

LUTHERAN



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paradise to
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Heart to heart

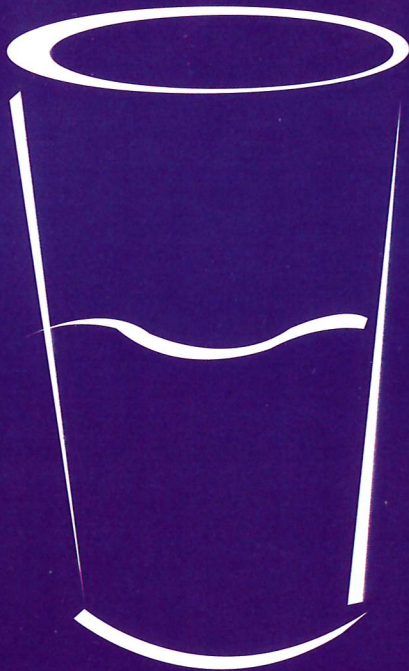
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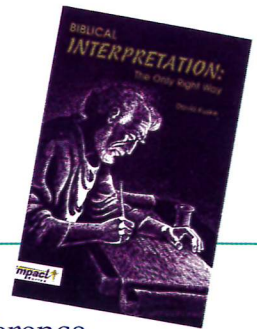


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We have God's Word to depend on

We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place. 2 Peter 1:19

Richard D. Balge

Would it be easier to trust Jesus if we had seen his miracles with our own eyes? Some who did see his miracles said the devil was at work. Some who followed him because of his miracles deserted him because of his teaching. When he raised Lazarus from the grave, his enemies sought more zealously to put him to death. Remember, Jesus said to Thomas that they are blessed who have not seen but have believed.

The foundation of our faith and our joy in God's salvation is not our experience, but God's dependable Word.

The word of eyewitnesses

From the start, some people believed that the story of our salvation was not literal truth, but an elaborate myth. In response, the apostle Peter wrote: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). Peter and his fellow apostles were reporters, not novelists, when they recorded that Jesus kept the law perfectly in our place, that he rescued us from death by his death, and that God raised him from the dead because these things are so.

Peter remembered what he, James, and John saw and heard when Jesus was transfigured. Furthermore, they had seen Jairus' daughter, the young man of Nain,

and Lazarus of Bethany raised from the dead. They saw the risen Christ, heard him say, "Peace be with you," and ate with him. Their eyewitness reports are dependable. They are God's power to make believers of us and keep us in the faith.

The Word of light

What Peter, James, and John saw at the transfiguration helped them understand the Old Testament better. More important, the Old Testament clarified what they saw on the mountain: "We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19).

If you were in a dark, scary house on a stormy night, a light would show you where you were and what to be careful of until morning.



That's just what God's dependable Word does for us. The world is haunted by the fear of death and the fact of sin, and the blind are leading the blind to spiritual disaster. Until the sunrise when Christ comes to take us home, God's Word is a light to show us where we are and what to look out for.

The Word of God

We can depend on the Bible, because it is the Word of God: "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). When those men "spoke from God"—when they spoke as they were "carried along by the Holy Spirit"—they couldn't be mistaken. The Holy Spirit did not prompt his spokesmen to speak error. God's Word is true and dependable, because he is truthful and dependable.

If we ever doubt the Word's dependability, there is only one remedy. That is to hear it again, read it again. Don't be misled by what critics think it ought to say. Rather, believe it as it tells you what God has done for you on earth, and what he has in store for you in heaven.

Richard Balge is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.



- It was January 1993: Gary Baumler, our new editor, wrote his first editorial—"Farewell, Jeb." Now, a much-too-short two years later, we say farewell again. *Northwestern Lutheran's* former editor, James P. Schaefer—pastor, friend, husband, father, and faithful Christian—died on Nov. 21, 1995. Please turn to page 34, where Gary, once again, offers you a glimpse of Jeb—and a glimpse of glory.
- This issue we start a series on the book of Revelation—a book often considered too confusing to wade through. Author Wayne Mueller promises to present clearly the insights—and the blessings—the book contains for everyone. See page 8.
- Those of us who sit in the pews on Sunday mornings expect the best. We want eloquent sermons that bring the message of sin and salvation. On page 12, retired seminary professor John Jeske shares with us what makes a sermon a "truly Lutheran sermon."
- We end our "By faith they led" series this month. We thank author Morton Schroeder for introducing us to 12 Christians God used to shape WELS. See his final article on page 16.

