, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword?" He was talking about the effect of his coming, not the purpose. He was talking about unbelievers' reaction to his coming, not the believers' response.

"The world will hate you because of me," Jesus warned his disciples. The early Christians found this to be true.

"Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" the people shouted when the apostle Paul said he was going to take the message of peace with God to the non-Jews (Acts 22:22). Also, in the early church, there was tension between married couples when one of them converted to Christianity and the other remained an unbeliever. When the unbelieving spouse wanted to end the marriage because of the believer's godly lifestyle and faith, the apostle Paul advised, let "the unbeliever leave . . . God has called us to live in peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15).



"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword," Jesus said. He immediately went on to warn: "For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matthew 10:35,36).

### Conflict results

Just being a Christian will cause conflict both at home and at work. "The Gospel vs. the Game" was the title of the June 14, 1994 issue of *USA Today's Baseball Weekly*. To some in professional baseball, conversion to Jesus Christ means conflict. "Walk too much with the Lord, and a ballplayer can sometimes forget to walk with the bases loaded," former Baltimore Orioles manager Earl Weaver once said.

Christian ballplayers are sometimes called "passive." But, Seattle Mariners pitcher Randy Johnson, who is a Christian convert from several years ago, said, "If anything, I became a warrior out there. I became stronger." Johnson led the majors in strikeouts in 1993 and was one of the best pitchers in major league baseball in 1995. He throws over 90 miles per hour. One ballplayer said he was traded

because of his Christian faith, even though he is the best hitting catcher in the major leagues. The article comments how Christians have ruined "team chemistry."

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### *Just being a Christian will cause conflict.*

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So what else is new? Christians were accused of "bad chemistry" in July of AD 64. It wasn't at a baseball game, but in Rome. Emperor Nero accused Christians of causing the great fire of Rome. Nero did not trade them to another country, he simply arrested and executed many of them. The unofficial policy of opposition to Christianity instigated by Nero, later became the official policy of the empire.

"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword," Jesus said.

Just being a Christian will cause conflict. In the 1920s, just after the Bolshevik Revolution, Joseph Stalin sent political speakers out to Russian towns and villages to brainwash the people about Marxism. Peasants were forced to listen to these propaganda speeches, which demanded that their Christian faith come to an immediate end. The

church was no longer to be active.

On one occasion a large crowd of people sat for three hours in a public auditorium listening to a Russian commissar trying to convert the crowd to the glories of atheistic communism. When it was over, questions were welcomed. A few questions were asked. Then, when it was about to end, a Russian Orthodox priest stood up and said to the commissar, "I have just one thing to say to you. Christ is risen!" Instantly, the entire Russian Orthodox crowd responded, "Christ is risen, indeed!" This was more than a memorized statement of faith by these Christians. They knew that for saying it, they would all go to prison.

"I did not come to bring peace," Jesus said, "but a sword."

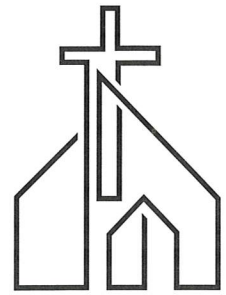
Just being a Christian will cause conflict. People hated Jesus, and people will hate us for promoting Jesus. Jesus said it would be that way. He also said we are to be witnesses for him. Witness, and brace yourself.

NL

*Thomas H. Trapp is campus pastor for Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center at the University of Wisconsin—Madison.*

# Opportunities in Ottawa

Members of St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, use the opportunities God gives them to serve his kingdom.



Julie K. Tessmer

This December, people driving down King Edward St. in Ottawa, will get a sweet surprise from members of St. Paul Lutheran Church—a candy cane with information about Christmas for Kids and worship services. Members hope to reach 1,800 people this way.

Opportunities like these abound for St. Paul. Its location near the heart of this city of almost 309,000 people—within the borders of the University of Ottawa and along King Edward, a main through-way—provides countless openings to witness.

“I’ve been bored maybe twice in the past 31 years,” said Pastor Thomas Pfothenhauer. “There is no end of opportunity to serve Christ’s kingdom.”

## Opportunities for outreach

Christ’s kingdom in Ottawa encompasses varied nationalities and backgrounds. Immigrants

from all over the world live there because of its liberal immigration policy. Students of all nationalities attend the university. “We have had Haitian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and numerous other nationalities visit our services,” said Pastor Roger Knepprath.

Many native Canadians practice Catholic, Anglican, or United religions and are unfamiliar with Lutheran teachings.

Street people show up at the church’s door, some looking for spiritual guidance, but many just wanting food and clothing. “We try to lead what they ask for into spiritual advice,” said Pfothenhauer.

Thousands drive by the church every day and don’t even notice it. Advertising, therefore, becomes important to St. Paul’s outreach.

Consider St. Paul’s vacation Bible school. The church put VBS announcements in about 500,000 sales flyers. Knepprath and mem-

bers, clad in sandwich boards, handed out flyers in the marketplace. Members living throughout the city displayed signs in their yards. The congregation even used the church building—a 14x16 ft. sign hung on the church and faced the busy streets. Personal invitations to prospects followed up advertising. The result—about 70 children, half prospects, attended VBS this year.

## Opportunities for involvement

Members help advertise and run events. This fall, St. Paul held an open house. Members helped plan the event, cooked and served breakfast, greeted guests, and went out on the streets to invite people in.

Members also teach the Word to prospects. Don Bradley leads an introductory course on basic teachings of Christianity. Although prospects still meet with the pastors, having a layman teach frees up the pastors on Sundays and gets the prospects to church. Bradley said he also can intercede by asking the pastors difficult questions for the prospects.

Besides outreach, member organizations include Christian strength club, Girl and Boy Pioneers, Ladies Aid, church government, and Bible classes. “The members of St. Paul are thirsty for the Word of God,” said Knepprath. Teens get involved through a program called Teen Troupe and act out an object lesson for the Sunday school.

“People don’t just want to show



Members of St. Paul’s ladies aid sew a charity quilt. Women in the congregation are involved in many other organizations within the church including the evangelism committee, Sunday school, LWMS, Girl Pioneers, and the Singers of Praise choir.

up on Sunday," said Bradley. "We have many programs that allow us to get more into Christian fellowship and learn more about Christ."

### Opportunities for growth

In the early '70s, Pfothenhauer and members of St. Paul began looking into establishing daughter congregations to better serve outlying members. Abiding Word was established about 10 miles away in Orleans in 1974. This church provided new opportunities for mission work in Ottawa's suburbs, besides being closer for members. Another daughter congregation, Divine Word, Nepean, was established in 1978.

Problems exist for St. Paul, however. Many people are more comfortable speaking French. Some walk away when they hear English or receive a flyer written in English, said Knepprath. Immigrants also speak a variety of languages, making communication difficult.

Time is also of the essence. Students come and go from the university. Many immigrants live in Ottawa until unrest or troubles in their homeland diminish. "We have to reach them quickly so they have the important information they need and will then contact missions in their homelands," said Knepprath.

Knepprath will soon have more time for outreach. When Pfothenhauer retires in December, the new pastor will concentrate on nurturing



The "Great Photo Wall," a 1995 Board of Christian Growth project, shows the diversity of members at St. Paul. The "Wall" features a picture of every congregational member.

members, while Knepprath will spend over 85 percent of his time on outreach.

Knepprath's plans for the future include taking a French class to communicate better with prospects. He also wants to reorganize the congregation into outreach committees dealing with flyers, advertising, canvassing, and general evangelism.

Both of these plans will help Knepprath reach his goal: "Many people see the building on a regular basis and feel it's a church that serves other people. I want to have our community see us as serving them with the gospel."

NL

*Julie Tessmer is communications assistant for Communication Services and Northwestern Lutheran.*

In 1991, St. Paul began studying the opportunity to begin the first synodical elementary school in Canada. A joint committee from St. Paul and Abiding Word in nearby Orleans, has studied the feasibility.

"We would mirror the public school curriculum, only enhance it with biblical teachings and a Christ-centered viewpoint," said Garry Stearns of Abiding Word, co-chair of the committee. "We would start with grades kindergarten through three."

The committee surveyed the congregations, and 70 percent strongly support the concept of a school. "We need the members to come on board and support it financially," said Stearns.

The next challenge is to "educate parents and grandparents on the differences a school would make to the congregation in outreach and benefits to children and parents," said Stearns.

The committee has gotten government permission to call a teacher from the U.S. Now they are looking at facilities and finances. In 1997-98, they hope to present their plans to the congregations for approval.

### ST. PAUL

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
organized 1874  
members: 374 souls

### Pastors:

Thomas Pfothenhauer  
Roger Knepprath



# August F. Ernst: “Preceptor of Lutheran Northwest”

**Ernst sought no ambition higher than teaching men who were to teach believers.**

**Morton A. Schroeder**

**A**ugustus Friedrich Wilhelm Ernst was a builder. His ministry was dedicated to laying foundations in education, missions, orthodox union, and civic discourse.

The son of a Hanoverian clergyman and his wife, Ernst prepared for church work in German *gymnasium* and university. He taught a year after finishing his studies and then set sail for America.

## Called to teach

Ernst must have been given pause when he was called to teach German in Pennsylvania’s Gettysburg University. Although he was inclined to accept, he returned that call. He felt the time inopportune to leave his parish and the pastoral ministry.

After five years, Ernst did leave the congregation for the classroom, accepting the call to be professor and inspector at Northwestern University. He came to the position recommended by Johannes Bading, president of the Wisconsin state synod. Ernst was 28 when he arrived in Watertown and 82 when he left.

Within 19 months, Ernst became the school’s third president, replacing Adam Martin, the school’s first, and Lewis O. Thompson, its second. Martin urged that the school be built in Milwaukee, boasting it would educate its students “to be just a little more than mere backwoodsmen and obedient servants of their American fellow citizens.”

## Educator of pastors and teachers

From the outset of his presidency, Ernst focused his energies at the school’s name, aim, and faculty. He believed “university,” which Martin had persuaded the board to accept, was a misnomer. Using his education and experiences as guides, he fashioned curricula he believed significant to men studying to be pastors. He tried to gather a stable faculty, tuned to the school’s aim. Early recruits were Drs. F.W.A. Notz and J. Henry Ott, whose combined years of service to Northwestern, beginning with Notz in

1872 and ending with Ott in 1939, were almost 100.

Called “the preceptor of the Lutheran Northwest,” Ernst sought no ambition higher than teaching men who were to teach believers. In a labor of love pursued for over 50 years, he taught German, Greek, Latin, history, philosophy, logic, and psychology. At one time, the Wisconsin Synod was manned predominantly by his former students. To them, he was “The Old Man”—the symbol of ultimate authority.

Ernst had the ability to see the big picture. Arguing that able parish teachers were crucial to a congregation’s well being, he added a room to the college: the normal course. It preceded, by eight years, the Minnesota Synod’s school in New Ulm. In keeping with the pact agreed to by the constituent parts of the federal synod, the course was discontinued in 1893.

## Leader of orthodox causes

Ernst was one of five Wisconsin Synod men who in January 1871 met with Missouri, Norwegian, and Ohio synod representatives to frame a building to house conservative Lutherans. The meeting provided the footings for the Synodical Conference, founded a year later.

Ernst was also one of six men who met in Watertown in August 1891 and drew the blueprints for the federal synod. Representing the



*Known as the “Kaffeemuehle” (Coffee Mill), the first building of Northwestern College, dedicated in 1865, served as dormitory, classroom, dining hall, and residence for staff members. It was destroyed by fire in 1894.*



Wisconsin state synod president, he, although not the principal draftsman, was an able helper in designing a conservative home.

On Apr. 16, 1889, the Wisconsin state legislature passed the Bennett Law. A seemingly harmless English language provision set off alarms in education-minded churches. The Wisconsin state synod, sensing unconstitutional intrusion in its schools, became deeply involved in its repeal. It appointed a six pack—an attorney, a teacher, two professors, and two pastors—to head the repeal campaign. Of the six, Ernst as chairman was the most active in raising civic shades on a dark problem by educating the public through the public press. The law was repealed.

In his presidential report in 1899, Ernst pointed out that the federal “synod had been doing no home mission work.” He proposed that widely-scattered Lithuanian Lutherans, not yet served by Lutheran pastors, be brought into the family. The idea was noble, but the diet, too rich for the federal synod’s budget, was within six years shared with the Missouri Synod.

### Tireless worker

Regardless of his work load, Ernst was willing to help, even when called upon by people beyond his mete. When Nebraska’s “Old Lutherans,” who had escaped from Wisconsin to avoid synods and synodical strife, lost their pastor, they turned to Ernst, whom they had known from their Wisconsin days. The man he suggested tactfully changed separatist thought into synodical unity.

Ernst was no stranger to failure. The too-prestigious catechism committee he served on from 1907 was discharged by the 1913 synod convention after the convention

expressed regrets at any lack of progress. The job, given to an individual, was done famously.

Success followed the catechism error. Synodical schools had serious problems with their dormitory supervision methods. Ernst and recent seminary graduates wrote regulations governing a new system that used those same graduates called “tutors.” Some 80 years later, the system is largely that of Ernst and company.

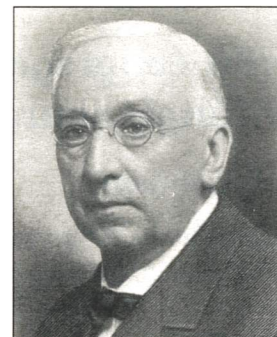
Even though he neared 80, Ernst was an esteemed member of a blue ribbon education committee. During a 17-month period in 1918-19, the committee advanced 27 proposals that altered forever the synod’s view and value of its educational system.

Ernst’s last years were painful. Illness forced him to quit his duties when the term began in September 1921. The board granted him a leave of absence, and his fellows tried in vain to pick up the slack. A call was issued for his position on May 19, 1922; 58 days later Ernst left the campus. His rocking chair stood empty; he would never return. Ernst left the bulk of his splendid library behind. Even though it was a significant bequest, it was less than the best Dr. August F. Ernst had given Northwestern, the Wisconsin Synod, and American Lutheranism.

Ernst spent his last months with George, his doctor son, and, after suffering a paralytic stroke, in the Layton Home annex of Milwaukee Hospital where he died. Survivors were seven children: George, Carl, Fritz, Otto, Minnie (Wilhelmina), Ella, and Maria. His wife, whom the obituary called his “faithful companion through life,” preceded him in death on Jan. 30, 1908.

*Morton Schroeder, a retired professor, lives in Appleton, Wisconsin.*

NL



### August F. Ernst

- Born June 25, 1841, Eddesse, Hanover, Prussia
- Graduated from Celle Gymnasium and Goettingen University
- Came to America 1863; ordained at Pottstown, Penn., 1864
- Served Brooklyn and Albany, N.Y. parishes, 1864-1869
- Married Agnes Hartwig, New York City, Jan. 6, 1867 (born July 6, 1850, Brunberg, Posen, Prussia)
- President of Northwestern College, March 9, 1871-1919
- First president of federal synod, 1892 to Oct. 1, 1900
- Granted honorary Ph.D. by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.
- Died Aug. 8, 1924, Milwaukee; buried Aug. 11, Watertown, Wis.

# We share the promise into the third millennium

**A family, congregation, and church body that take to heart the promise will willingly share the promise.**

Harold A. Essmann

As we look to the future we do well to listen to the voices of the past.

## Recognition and establishment

In the sharing of the promise, the first millennium after Christ was one of recognition and establishment.

It was perhaps the greatest era ever for the spread of the gospel, as Christianity emerged through centuries of mission activity and persecution. The apostles and the early church carried the promise to Africa, Asia, and southern Europe. By the year 60, Paul wrote that "all over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing" (Colossians 1:6).

Christian volunteers played a large part in spreading the gospel. The Bible was translated into various languages, and Christian literature became an effective method of sharing the promise. Under Emperor Constantine, Christianity became an officially recognized religion.

The gospel spread beyond the Roman world to all of Europe in the latter years of the millennium. Inscriptions in India and China indicate that the message of "Jesus Christ, the true Messiah" had reached even to these lands.

## Reformation and emergence

The second millennium was one of reformation and emergence. The dark ages of the Western church ensued, and the doctrines and prac-

tices of the church were so mutilated and corrupted that reformation was the only answer. God led Luther to examine and restate the doctrines based on the inerrant Word.

Complacency ruled the major portion of the second millennium. For a long time, the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations was understood to be given only to the apostles and fulfilled by them.

Among Lutherans, some prominent laymen broached the subject of missions. Count Truches challenged the theological faculty at Wittenburg: "Since faith comes alone from preaching, I would know how east and south and west shall be converted to the only saving faith, since I see no one of the Augsburg Confession go forth thither." A mission spirit was emerging from the rubble of complacency and disregard.

This mission spirit was largely the result of laymen's efforts. Through mission societies, the Lutheran Church followed immigrants from Germany and Scandinavia, resulting in many Lutheran synods in America.

But the modern mission movement began at the start of the nineteenth century; the promise was shared in this new world and throughout the whole world.

## Reaffirmation and expansion

Think of the third millennium as a time for reaffirmation and expan-

sion of the church.

As we look to the future, we see a degenerating society, increasingly hostile to the Word. A humanistic and universalistic philosophy pervades our society. We will need to reaffirm the message of Christ.

Millions of people will be entering America from Latin America and Asia, bringing completely different languages and cultures. Our greatest opportunities and challenges will be to meet these new people and bring them into our congregations—or our church will die. We will be a "white" church, an island in a nation where Hispanic, Asian, African, and Native American cultures will predominate.

Beyond our country, we need to be prepared as some nations close and some open the doors for Christian mission work. Muslim and atheistic governments seek to limit or eliminate Christian mission work.

Meanwhile, doors have opened for mission work in countries long closed. With the fall of the Berlin wall, people who were not permitted to worship as they pleased are now free to hear the promise. And what about China, India, and southeast Asia that are virtually untouched by the gospel? Sharing the promise with people in eastern Europe and Asia may be the greatest world mission prospect in the new millennium.

Still, we have many people in

spiritual need right here. We see it in the faces of abused children, divorced women, drug-addicted fathers; in families divided, greed abounding, and abortion destroying. We need to share the promise with our families to bring about a more biblically-based family life.

Your church in the new millennium will play a decisive role in all these activities at home and abroad. How can we in an atmosphere of declining family values, lowering doctrinal standards, and increasing challenges in the world, share the promise into the third millennium?