—LRB

Cover photo by Eugene Schulz

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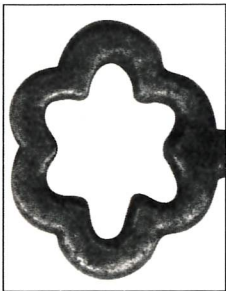
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Returning paradise to Taiwan

Only the good news of Jesus can overcome the ghosts of hell.

Gary P. Baumler

Enchanting! Exotic! This island just 90 miles off the coast of mainland China features friendly people, ornate temples, tasty food, oriental culture, beaches, bamboo forests, and spectacular mountain scenery. Marring the mystique, however, are factories, container ships, crowded cities, and snarled traffic. Making it a mission field are the 22 million people crowded on one-third of the island, which is almost twice the land size of Hawaii (about one million people).

Here in Taiwan, a small church body of 150 souls is working with two WELS missionaries to make an eternal difference. The road for the Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church (CLEC) is even rougher than the single major north-south freeway on the island.



Sarah Stellick makes Chinese ravioli with friend and prospect, Jan Pahn. Chinese people value relationships highly, making friendships golden opportunities to share the gospel.

Ninety-eight percent of Taiwan's people pay allegiance to Buddha and ostracize those who dare to be different. Our foreign missionaries must spend two to three years of full-time study to learn Mandarin Chinese (a tonal language) and another two years to get "on-line" with the people. People are friendly, but you can't approach them to witness (e.g., canvassing) unless you are friends.

At present, the national staff has but one pastor, Mathaias Chen, who is retiring. Evangelists Lin and Peter Chen (CLEC president) and elders Chen Yeshin and Chen Dyan-Ming are leaders in the church's ministry, all without pay. Peter Chen and Yeshin (sons of Mathaias) wish to become pastors.

Missionary Rob Siirila has had 12 years experience, and Missionary Kevin Stellick, after two, is still mounting the language curve. Undaunted, Stellick holds a weekly Bible class and worship, using Mandarin Chinese. Says Stellick, "We use simple language to share the love of Jesus. The gospel is simple, isn't it. Even children can understand." The study and worship move from home to home to give "the host family a chance to invite friends, neighbors, and relatives to join us."

In Taiwan, the saying "no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care" is particularly significant to our gospel witness. The Chinese people value relationships most highly. For

Pastor Siirila says this about his coworker, Chen Dyan-Ming:

How many of us have read God's Word cover to cover? Do we understand it's basic story? Can we tell that story to others?

Mr. Chen Dyan-Ming, a 38-year-old elder at Fountain of Grace Church, can answer "yes" to all three questions. He leads 12 members of our Taipei churches on a two-year course through the entire Bible. The class meets Monday nights for two to three hours. Reading assignments average 25 chapters per week.

Discussions have been lively and beneficial. "I get much more out of the Bible when I read it and then participate in these discussions," one student mentioned. From other students' comments, it's easy to see they are getting excited about regular Bible study.

Besides hefty reading assignments and homework, students take turns leading a devotion and reviewing the past week's work. After two years, those who successfully finished the course may teach it with the approval of the local church. Mr. Chen hopes all the churches in Taipei will eventually have this kind of course.

Elder Chen is confident it will be a blessing. "With basic knowledge of the Bible, and confidence gained in speaking in front of people, these students will be better equipped to share their faith with others," he shared recently. "The growth of the church will be much healthier, stronger."

example, the Stellicks' friendship with their non-Christian neighbors, the Pahns, allowed them to engage the couple in Bible study. Mrs. Stellick, too, is able to read Bible stories and teach Christian songs in English at her daughters' preschool, and to "meet new people and build friendships" that give her the opportunity to share the gospel.