### Means for a new millennium

Foremost, we need to appreciate the gospel. Churches become weak when members ignore the Word and sacrament. Christ himself embodies the promise. He is the only way, truth, and life. He gives us the word of reconciliation. He instituted the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A family, a congregation, a church body that faithfully reads,

learns, and takes to heart the promise will willingly and aggressively share the promise.

And we share the promise through faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and use of every God-pleasing method to proclaim the gospel.

Lay people need to be catalysts and workers in God's kingdom. Lay people in Europe energized the church for missions in this second millennium. We use volunteers extensively in our home congregations. But have lay people considered volunteering in our world missions? There are many opportunities to do so.

We need to expand the influence of the gospel through a more concerted effort to provide doctrinally sound, soul-inspiring Christian literature in many languages. One day we may be forced to leave certain mission fields, but the printed word remains to be read again and again.

We also need to use new methods of this age to proclaim the

gospel. Cyril and Methodius invented a new alphabet to share the Word with the Slavic nations. Luther used the printing press to spread the gospel in his day. We use radio, television, and other means to proclaim the good news. Let's always be aware of new, God-pleasing means to preach the Word in the new millennium.

Christ tells us to share the promise. He says, "Go, make disciples. Baptize in the name of the Triune God. Teach them my Word. Forgive the sins of the penitent. Remember my death in my supper." In believing the gospel and following Christ, men and women will be ready and willing to live and even to die for Christ while sharing the promise into the third millennium.

NL

*Harold Essmann, a retired pastor, is a member of WELS world mission's committee for mission expansion.*

*This essay has been edited to fit the space available in NL. The full text is available in the convention Proceedings.*





## WELS members support church after hurricane

WELS members quickly responded to the damage caused by Hurricane Luis on the church, school, and homes of St. John's, Antigua. In addition to prayers and letters of support, 1,570 people gave \$128,130.07 (as of Oct. 31) to finance rebuilding and cover costs of basic items like furnishings and food.

Monetary gifts for individuals and congregations suffering from disasters and calamities can be sent to the WELS Committee on Relief.

## Church destroyed by fire

St. Paul, Mound City, S.D., burned to the ground on Aug. 12. "It was a total loss. There was nothing left," said St. Paul pastor, Tony Hansen.

Eighteen hours after the fire, at the congregation's usual Saturday night service, members voted to reorder hymnals and communion ware. They also voted to rebuild the church, keeping within their budget. Until the church is rebuilt, members are worshiping in a public school gym—offered to Hansen even as the fire burned.

The church was built in 1908. The congregation is the mother church of many congregations in the north central part of the state. An electrical transformer on the cross on the outside of the church malfunctioned and started the early morning blaze.

## Martin Luther College celebrates first homecoming

On Sept. 30 over 2,000 parents, friends, and students of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., watched the Knights beat the Eagles of Northwestern College, Roseville, Minn., 28 to 14. The victory put the finishing touch on a successful week for the college's sports teams. Both men's and women's soccer teams chalked up successes in their respec-

tive matches, while in the cross country invitational, MLC ran off with the win. The women's volleyball team gained the college's first trophy by coming in second at a tournament at Gustavus Adolphus, St. Peter, Minn.

Over 90 percent of the athletes' parents came from all over the United States to participate in homecoming and parents' day festivities.



Quarterback Jared Oldenburg from Appleton, Wis., leads his team on to victory at Martin Luther College's first homecoming.

## Calendar showcases mission work

The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society's 1996 prayer calendar will showcase foreign missions and exploratory home missions. The 12-month calendar will highlight 12 different mission areas served by WELS. It will also include addresses, birthdays and anniversaries of mission families, brief histories of the mission churches, letters from the missionaries, and cartoons.

"This calendar will encourage everyone to remember missionaries and their families in their prayers," said David Hein, pastor at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., and a member of the LWMS national board.

The calendar also contains areas for individuals to keep personal prayer lists.

To order a calendar contact the LWMS Central Office at 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-6212.



### Looking for a last minute Christmas gift?

Give Northwestern Lutheran. One size fits all, modest price, and you don't have to find a parking space or fight the crowds. Use the order form on page 4 or call toll free 1-800-662-6093 ext. 8; (Milwaukee 475-6600 ext. 5) weekdays 8 AM to 4 PM. Charge it—Discover Card, MasterCard, or Visa—or bill it.

## MLC offers opportunity for generations to share the promise

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., is working to promote cross-generational ministry. A banner project pattern, designed by MLC's art department, will be sent to congregations this winter. Teams of adults and grade school children will work with each other—purchasing materials and putting the banners together.

The six banners are intended to be

unfurled, one each week, with the last one opened on Easter Sunday 1996. After the banners are unfurled, they can be hung in church or school to remind members of the need to spread the gospel. Or, to truly share the promise, banners can be sent to a retirement community or mission congregation.

## Expo educates youth and adults

The second WELS EXPO took place at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, on September 29-30. Close to 500 youth and adults of WELS southeastern Wisconsin district viewed 44 displays of synodical and para-synodical organizations. Visitors also heard from 38 representatives during small group presentations.

A successful addition to this expo was Youth Day, attended by over 300 grade school children. "Youth Day offered these children a chance to see

and hear what our synod is doing," said Neil Hankwitz of WELS Kingdom Workers, expo sponsor. "We thought Youth Day would be a one-time occurrence connected with the expo, but due to its success that the idea will have to be revisited."

The next expos will take place in the Minnesota District at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, on Apr. 20, and in the Michigan District at Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, on Oct. 12.

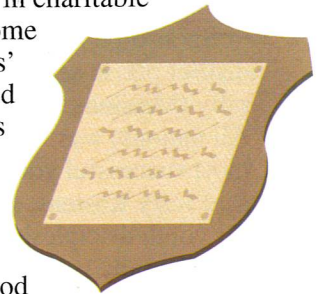


Over 300 grade school children attended Youth Day as part of WELS EXPO. The displays helped the students understand more clearly what a synod is and what work is going on in WELS.

## Congregation receives Senate citation

Members of Zion, Columbus, Wis., received recognition from the Wisconsin State Senate for their volunteer work. The commendation cited Zion's Aid Association for Lutheran members "for their service and dedication in charitable endeavors." Some of the members' service included helping victims of the 1994 California earthquake, their work in a fund-raising food tent at Farm Progress Days, and their participation at the Columbia County Fair.

Although the branch wrote to Senator Chvala and invited him to their potluck dinner, they didn't know he would be bringing a commendation for them. "We were very surprised," said Ruth Holsten, branch liaison. "His secretary told us that he had something for us, but we thought it was like a pen. We never dreamed it was a citation."



## Obituary

### Lydia Zempel Degner 1904-1995

Lydia Zempel Degner was born Mar. 15, 1904 in Weyauwega, Wis. She died Sept. 21, 1995 in Watertown, Wis.

A 1924 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she taught at Salem, Owosso, Mich., and St. Lucas, Milwaukee.

She is survived by daughters Marilyn (Elmer) Neitzel, Doris (Peter) Westra, Alva Degner, and Lois (Jerald) Plitzuweit. She was preceded in death by her husband, Alwin.



## youth news

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

### WELS youth rally—MEGA success

With the temperature heading for a sweltering 105 degrees, approximately 1,400 young people and 300 counselors descended on St. Cloud, Minn., July 12-15, for the WELS International Youth Rally.

Sponsored by the Minnesota district parish services, the MEGA rally (Missions, Evangelism, God, All nations) was "the largest and most successful youth rally ever," said Jerry Kastens, administrator for youth discipleship.

"The rally is a highlight for our youth," continued Kastens. "It's the one time this many WELS members can get together for fellowship and gather around the Word."

Dan Graunke, a student at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., reported, "I have never seen so many teenagers enthused to hear and share God's glory. It was amazing."

One highlight was a trip—requiring 33 buses—to the Mall of America. After a couple of hours shopping, the counselors and youth were "locked-in" at Camp Snoopy from 10:30 PM to 3 AM.

Thousands of people at the mall saw the rally-goers wearing identical t-shirts. "Lots of people asked questions about us," said Kastens. "The teens had an opportunity to tell others who they were and share information about their Savior."

Their behavior also witnessed to others. One bus driver commented, "These teens were a treat to transport. I can't say that often."

The 1997 rally—focusing on youth service—will be held June 18-21 at Middle Tennessee State, just outside of Nashville, Tenn.



Teens attended small group sessions. "We set attendance records at the sessions," said Jerry Kastens, administrator for youth discipleship.



Participants at the rally made banners for each of the synod's 12 districts. These banners will be used at future rallies to demonstrate the unity the districts have as a synod.



Rally-goers didn't come just to listen. They came to participate. Activities included music by Ex Corde, skits, and mixers.

### Planes, trains, automobiles—and bikes

Most rally participants came by plane, bus, or car. Not the youth from St. Paul, Winneconne, Wis. They biked—200 miles.



The idea came—half-jokingly—from Mike Falck, one of five teens on St. Paul's youth council. Everyone else took him seriously.

"It took a full year to see the idea through, train extensively, and raise the money to go," said John Covach, pastor at St. Paul. "It's the only way you'll get youth volunteering to get up at 5:30 AM and exercise with their Christian friends."