Perhaps nothing so typifies the dense spiritual darkness in Taiwan as the annual Ghost Month. In that month, it is taught, doors of hell are opened, and all the ghosts of the dead are free to roam. At nine of 10 homes on the island, fake money is burned and tables of food are set out so the ghosts can make use of the essence of the money and food while

they roam and when they return to hell. People fear the ghosts. For example, they will not go swimming that month for fear the ghosts will pull them under. And no whistling! Whistling attracts the ghosts.

Only the good news of Jesus can overcome the ghosts of hell. His victory at Calvary slammed shut the gates of hell and saved us from hell's threat. Our brothers and sisters in Taiwan have the means to make the difference. Pray that God will sustain their zeal for his work.

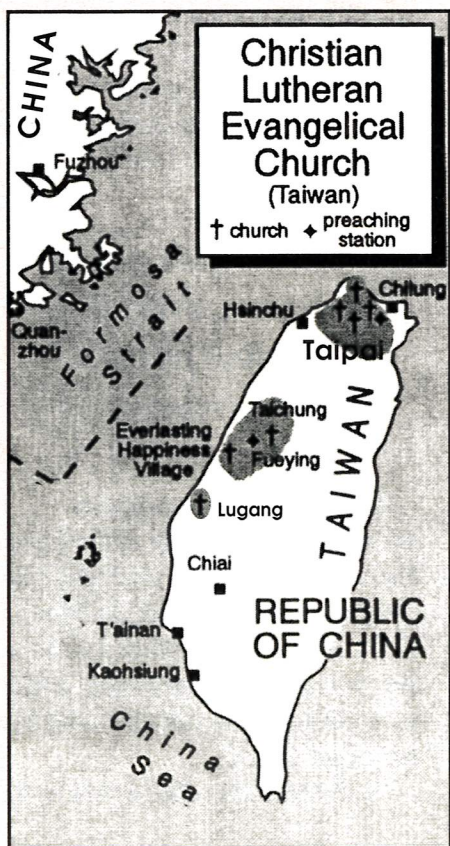
NL

See WELS Taiwan homepage on the World Wide Web at <http://users.aol.com/welstaiwan/homepage.htm>

Thanks to our missionaries in Taiwan for information for this article.



A woman burns fake money at the Buddhist Temple, Taichung, Taiwan. People in Taiwan believe that ghosts use the essence of the money in the afterlife.



Serving in Taiwan:

Robert and Judith Siirila
Kevin and Sarah Stellick

Greeting from your sister of Taiwan

I was born and grew up in the Taiwan province of the Republic of China. When I studied at senior high school, my classmate, Fun's father was a pastor in the Presbyterian church. So I had a chance to contact the gospel of Jesus. I was baptized in my sophomore year. Because I studied history, I understood that time is like a river, and how small human beings are, but the Bible tells me, even the lily flowers, and the birds, God takes care of all of them. He cares for us, loves us, and treasures us. Above all, his love attracted me. I prayed to God, that I have this love and learn more about our faith.

When I was married, I moved to Taipei city in the northern part of Taiwan, God answered my prayer. One day I received a flyer about a Lutheran church which would begin an English class and English Bible class. Since I was

interested, I joined the class, then Pastor Siirila invited me to attend the church service. The pastor also arranged some classes, such as how to introduce the gospel to people and how to teach the Bible. Thanks to God who gave me the chance to learn about him. Now I have attended the church about two years and served in the church Sunday school. I like the work, because I can learn with the children from the teaching.

I want to thank God for giving me the chance to writing this letter in English. Because I just started attending English writing class, and this letter is the first English letter for me. So once again thank God at all times, for everything and everywhere, for giving me the chance to learn.

May God take care of you and your needs.

God knows what is good for us, so don't hesitate to pray to him.

Jullana Lin

Jesus: unlocking the book of Revelation

This simple guide to understanding the Bible—keep Jesus at the center—is often left behind by those who delve into one of its most profound books, the Revelation.

Wayne Mueller

Life becomes a blur when Jesus is not at the center. Without the Savior to guide and comfort, daily existence is only a senseless series of events. When troubles further complicate life, Jesus' absence leaves us without explanation or purpose.

What is true of life is true of the Bible too. St. John says the Bible was written so that "you may have life" in Jesus' name. When Jesus is not at the center of our thoughts, the Bible is hard to understand.