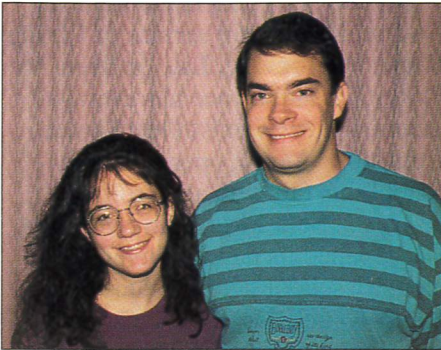
A group of 26 people left the Saturday before the rally and biked 40 to 60 miles each day to reach the rally on time. Members of the congregation provided an elaborate support team. One group was a repair and refreshment crew. Another group drove ahead, staked out and set up campgrounds, and did the shopping and cooking. "One woman even drove five miles per hour with her hazards on, warning people that a bike tour was ahead," said Covach.

"But, the best part was seeing the love of Jesus in the youth," he continued. "They would help each other, without complaint, because they were doing this as family. Their confession of faith was so great."

When one teen thanked the congregation for their support he said, "If it weren't for the Lord, we couldn't have done this. Without him, we would have been drained of desire to follow through, and we wouldn't have made it to St. Cloud without any problems."

## World missionaries commissioned

Four pastors were commissioned as world missionaries by their home congregations in August. Michael Ewart, a 1995 seminary graduate, and pastor Tedd Wendt, former minister at McCook, Neb., and Norton, Kan., were sent to Russia.

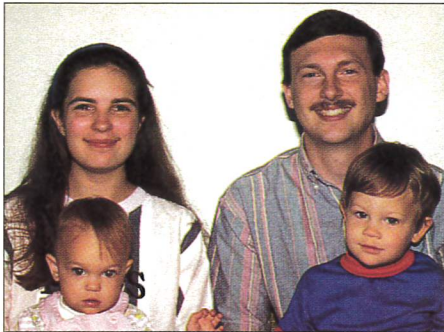


Jennifer and Michael Ewart, Russia

Eric Vertein, another 1995 seminary graduate, and Arno Wolfgramm, former pastor at First German, Manitowoc, Wis., traveled to Bulgaria. All missionaries arrived on their fields and are studying new languages as they share the gospel.



Tedd Wendt, Russia



Eric and Monica Vertein, children Andrew and Allison, Bulgaria



Joan and Arno Wolfgramm, Bulgaria

## Worship workshop in the works

If you have a strong interest in worship, especially as a leader, musician, or planner, WELS Commission on Worship has just the workshop for you. A national conference on worship, music, and the arts will be held July 21-24 at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.

For a brochure contact Commission on Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3265.

## rē · li · giōn

Defining religion

**angel:** a spirit being God created some time during the week of creation (Exodus 20:11). Angels praise God (Isaiah 6:2,3), deliver his messages (Luke 1:28-38, 2:8-14), and serve him by helping and protecting his people (Daniel 6:22, Acts 5:18-20, Psalm 91:11,12). They are numerous (2 Kings 6:16,17, Matthew 26:53) and powerful (Psalm 103:20, Genesis 19:10,11).

**DON'T  
KEEP  
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MAGAZINE!**

### Share it!

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; 414/256-3232.

## Mission for the Visually Impaired loses long-time volunteer

Ruth Wedl died Oct. 7 at the age of 79. For the past 15 years, she volunteered at WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI). As general manager of the office, she was directly responsible for putting *Northwestern Lutheran* on audiocassette and into braille.

"She was the consummate administrator," said Al Woltdt, administrator for special ministries. "Her love for her Lord and his people motivated her to serve."

MVI's goal is to reproduce in large print, audiocassette, or braille, any material produced by WELS. While Wedl was manager, a new computer system was installed that made it quicker and easier for *Christian Worship* to be transcribed into braille.

For more information on MVI or to receive NL on audiocassette or in braille, contact Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Ave, St. Paul MN 55107.



## District news



Almost 200 people celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Dakota-Montana District. A choir and brass instrumentalists, made up of members from the district, provided music for the service.

### Dakota-Montana District celebrates 75th anniversary

About 200 people gathered in Mobridge, S.D., to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Dakota-Montana District. An anniversary worship service and a banquet were held on July 10. Former district president Reginald Pope preached at the service where almost \$3,000 in offerings was collected for the District Scholarship Fund.

A history of the district, Northwestern Lutheran Academy, and each of the district congregations is available for \$17. For more information contact Zion Lutheran Church, 620 W 9 St, Mobridge SD 57601.

### Michigan

On Sept. 17, Lola Park, Redford, celebrated **Edward Zell Sr.'s** 50th anniversary in the preaching ministry. **Lola Park** also celebrated its 50th anniversary on Nov. 19.

### Nebraska

**Redeemer, Hastings**, celebrated its 50th anniversary in June. . . . **St. John, Stanton**, dedicated a new gym and fellowship hall and remodeled

kitchen and school on July 9. . . . **Peace, Carlock, S.D.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on Sept. 24. . . . The Nebraska district commissioned two world missionaries. One is a new world field—work among the Sioux. Pastor **James Fleming** was commissioned to spend half his time reaching out to the Native Americans in and around the Rosebud Reservation. The other portion of his time will be spent at Zion, Mission, S.D. The other commissioning: Pastor **Tedd Wendt** as missionary to Novosibirsk, Russia.

*Keith Petersen*

### Northern Wisconsin

Riverview, Appleton, celebrated 25 years in the teaching ministry for **Ruth Schmidt** and **Kathleen Barfknecht** on Sept. 10. . . . The 32nd annual meeting of the Wisconsin Synod Lutheran Ladies' League was held Sept. 13. More than 200 women from the Fox Valley and Manitowoc conferences attended.

*Jan Eggert*

### South Atlantic

**Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.**, has entered a year-long project with St. John, Markesan, Wis. Good

Shepherd will benefit from the advice and help of an established congregation; St. John will enjoy learning what life is like in a mission setting. Members from St. John will take a spring break in Florida to help with Good Shepherd's evangelism work.

Seventy-two people attended the first public worship service of **Living Hope, Mandeville, La.**, on Sept. 10. Since then attendance has averaged around 40. . . . **Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn.**, opened its pre-school this fall with an enrollment of 40. . . . **Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.**, opened its new Lutheran elementary school with 19 students. . . . **Keith Kruck**, Rock of Ages, Madison, Tenn., passed the 30-year milestone of his ministry this summer.



God has seen us through the **busiest hurricane season on record**. As of Oct. 15, mainland congregations have suffered no more than minor damage and the inconvenience of power outages; our mission on Antigua suffered property damage, but no bodily harm. The hurricane season ends Nov. 30, so y'all come on down for your winter vacations.

*Philip Wilde*

### Western Wisconsin

**Madison Institutional Ministry** is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Since 1982, Western Wisconsin district congregations supported this ministry. During 1994 Pastor Clement, chaplain of the ministry, made 3,713 hospital visits.



## "Parent Pledge" provides for networking and support

Area Lutheran high schools are asking parents to take a stand against student drug and alcohol abuse by signing the "parent pledge."

This pledge states: "As Christians we believe that a person's entire life is a loving response to our Savior's love for us. . . . As Christian parents and members of the [high school name] family, we want to provide opportunities for our teens to socialize without the outside influence, pressure, or threats connected with the misuse of alcohol or other drugs." It continues by asking parents to monitor their children's social

gatherings and contact other parents if problems occur.

A parent pledge networking list is then made available to parents in the high school, allowing them to support and encourage each other as well as discuss standards of behavior for their children.

Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis., and St. Croix LHS, St. Paul, Minn., are two of the schools using this program.



## WELS prints in Spanish

To assist congregations reaching out to Hispanics, WELS will continue publishing *The People's Bible* in Spanish. A grant from the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation will cover the cost of publishing nine volumes of this Lutheran Bible and commentary.

For more information contact Paul Hartman, director of mass communications to Latin America, 10672 Quezada, El Paso TX 79935; 915/592-9900.

## Home missions added

Manpower and exploratory status were granted to Eagle, Colo.; Farmington, N.M.; Peoria, Ill.; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Summerville (Charleston), S.C.

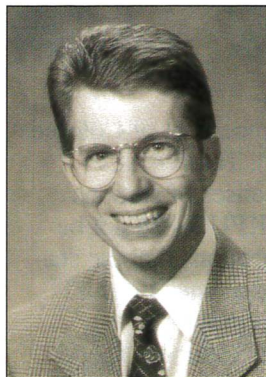
Three areas—Bellevue (Green Bay), Wis.; Cedar Grove, Wis.; and Rib Mountain (Wausau), Wis.—were granted mission status, allowing them to move from the research to the development stage.

## Gerlach heads worship commission

"First, I need to listen and learn," said Bryan Gerlach, administrator for WELS Commission on Worship. Although there has been a worship commission, "WELS has never had a worship administrator. I want to start by discovering the needs of our congregations, pastors, musicians, and teachers."

One of Gerlach's goals includes balancing the strong points of worship in WELS churches with a greater sense of awe and reverence. "We are redeemed saints, not worship consumers. I want people to appreciate the difference between coming to church, and coming to worship."

He also wants to coordinate resources for worship leaders: MIDI technology, workshops for organists



and choir directors, enrichment for pastors—anything connected to worship.