Jesus at the center

The whole Bible was written to present the Savior to us. The Old Testament promised that Jesus would come. The New Testament tells us God kept his first promise and promises that Jesus will come again. Jesus set himself at the center of biblical understanding when he said, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).

This simple guide to understanding the Bible—keep Jesus at the center—is often left behind by those who delve into one of its

most profound books, the Revelation. All kinds of strange isms—millennialism, futurism, dispensationalism—claim the Revelation for their support. Those who try to explain the Revelation without putting Jesus at the center have left the impression that the Bible's last book is too complicated to be of any benefit to the common Christian. I'm afraid this widespread impression has kept many Christians from reading this book and deriving the confidence the Savior offers to face the last days.

In future issues we will discuss seven keys to understanding the Revelation, but Jesus is the most important key to unlocking its riches. The opening words set the tone for the whole book: "The revelation of Jesus Christ . . ." Keep in mind that Jesus inspired this book, and Revelation will not be too murky to offer any benefit. Jesus promised the opposite: "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it" (1:3).

Jesus in pictures

One thing that intimidates readers of the Revelation is the wealth of word pictures. Long before the age of color lithography and desktop publishing, Jesus illustrated his last word to his people with stunning graphics. Remember, most of these illustrations are of Jesus himself. Revelation is a self-portrait. Here Jesus paints many pictures of what he did, does, and will do for us.

We can get carried away, too, with all the glorious pictures in Revelation.

The picture that reappears throughout Revelation is the Lamb. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). All of Jesus' work for us in the past, present, and future centers on washing away our sins with his sacrificial blood.

We hear of this blood first in the

Seven keys that
open the Revelation

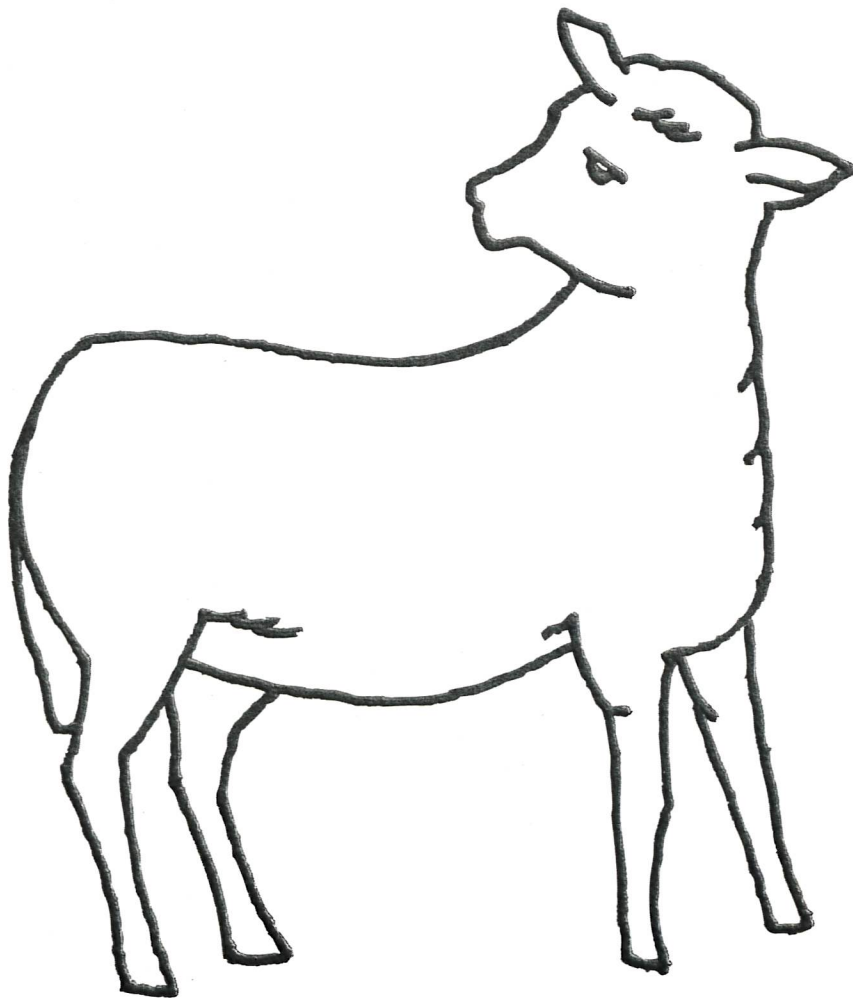


Next: the Word

opening verses (1:5), then many times throughout the book. Heavenly choirs sing, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain” (5:12). Because God planned in eternity to sacrifice his Son, Jesus is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (13:8).