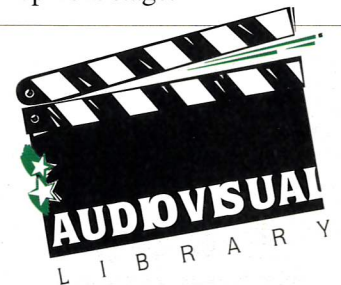
A 1983 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Gerlach

served at Trinity, El Paso, Texas, and St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif. He has also studied music on the graduate level. He and his wife, Jackie, also a musician, are the parents of four children, Jacob, 9; Andrew, 7; Gregory, 4; and Michael, 2.

## rē·li·giōn

Defining religion

**hope:** trust or confidence; in the Bible, Christian hope is not some vague longing for something we don't have. It is confidence based on the certain promises of God. "We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).



**Joseph in Egypt** (Code 8229)—1995, 25 min. color PIJA (\$7.50). The story begins with Pharaoh's dreams with flashbacks to the "coat of many colors." Not every detail is based on Scripture.

**Forgive Us Our Debts** (Code 8224)—1995, 25 min. color PIJA (\$7.50). Features the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate that we need to forgive others as God has forgiven us.

Order from Audiovisual Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.



## Church of Sweden moves toward independence

The synod of the Church of Sweden, the state church's highest decision-making body, has voted to accept an agreement that will make the church more independent of the government.

Under terms of the agreement between the Lutheran church and the government, the tax paid by all Swedes to support the church will be abolished, and a membership fee, to be established by local congregations, will be introduced.

In addition, children will not be automatically registered as church members, and baptism will become the normal way to church membership.

About 7.6 million of Sweden's 8.8 million people are members of the Church of Sweden.

The church's special place in Sweden will still be recognized in law, but authority over many church matters will shift from parliament to the synod.

## rē · li · giōn

### Defining religion

**Pelagianism:** The belief that human beings have the ability to save themselves apart from God's grace and the work of Christ. The teaching is named for Pelagius, a British monk who traveled in the Mediterranean world around AD 400.

Pelagianism was opposed by Augustine and condemned by the Council of Ephesus (431).

## Christianity making comeback in Cuba

Five years ago, said Rev. Hector Mendez, a Presbyterian minister from Cuba, no more than 60 worshippers came to his Havana church on Sundays. Today, about 1,000 come.

Many of the new worshippers are young people who have never previ-

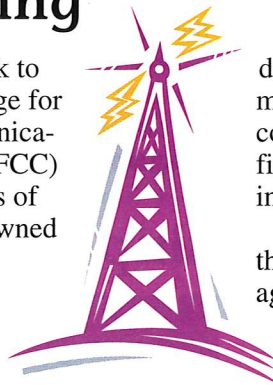
ously been involved in the church.

Mendez cited those figures recently as evidence that church attendance in Cuba is on the upswing, according to a recent report by Ecumenical News International.

## LCMS radio stations get favorable court ruling

In a case dating back to January 1990, a judge for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) renewed the licenses of two radio stations owned by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in spite of a challenge by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP asked that the licenses of stations KFUO-AM and KFUO-FM not be renewed on the grounds that the stations did not have a "meaningful" affirmative action program.

Judge Arthur I. Steinberg found that granting the stations' renewals would serve the public interest. He



did, however, impose Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) reporting conditions and assessed a \$50,000 fine for inaccuracies made in describing the stations' EEO program.

In his ruling, Steinberg determined that "no individual was discriminated against by the stations because of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex" and that no evidence was presented "to indicate that any adverse discriminatory act ever occurred."

Elated by the decision, Rev. Paul Devantier, executive director of the Board for Communication Services of LCMS, nevertheless cautioned, "We have a number of questions about the fine and the ruling, including questions about the religious freedom issues involved."

## Church giving remains stagnant, study says

Giving by church members remains stagnant, and less of what is given is leaving local congregations for activities at the regional, national, or world level, according to a study by empty tomb inc., a Champaign, Ill.-based religious research organization.

According to the study, of the \$367.39 donated per capita by full or confirmed church members in 1993 (the last full year for which statistics

were available), \$304.84 stayed in local congregations and was used to pay the pastor's salary, to maintain buildings, or to pay for other internal expenses. Only \$62.55 went to support church work at the regional, national, and international level—down from \$63.99 in 1992.

According to the researchers, church members gave 2.52 percent of their disposable income to churches.

## WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD Financial report

## CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Nine months ended September 30, 1995

	Total Subscription			Offerings Received			
	Communicants 12/31/94	1995	Year to Date Projected	Sept Offerings	Nine Month Offerings	Percent of Sbscrptn	Annld Ave Per Commun
Arizona-California	16,420	\$ 950,146	\$ 633,717	\$ 72,821	\$ 645,270	101.8%	52.40
Dakota-Montana	9,340	432,230	250,566	23,499	260,125	103.8	37.13
Michigan	37,272	2,090,667	1,315,484	132,068	1,318,830	100.3	47.18
Minnesota	44,834	2,454,042	1,574,202	185,332	1,457,143	92.6	43.33
Nebraska	10,010	537,906	319,620	35,898	340,803	106.6	45.40
North Atlantic	3,605	326,428	225,088	25,431	228,542	101.5	84.53
Northern Wisconsin	61,350	2,524,580	1,535,244	130,281	1,435,874	93.5	31.21
Pacific Northwest	4,745	252,972	162,372	16,093	160,588	98.9	45.12
South Atlantic	6,172	386,716	273,857	26,592	268,903	98.2	58.09
South Central	4,053	314,366	214,181	27,238	230,443	107.6	75.81
Southeastern Wisconsin	58,165	3,235,311	1,994,873	204,185	1,834,069	91.9	42.04
Western Wisconsin	60,255	2,929,615	1,823,035	222,424	1,886,448	103.5	41.74
Total - This Year	316,221	16,434,979	10,322,239	1,101,862	10,067,038	97.5	42.45
Total - Last Year	316,748	16,240,856	10,065,361	1,191,006	9,886,941	98.2	41.62

## CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Three months ended September 30, 1995

	1995 Actual	1994 Actual	1995 Budget
Revenues:	\$	\$	\$
Synod Mission Offerings	3,353,261	3,379,046	3,332,000
Gifts and memorials	481,756	39,753	222,000
Bequest/planned giving income	4,614	154,355	78,000
Tuition and fees	2,508,309	2,273,701	2,637,000
Other income	10,091	11,263	17,000
Transfers-endwmt/trust earnings	56,178	45,289	50,000
Transfers-gift trust	2,059,572	1,769,248	2,100,000
Transfers-continuing programs	937,343	555,984	962,000
Transfers-other	50	-	-
Total revenues	9,411,174	8,228,639	9,398,000
Expenditures:			
Administration Division	642,807	660,655	778,000
Home Missions Division	1,423,608	1,380,655	1,626,000
World Missions Division	1,886,071	1,898,238	1,904,000
Ministerial Education Division	5,683,016	4,912,665	5,425,000
Parish Services Division	335,277	296,123	334,000
Fiscal Services Division	417,181	436,687	409,000
Total expenditures	10,387,960	9,585,023	10,476,000
Net change for the period	(976,786)	(1,356,384)	
Net assets - beginning of year	627,702	155,746	
Net assets - end of period	(349,084)	(1,200,638)	

## CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Sept 30, 1995

Sept 30, 1994

	Sept 30, 1995	Sept 30, 1994
Assets:	\$	\$
Cash and cash equivalents	207,256	26,960
Due from other funds	11,610	-
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	91,750	83,250
Other accounts receivable	64,707	91,960
Mortgage note receivable	21,240	22,813
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	53,561	30,233
Total assets	358,124	163,216
Liabilities and net assets:		
Due to other funds	-	826,502
Due to schools	524,414	370,991
Accounts payable	166,361	
Total liabilities	707,208	1,363,854
Net assets	(349,084)	(1,200,638)
Total liabilities and net assets	358,124	163,216

## Americans' views on speaking in tongues

A January 1995 poll by Barna Research Group, Ltd. reports that among Americans who have heard of the gift of tongues, viewpoints vary widely. For instance:

**73%** say that speaking in tongues is biblical, but not necessary for a Christian to lead a full life.

**40%** say that if they were to speak in tongues they would be frightened by the experience.

**37%** say that speaking in tongues is a sign that a person has truly let God take total control of his/her life.

**35%** say people who speak in tongues are usually sincere, but are more likely involved in an emotional outburst that is neither biblical nor of God.

**28%** say even if people believe they are speaking in tongues, it is not an experience directed by God.

**23%** say that if they did speak in tongues, they would be too embarrassed to let other people know.

**23%** say speaking in tongues is a sign of spiritual maturity.

**8%** say speaking in tongues is evidence of demonic possession.

# Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement,  
call 414/256-3232; FAX 414/256-3899.  
Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY

### Pastors:

**Chworowsky, John**, from Ascension, Roseville, Mich., to Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis.

**Doelger, Marvin**, from St. John, Caledonia, Minn., to retirement

**Duford, Charles**, from Abiding Word, Somers, Wis., to Peace, Houghton, Mich.

**Gates, Lawrence R.**, from Our Savior, Wausau, Wis., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

**Kassebaum, Jerry A.**, from Redeemer, Merritt Island, Fla., to Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.

**Kolander, Jonathan**, from Hope, Indian River, Mich., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.

**Otto, Carl T.**, from North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis., to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.

**Warning, Gregg M.**, from King of Kings, Willoughby, Ohio, to Zion, Tyler/Immanuel, Island Lake Township, Minn.

**Wessel, Mark W.**, from St. John, Dowagiac, Mich., to Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio.

Correction: Mark Henke did not accept a call to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis., as was reported in the Nov. issue.

### The synod administration building will be closed:

December 25 & 26—Christmas

January 1—New Year's Day

Callers may leave voice mail messages on those days, 256-3888; FAX 256-3899.

### Congregation treasurers

The cutoff date for Synod Mission Offering (SMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 1995 lock box offerings will be credited as 1995 receipts through January 9, 1996, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as December offerings on the remittance coupon. Please note that offerings must be mailed to the lock box rather than delivered to the synod offices.

Randy Matter, controller

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Hudson, Wis.**—Emmanuel (20). Dec. 10. Service, 9 AM; fellowship brunch, 10:15 AM. 715/386-9851.

**South St. Paul, Minn.**—Grace (75). Dec. 25, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, Mar. 17, Apr. 28. Services, 10 AM, plus a 2 PM service on Apr. 28; meals follow. Fellowship party, 6 PM, Apr. 27; 612/451-1035.

**Wrightstown, Wis.**—St. John school (50). Apr. 28. Service, 9:30 AM; open house, 11 AM; dinner and program, noon. 261 Clay St, Wrightstown WI 54180; 414/532-4361.

**Wonewoc, Wis.**—St. Paul (125). Jan. 14, theme Sunday; Apr. 28, confirmation reunion; Aug. 11, fellowship picnic; Oct. 27, anniversary heritage. Confirmands contact Rachelle Richert, PO Box 52, Wonewoc WI 53968.

## COMING EVENTS

**Lutheran Chorale Concert**—Prelude to Christmas 1995. Dec. 3, 3 PM and 7 PM. Atonement, 4500 N Sherman Blvd, Milwaukee; 414/871-1224.

**Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Easter break**—Contrary to the catalog, Easter break will begin at 11:35 AM, Apr. 3. Classes resume at 7:30 AM, Apr. 16.

**European Study Tour**—A tour of Luther lands, Austria, and Switzerland led by Professors Arnold and Paul Koelpin. June 15-July 6. Approximate cost: \$2,400—includes airfare, land transportation in Europe, hotels and meals, and group entrance fees. Contact Special Services, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142.

**Women's retreat**—Christian Woman Today retreat. Mar. 15-17. Country Inn, Waukesha, Wis. Naomi Schnitker, 414/784-9477.

**Women's retreat**—Today's Christian Women's retreat. Mar. 22-24. Stouffer Renaissance Hotel, Battle Creek, Mich. Laurie, 616/773-2380.

**Women's retreat**—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. Apr. 12-14, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866.

**WELS handbell festival**—Apr. 20-21. St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn. Cheryl Diener, 223 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203.

## ITEMS AVAILABLE

**Evangelism big books**—"Christian Countdown to Christmas." Commission on Youth Discipleship has published the third in a series of four big books for pre-K through third grade. To order the book and accompanying resources (catalog item 38-4002, \$14.95) contact Northwestern Publishing House; 1-800-662-6022.

**Newsletter for singles**—Looking for fellowship, fun, and friendship with Christian singles? For information and a copy of the newsletter, contact SHARE (Singles Helping one Another on the Road to Eternity), PO Box 341004, Milwaukee WI 53219; Susan Johnson, 414/546-0275; Dan Stege, 414/744-1544. All singles welcome.

**Organ**—with Leslie speaker. Free for cost of shipping. Dorothy Simmons, 608/752-3097.

**Organ**—for mission church. Hammond, excellent condition. Free for cost of shipping. 414/757-6457.

**Organ**—Rhythm II Hammond T-422. Free for cost of shipping. Good Shepherd, Beloit, Wis., 608/362-0669.

## MLC EXTENSION COURSE

**Interpreting and Teaching the Bible, SM 9024**—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Jan. 26-27, Feb. 16-17, Mar. 8-9, 29-30, and Apr. 19-20. Fri.: 6-9 PM; Sat.: 9 AM-4 PM. The course is part of the certification requirements for MLC's staff ministry program, but cannot be applied to other synodical certification programs. Contact Special Services, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142.

## SERVICE TIMES

**Fort Knox/Radcliff/Elizabethtown, Ky.**—Sunday, 10:45 AM; 502/425-1101.

## NAMES WANTED

**Home schooling families and congregations**—Those interested in forming a self-supporting, synod-wide home schooling assistance organization. This will provide guidance, books, lesson plans, and instructional materials. Send name, address, and SASE to Pastor Londgren, St. John home school survey, 1002 N McEwan, Clare MI 48617; 616/348-2633. Return names by Mar. 1.

**Camp Verde/Rimrock/Lake Montezuma, Ariz.**—Pastor Gary Haag, 1450 E Fir St, Cottonwood AZ 86326; 520/634-0630. Or contact Bill Lipke, 452 Spruce, Camp Verde AZ 86322; 520/567-3321.

**Students at Northwestern/Loyola/DePaul University, Chicago**—Steven Radunzel, 2238 Central St #1, Evanston IL 60201; 708/864-5230.

**Sudbury/Parry Sound/North Bay, Ontario**—Pastor Douglas Priestap, 165 Kingsview Dr, Bolton, Ontario, Canada L7E 3W8; 1-800-561-1917 or 905/857-7486.

**Oakville/Mississauga/Burlington/Hamilton, Ontario**—Pastor Douglas Priestap, 165 Kingsview Dr, Bolton, Ontario, Canada L7E 3W8; 1-800-561-1917 or 905/857-7486.

**Ken-Caryl Ranch/SW Denver Metro Area, Colo.**—Pastor Ross Stelljes, 11198 Wildhorse Peak, Littleton CO 80127; 303/904-1214.

## NEEDED

**Sunday school leaflets**—Copies of the Sunday school series, "The Story of God's Love." Good for teaching English as a second language. Contact Jim Bourman, 4410 S Kirkwood, Houston TX 77072; 713/498-2634.

**Furnishings**—Altar, Bible stand, candle holders and candles, offering plates, paraments, candle lighter/extinguisher, guest book stand, advent wreath stand, pews, Allen organ with bench, wooden church building with bell. For Georgetown, Tex., mission. Contact Alice Pennington, 512/863-7364.

**Book**—*The Life of Christ*, by Fahling. Contact Merel Frank, 708/823-2992.

**Information on activities**—For synod-wide calendar. Congregational, circuit, and district events where more than one congregation participates. Include district, event, time, place, and contact person. Send to WELS Communication Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210.

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**Director of Nursing**—The Lutheran Home, River Falls, Wis., is seeking an R.N. with healthcare experience for the position of director of nursing. Send or FAX resume to The Lutheran Home, 640 N Main St, River Falls WI 54022; 1-800-679-2260, FAX 715/425-9911.

**Camp caretakers**—Camp Luther, Wasilla, Alaska. Contact Camp Luther, c/o Pastor Fred Voss, 11600 Elmore Rd, Anchorage AK 99516.

# Precious is the child

Karl R. Gurgel

Your birth is special to us, your grandparents. You are our first grandchild, the start of the next generation.

It's awe-inspiring, this precious gift of life! Your little fist is smaller than my thumb. The legs to which your tiny feet are attached look like Tinkertoys, so frail they seem. Unlike the most realistic doll your mother ever got for Christmas, your eyes really do follow me around the room. And the sound of your voice is not activated by pulling a string.

You are real and precious, as real and precious as your mother was to us when she was born. Like every newborn child, you are an indescribable gift of God's grace, a living token of his love for us.

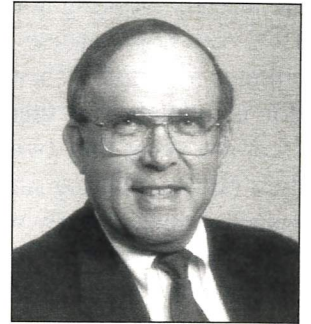
Yet, although you are precious to us, you are not perfect, just like your mom and dad and no different from us, your grandparents. It's not so evident yet, but it will be soon. Your thoughts will mislead you, your words and actions will be contrary to your mother and father's wishes—your heavenly Father's, too. That is why for you, just as for me, birth and death are linked. The sinful nature you inherited from your parents, the sinful nature they got from your grandparents, sentences all of us to death.

So, dear grandchild, from your first Christmas on, I want you to know and to love an even more precious child. His coming was even longer awaited than yours. His birth was even more miraculous. Because, as you will come to see, this child—the Christchild—is God's and is God.

Though he had a human mother just like yours, having God as his father, made the difference in his life. There would be no talking back to his mother, no temper tantrums, no fighting with other children. Unlike you and me, he would be perfect.

Though he was perfect, however, his birth was linked to death. For, you see, he was born to die for us. When he did, his father, our heavenly Father, gave us forgiveness. Endless life, therefore, is what you and I will share one day in heaven.

That is why, even as I want you to know how precious you are to me, from your first Christmas and for the rest of your life, I pray, you will know about an even more precious child, the Christchild. Precious is the child, the Christchild. And, because of him, so are you.



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

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*Though he had a human mother just like yours, having God as his father made the difference in his life.*

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# The fruit of the Spirit is self-control

James A Aderman

“When other people’s alarm clocks start ringing, they are already working at the gym,” a 1992 *Newsweek* article on Olympic athletes reported. “Their concentration is total, even at this early hour. Over and over, they twist and turn their bodies, making sure that each muscle knows exactly what to do. After practicing, they might head off for a few hours of school; then it’s back to the gym for an afternoon-into-evening session. And that’s in the off-season.”