But that’s all in the past. Now the

work of the Lamb is complete, and he is at the throne in heaven (5:13; 7:9). The Lamb on the throne has become the Shepherd of his people. “For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water” (7:17). That is why we “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (14:4).



Those who live under the protection of the Lamb-Shepherd are able to overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb (12:11). They know there will be fierce predators, “but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers” (17:14).

In the end the Lamb will take all his flock home. In heaven, they will wear robes made white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). Heaven will be like a glorious wedding supper for the Lamb (19:9) at which believers will be honored as his bride (21:9). There will be no need for the sun or moon in heaven, “for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (21:23).

Jesus is the focus

Jesus dictated the book of Revelation to John through an angel. When John saw all the wonderful graphics that the angel showed him about Jesus, John got a little carried away. He tried to kneel and worship the angel, but the angel redirected his attention: “Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (19:10).

We can get carried away, too, with all the glorious pictures in Revelation. We need the reminder the angel gave John. If we want to catch the spirit of this book of prophecy, the key is to listen to what Revelation testifies about Jesus.

NL

Wayne Mueller is administrator of WELS Parish Services.

Unremitting pain, unremitting blessings

God took a devastating accident and turned it into a return to faith.

Linda R. Baacke



“I wake up every day to unremitting pain,” says Charles Perry. “My hands don’t work right, my grip strength is half of what it should be, and I drop things because nerves don’t transmit properly.”

Perry, whose wrists were crushed in an auto accident in July 1990, can barely open a pickle jar.

But he’s grateful he still has his hands. Waking in the hospital, Perry dimly recalls hearing doctors discuss amputation because both hands would be useless. “I thank God every day that they were, at least, partially wrong.”

Renewing his faith

At the time of the accident, thanking God—for anything—was the furthest thing from Perry’s mind. “I had left the church and was heavily involved in New Age.” He was working for the state at a well-paying job, and “considered Sundays off far too important for anything as silly as church,” he explains. “I had been raised Lutheran and the services were nice, but my time was too valuable.”

After the accident, he had nothing but time. That’s when the blessings started.

“My father’s health was deteriorating fast. He couldn’t leave the house for church as he had most of his life,” says Perry. His mother couldn’t drive anymore, either. On Sundays, someone had to stay home with his father, and his mother needed a ride to church. Once the casts were off and his therapy started, Charles and his wife, Jacki, were volunteered by other family members.

“Every Sunday, Jacki and I would go off to my parent’s home. Jacki would sit with dad, and I would take mom to services,” says Perry.

“It seemed silly to sit in the car

and wait for her, so I started going in.” The sights and sounds of worship flooded his soul. “I watched the members of the congregation and saw how their faith bolstered their everyday lives.”

Also, as he heard the pastors minister to his father at home, he compared the Christian faith he abandoned with the New Age beliefs he supported. “Slowly the seed of faith started growing again,” says Perry.

He and Jacki discussed his renewed interest in Christianity. “At first she was shocked, but we talked, we prayed, we read the Bible,” explains Perry. “Before he died, my father had the joy of knowing that Jacki and I, once again, placed ourselves in God’s hands, at his bidding.”

“Looking back, it’s hard to understand why I left Christianity,” says Charles Perry.

In the early 1970s, Perry was volunteering at a crisis center. A majority of the staff was into Eastern mysticism, and used the Bible to substantiate their claims. “It’s true, people around you influence you,” says Perry. “They said they had answers. And I was looking for answers.”

He didn’t find any.

“When I started going to church with my mom, I realized I hadn’t found any answers in New Age. I remember listening to a sermon and it struck me—why on earth did I ever leave this?”

“This” was Christianity—Jesus paid for the sins of the world.

“When I went back to church, I realized the answers were right in front of me the whole time.”

Relying on God

Being in God’s hands, though, doesn’t mean Perry has no problems. Now a member of St. Paul, Livonia, Mich., Perry admits, “My life isn’t exactly a bed of roses—but God didn’t say it would be.”

After 14 years of marriage, Jacki moved out of the house. Charles can’t go back to his previous job, and his emphysema, heart problems, and arthritis limit his activities. Two years after the accident, doctors discovered a closed head injury; Perry’s brain doesn’t produce enough serotonin, and that causes depression.

When depression hits, Perry sits and reads the Bible. “That helps me fight my depression. If I didn’t have my faith now, I’d probably have killed myself,” he concedes.

“But do I think God caused the accident?” Perry answers his own question: “No, I don’t believe he works that way. But I do believe that God made sure the accident worked for my good.”

“Because although God didn’t promise a perfect life, he did promise all things will work together for good,” says Perry. The good things are evident. “I’m in a writing course, struggling to start a career writing. With God’s help, I’ve made a few sales. Not many, but a start.

“But that’s not important. What is important is that every day I feel myself enfolded in God’s loving protection. He took a devastating accident and turned it into a return to faith. Because of it, I am assured of an eternity with God.”

And that’s very good.

NL

Linda R. Baacke is a communications assistant for WELS Communication Services and Northwestern Lutheran.

Preaching that deserves the name “Lutheran”

Lutheran sermons emphasize that Christ reconciled a whole world of sinners to God.

John C. Jeske

What is different about Lutheran preaching? Is it enough to answer: “Lutheran preaching is unique because it proclaims what the Bible says?” No, that’s not enough. Every self-respecting church makes that claim.

Distinguishes between law and gospel

Then what is unique about Lutheran preaching? The Lutheran Confessions answer by emphasizing that the distinction between law and gospel is “the especially brilliant light” by which the message and the meaning of the Scripture become clear to us. Here is the genius of Lutheran theology—and of Lutheran preaching. The sword of the Spirit is double-edged. If either one of those cutting edges is blunted, if either one of its two messages is muted, the sword of the Spirit cannot do its work.

It’s hard for a Lutheran pastor to preach because he knows that every time he steps into the pulpit he has to hurt people before he can help them. That’s the primary function of God’s law. It convinces us we have not met God’s unconditional demand to lead holy lives. Our holy God demands perfection and will be satisfied with no less. “Without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). By admitting we



have not lived lives of perfect love—for God and for people—we put ourselves under God’s curse. God is awesome in his holiness and terrible in his justice. Here, for starters, is something that’s different about Lutheran preaching. It doesn’t preach the law merely to scare or to wound, but to kill, to damn.

The message of God’s law does not bring comfort. It’s a message, however, that must be heard. “Whoever does not believe in his own sinfulness does not believe in the Savior,” August Pieper (deceased Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor) once declared.

After God convinces us we cannot get right with him by any effort of our own, he introduces his Savior to us. Lutheran preaching emphasizes that God’s law is not his final message to us. The primary message of the Bible is not “This do!” but “This happened!” Jesus came to our planet and lived life right. He met the holy demands of God we couldn’t meet. In addition, he chose to be sentenced and punished in our stead. Preaching God’s law explicitly and God’s gospel explicitly makes Lutheran sermons unique. They stand in sharp contrast to the message regularly heard from too many American pulpits: “My boy, be a good boy.”

Avoids confusing law and gospel

For a preacher to know the difference between law and gospel, however, doesn't guarantee that his preaching deserves to be called Lutheran. He must relate these two critical teachings to each other correctly.

To take a gospel truth and make a law out of it we call "moralizing"—distinctly not a characteristic of preaching that deserves the name Lutheran. For example: The narrative of the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple shows us how, even as a child, the Lord Jesus submitted to the law of his Father and obeyed it. That's pure gospel. As our substitute, Jesus obeyed the law because we could not, and had not. Now what about a sermon that takes that incident from Jesus' childhood and makes the application: "Jesus went to church, and that teaches us that children today should go to church, too"? Horrendous, isn't it? That's moralizing, and that's not Lutheran.