## A response requiring training

Olympic training is not easy. It never was.

Two thousand years ago, Olympic candidates trained for 10 months. Epictetus, a first century Greek philosopher, said to the Olympians, “You must be orderly, living on spare food; abstain from the confections; make a point of exercising at the appointed time, in heat and in cold; nor drink cold water nor wine.” These athletes showed self-control.

A person in charge of his actions has self-control. An athlete may feel like breaking curfew, quitting the team, skipping drills, but he won’t allow those options. The Greek word goes below actions

to attitude. Spirit-produced self-control describes a person so (literally) “in a position of power over” himself that he doesn’t even think about having options.

## A response to God’s grace

Self-control is the believer’s response to God’s grace. It’s the attitude that grows the more the believer recognizes Jesus “died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Luther says, “This [word] refers to sobriety, temperance, or moderation in every walk of life. Paul contrasts it with the works of the flesh. He wants Christians to live a chaste and sober life; not to be adulterers, immoral, or lustful persons; to marry if they cannot live chastely; not to be contentious; not to go to court, etc.; not to be drunken, not to be addicted to intoxication; but to abstain from all these things.”

## A response aided by the Spirit

Self-control shows itself as the grateful saint does what is unnatural for humans. A Christian doesn’t lack

in zeal, is joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. He blesses, rather than curses, those who persecute him. He is careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. He does not take revenge. He overcomes evil with good.

Self-control takes more than an Olympian’s determination. It takes the Spirit’s power, power he shares with every believer from the moment he brings souls to faith.

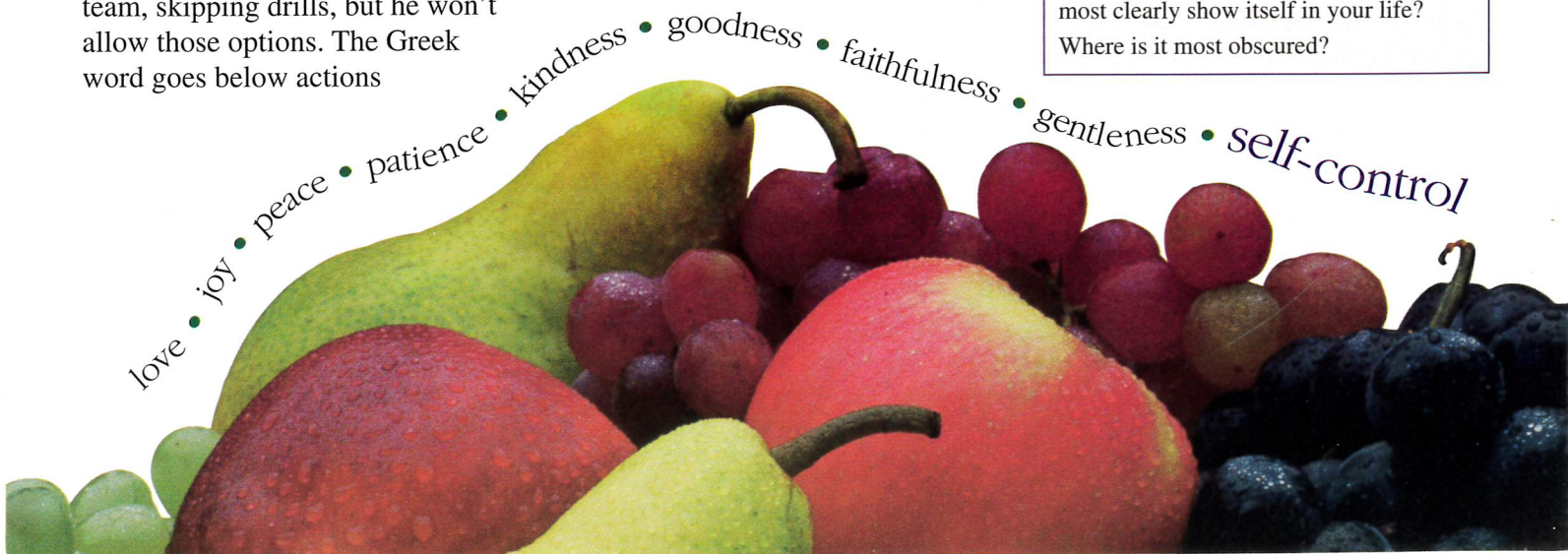
Because the Spirit lives within, believers are capable of Olympian-like self-control in life’s race toward glory.

*James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.*

## FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Paul compares Christians to athletes, who go into “strict training [i.e., practice ‘self-control’] . . . to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”

1. How do we know Paul is not saying our self-control earns the crown? (cf. Philippians 3:12 & 2 Timothy 1:8-12)
2. What prompts us to run the race of life in strict training?
3. Where does the Spirit’s self-control most clearly show itself in your life? Where is it most obscured?



# St. Mary, mother of God

Victor H. Prange

If you have the first printing of *Christian Worship*, you will notice that hymn 552, stanza 16, is titled "St. Mary, Mother of God." In subsequent printings this title was changed to "St. Mary, Mother of our Lord." This change was made not because there was anything wrong with the original title but to make it consistent with the way the festival honoring Mary, held on August 15, is listed in the church year calendar (CW, p. 160).

Lutherans may be shocked to hear Mary referred to as "mother of God." They are not always aware that this title is applied to her in our Lutheran Confessions. The summary to Article VII (Person of Christ) in the Formula of Concord, paragraph seven of the affirmative statements, declares: "We believe, teach, and confess that Mary conceived and bore not only a plain, ordinary, mere man but the veritable Son of God; for this reason she is rightly called, and truly is, the mother of God."

One reason this title may upset us is its use in the "Ave Maria," a common prayer among Roman Catholics and set to music by several prominent composers. The words of this prayer are: "Hail Mary (Latin: Ave Maria), full of grace, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

The first two sentences of this prayer

are taken from Luke 1:28,42 and confess biblical doctrine. The last sentence was added in the 15th century. In 1568 Pope Pius V ordered the daily use of the "Ave Maria."

We have two objections to this prayer. First, it is addressed to Mary. Our prayers should be addressed to the true God and not to any human being no matter how blessed. Second, it is foolish and false to believe that Mary is able to intercede for us before the throne of God now and at the hour of our death. The Lord Jesus Christ is our intercessor before the throne of his Father (Romans 8:34). His intercession is effective because he died and rose for our salvation.

As Lutherans, we do not object to calling Mary "mother of God." To give Mary this title expresses the truth we celebrate at Christmas: the one born in Bethlehem's manger is truly God. To call Mary "mother of God" is not to honor her; rather, the title means to honor her Son. It means to marvel at the miracle of grace that God should choose a fully human being like Mary to bear his eternal Word. It means to move us to sing:

"This is the Christ, our God most high,  
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;  
He will himself your Savior be  
From all your sins to set you free."  
(CW 38:3)

*Victor Prange is pastor at Peace, Janesville, Wisconsin.*

*To call Mary*

*"mother of God"*

*is not to honor*

*her; rather, the*

*title means to*

*honor her Son.*

# Thoughts about Jesus' birthday and about amens

John F. Brug

*Some churches celebrate Jesus' birthday with cake, candles, and singing "Happy Birthday." Is this appropriate?*

Such activities may be a well-meant attempt to use an event that is a happy part of the lives of small children to impress them with the reality of Jesus' birth as true man. Such a celebration, however, may trivialize that the baby in the manger was true God and now rules in heaven as our victorious Savior.

His birth is a joyous occasion, but reverence and worship are the appropriate ways of celebrating it, even for children. The wise men and shepherds worshiped the Christchild, brought him gifts, and told others about him. Mary pondered the meaning of his birth. Our celebration of his birth, regardless of our age, should focus on these same elements.

Teaching children the Christmas story and hymns that focus on the miracle of God becoming man, on the work Jesus came to do, and on his finished work and his rule in heaven, provides the best way to celebrate Jesus' birth meaningfully and reverently.

Jesus is our friend, but we don't speak to him as we do to our buddy down the block. Our goal in our holiday celebrations is to teach children a familiarity with Jesus governed by reverence and respect. It does not seem to me that a

"happy birthday" party can easily contribute to building such respect, and it may be offensive to many Christians who perceive it as irreverent. For these reasons, I feel such parties are inappropriate, and, therefore, should be avoided.

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*Worshipers did not use "amen" to end their own prayer, but to respond to a prayer or statement by someone else.*

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*Why were the amens left off the hymns in our new hymnal? It bothers me when I get to the end of a beautiful hymn and can't say "amen."*

Part of the hymnal committee's rationale for omitting the amens is based on the original Hebrew use of "amen." Worshipers did not use "amen" to end their own prayer, but to respond to a prayer or statement by someone else. See Deuteronomy 27 for an example of this practice. All of the Old Testament occurrences of "amen" are of this type.

Most New Testament prayers do not end with "amen." Here too "amen" is often used as the response to someone else's prayer (1 Corinthians 14:16, Revelation 5:14, 22:20). There is, however, some New Testament precedent for



using "amen" as a conclusion of one's own prayer, since Paul often uses it to conclude the doxologies that are common in his letters.

The hymnal committee, however, decided to return to the original practice of using "amen" as a response to a prayer spoken by someone else. This usage occurs a number of times in our new liturgies.

A second reason for omitting the amens after the hymns is that the practice of concluding a hymn with "amen" was not the traditional practice of the church. It has only been common in the last century.

Most contemporary hymnals are again omitting the amens. Our hymnal went along with this trend.

*John Brug is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.*

*Have a question? Send it to Questions, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX 414/256-3899.*



Joel Gerlach and NL received a number of letters regarding his Oct. editorial on *Promise Keepers*. Here Gerlach responds to issues and concerns voiced by our readers. —ed.

Responses to my *Promise Keepers* editorial expressed concern about the criticism of PK. The editorial focused on the unscriptural ecumenism of the movement expressed in promise six.

Another approach would have been to analyze the theology set forth in the book, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*. Space restrictions for an editorial would not have been sufficient for such an analysis. But it needs to be said that PK is flawed, not only because it ignores biblical principles of fellowship, but more seriously because the PK program employs the law to accomplish what only the gospel can do. The law does not change hearts. It exposes sin. Only God's promise of forgiveness in Christ can change hearts and give the strength to keep promises.

PK does offer a correct diagnosis of an acute moral/social problem in society. Although its prescription for a cure sounds biblical on the surface, it does not stand up under the scrutiny of God's Word.

PK theology also teaches that the Holy Spirit works independently of the means of grace. According to Scripture, the Holy Spirit has promised to come to sinners only through the Word and sacraments.

The Holy Spirit is never responsible for false teaching. Satan is. That was the point of referring to his influence. To suggest that Satan may use a popular movement to disguise the importance of fidelity to God's Word merely reflects what we learn from St. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 11:14, "Satan . . . masquerades as an angel of light."

**After reading Joel Gerlach's article concerning Promise Keepers,** [Oct.] I felt compelled to respond. Why not have WELS provide similar—and more accurate—opportunities for Christian men in such dire need today? There has been one attempt. I had the privilege to attend a WELS men's retreat. The first retreat was held last year with only 50 men in attendance. This year, they expected about 100 men. Barely 30 WELS men attended. What a shame. I went with my father and brother, and it was one of the most inspirational and memorable events in our lives. Hats off to Terry Pope and the team who made it happen. Is there any reason for such a lack of interest in Christian men's fellowship?

Michael Wilkes  
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

**If a picture is worth a thousand words, I feel the editor owes Las Vegas another cover page and a feature article.** The picture of a city with a road sign cautioning "Temptation Ahead" [Oct.] could rightly be labeled Anytown, USA. Yes, temptation does abound in Las Vegas.

But also, by the grace and blessing of our Lord, so does his church abound in Las Vegas: three growing WELS congregations in the area and a fourth call to a mission developer.

Linda Drexler  
Rancho Palos Verdes, California

Send your letters to Readers Forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX 414/256-3899. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity and conciseness. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or Northwestern Lutheran.

This is the beginning  
of our three-year series.  
We invite you to join us  
and read along—or start  
over, if you completed  
the series last month.

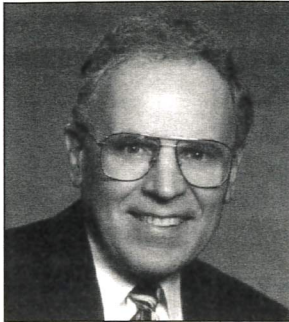
THROUGH MY  
**BIBLE** in 3 YEARS

January 1996

- 1. 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:16
- 2. 2 Cor. 8:1-15
- 3. 2 Cor. 8:16-9:15
- 4. 2 Cor. 10
- 5. 2 Cor. 11:1-21a
- 6. 2 Cor. 11:21b-12:10
- 7. 2 Cor. 12:11-21
- 8. 2 Cor. 13
- 9. Micah 1 and 2
- 10. Micah 3:1-4:7
- 11. Micah 4:8-5:15
- 12. Micah 6:1-7:6
- 13. Micah 7:7-20
- 14. 1 Timothy 1
- 15. 1 Tm. 2
- 16. 1 Tm. 3:1-13
- 17. 1 Tm. 3:14-4:5
- 18. 1 Tm. 4:6-16
- 19. 1 Tm. 5:1-6:2
- 20. 1 Tm. 6:3-21
- 21. Titus 1
- 22. Tit. 2
- 23. Tit. 3
- 24. 2 Timothy 1
- 25. 2 Tm. 2
- 26. 2 Tm. 3
- 27. 2 Tm. 4
- 28. Leviticus 1
- 29. Lev. 2 and 3
- 30. Lev. 4:1-6:7
- 31. Lev. 6:8-7:38

Next month's readings will appear in the next issue.

# All I want for Christmas



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

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*Jesus didn't come  
to do away with  
Jingle Bells; he  
came to do away  
with sin and death.*

---

I think you'll agree with me: "Commercialism can ruin Christmas." I know I've said so many times. Christmas after Christmas, when I was in the parish, I reminded my members of the dangers: "It's a crying shame what the world has done to this sacred day, and all too often we follow, like lambs to the slaughter. Be warned!"

Then one year I heard one of the church's officers say, "I don't want to hear so much negative at Christmas. I come to church for the comfort and joy of what that day means."

That set me to thinking. It took a lot of thinking, because I didn't want to believe I had brought anything but the best to the congregation. It's not as if I had neglected to add the good news of the newborn Christ.

But my member had struck a chord.

Maybe we can become so afraid commercialism is ruining Christmas that our fear ruins Christmas for us. We focus on what's wrong with the season, and by the time we get to what's right, we've lost the spirit for it. It's insidious. The world gets its way even as we inveigh against it. And the devil sings, "Tra la la la."

I'm reminded: Jesus didn't come to do away with Jingle Bells; he came to do away with sin and death. Our problem isn't too much tinsel; it's too little of God's glory. Our calling is to lead the

lambs to the Good Shepherd.

Of course commercialism and materialism and hundreds of other isms surface at this time of year and threaten to obscure the Savior's birth. They're nothing new. They're just full blown now.

And we need to condemn them.

However, I think my member was onto something. Let's celebrate the Savior of the world; let's not dwell on what's wrong with the celebration around us. Let the

song of heaven's angels silence the tra la las of devils. Let the light of the Word-made-flesh shine brighter than the floodlights across our landscapes. Let the message of Bethlehem's manger sound louder, longer, and farther than the call to Christmas sales. Let the joy found in Jesus be greater than the joy of many presents.

That's what I want for Christmas. Don't you?



**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.**

**Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of men.**

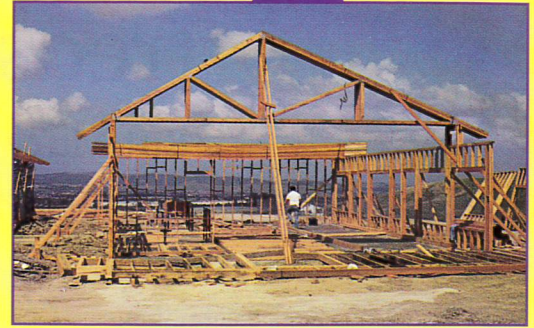
**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-4,14.**

*Gary P. Baumler*

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Photo courtesy of John Mallow

. . . serving people of all ages with the gospel



Photo courtesy of John Mallow

. . . revitalizing congregations

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# Treasure and ponder

“But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:19

Paul E. Kelm

Christmas begs celebrating. Beautiful and varied worship draws us in unparalleled numbers. Traditions and songs commemorate centuries of heritage. Family reunions and the memories of Christmases past add emotional depth. Big dinners and bigger parties lift people above their routine. Lights and colors, smells and symbols. Christmas means celebration.

But you may be missing the best part of Christmas if you don't spend some time all by yourself, treasuring and pondering the way Mary did.

### The incarnation

Spend some time treasuring the incarnation. That God became man to save rebel mankind, that the Holy One should endure all the consequences of our unholiness, that the Omnipotent became a

helpless dependent in hapless surroundings, that the Incomprehensible made himself known in person. Ah, how Love surprised us!

But ponder the virgin birth, the miracle that assures us God will stop at nothing to redeem us, the mystery that the Son of God became fully human without sacrificing any deity, the message that our Lord became our brother and knows personally what we face and feel. Think about it!

### The fulfilled promise

Spend some time treasuring the fulfillment of promise. All those years and all that hoping. Despite hundreds of reasons to renege and thousands of people who didn't care. We have a God as good as his word. We have a Word proven reliable.

Our hope this Christmas has a

basis in fact and a reason to look forward.

But ponder the plan of salvation, prophecies, and pieces carefully developed, because nothing is left to chance; obstacles overcome and events orchestrated, because everything serves God's purpose of saving us. Ponder the love of God that wrote you into this plan before ever you were, the power of God to implement his plan for you no matter what. Think about it!

### The resulting praise

Treasure the Gloria in Excelsis, that angels should find the highest reason for praise in the lowest position on earth, that God should bridge chasms of guilt and centuries of separation with a baby. But ponder that angels marvel at God's love, sing for joy, and crowd near his cradle. And they didn't even need saving!

Treasure the unsophisticated simplicity of the shepherds' witness, the unquestioning obedience of Joseph, the devotional reflection of Mary, the lavish gifts of the Magi, for they are the role models for our Christmas. Ponder the truth that changed their lives, and let that truth renew yours.

The best part of Christmas is just between you and Jesus.



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