Another form of relating law and gospel improperly we call "legalism"—again, not a characteristic of truly Lutheran preaching. Legalism makes God's standards for a God-pleasing life the essential message of Christianity. A generation ago President Harry Truman opined, "I can't see why there have to be so many different churches. After all, they all teach the same thing: 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.'"

That's the message of Mt. Sinai, the message of God's law. Martin Luther emphasized, "The law is the servant-girl in God's household, not the mistress. But like a housebreaker, the law wants to climb in where he does not belong, causing me to

lose what has been given to me."

Legalism also tries to direct the child of God to resources within himself for the power to live a God-pleasing life. Think of this sermon conclusion: "Jesus did a lot for you, and now your love for him and your gratitude to him ought to move you to live for him." That's thinly-veiled law motivation, and it assigns a role to God's law that God doesn't. Luther once commended, "The law can show me the way to go, but it can't give me the strength to get there."

*The primary message of
the Bible is not "This do!"
but "This happened!"*

Only the gospel gives the strength to live for God. Here I'm assured that when Jesus died and rose again, he not only canceled the debt of my sin, he also broke the power of my sin. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only a gift, it's a transforming power. It creates a new life in us. It enables us to say with the apostle Paul, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). Through faith, I accept not only God's promise of pardon, but also his promise of power to be what he has called me to be.

Explores the fullness of the gospel

The gospel is many-splendored good news. Lutheran preaching has more to tell people than simply, "Jesus died for your sins." That's true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough.

Lutheran sermons emphasize that Christ reconciled a whole world of

sinners to God. In Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death, God declared every person who ever lived to be perfectly covered with Jesus' perfection.

A truly Lutheran sermon also emphasizes that God saves sinners not by transforming them into gold-plated saints, but by crediting them with being what they actually are not. God gives us credit for Christ's perfection. Through a magnificent exchange that only the mind of God could have thought up, my sin is charged to Christ's account, and his achievements are credited to my account. Luther said it well, "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness; I am your sin. You became what you were not, and made me to be what I was not." Preaching that doesn't point out that, for Christ's sake, God pronounces sinners innocent doesn't really deserve the name Lutheran.

Finally, Lutheran preaching emphasizes the means of grace—the gospel in Word and sacraments. As Luther said, "God does not choose to work in human hearts except through Word and sacraments." Here is the power source from God's house to ours, and Lutheran preaching will reflect this.

Someone once asked Martin Luther, "Do you feel forgiven?" His answer illustrates what is different about Lutheran preaching. The great Reformer answered, "No, I do not feel forgiven. But I know I am forgiven, because God's Word tells me so. Feelings come and feelings go, but the Word of God stands forever."

NL

John Jeske, a retired Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor, lives in Watertown, Wisconsin.

An unchanging promise in a changing world

With a vision for the future, congregations are using modern methods to share Christ's unchanging love with younger generations.

Laurie Biedenbender

It starts with a question. How should we? Why don't we? Is there a better way?

However it's worded, it boils down to the same thought: Our church and our families are changing. Are we still doing all we can to feed Jesus' lambs? How should we share this unchanging promise in an ever-changing world?

A vision

You might think it'd be hard to ask questions like that at a history-rich church and school where the answer's been the same for generations. But St. Mark, Watertown, Wis., proud of its 140-year past, is willing to ask questions about its future.

The answer: St. Mark Vision.

The goals of the vision are clear: the best Christian education possible at their 345-student elementary school and 100-student Sunday school, a Bible-study mindset, increased school and home cooperation, and solutions for mushrooming family problems.

"We know where we're going," says Pastor Don Sutton, "but we don't always know how we're going to get there." So achieving those goals is a "try, try again" process involving everything from a new school/parent meeting approach to development of the St. Mark Discipline Model to a comprehensive parenting curriculum.

St. Mark is a traditional church

"with an open mind to new and potentially effective methods to serve the vision." "No one thing is the answer," says Sutton. "It's a long-term, multi-faceted, continually changing approach—to keep up with the changing times."

A Sunday school for changing times

That kind of open mind led to Pastor Roger Huffmann's question: "Why does Sunday school have to be boring and drab? I'm not sure a one-dimensional Sunday school—where all we do is teach a story—is what the Savior had in mind."

So Peace, King of Prussia, Penn., made changes. Their team-taught Sunday school—called a "model" by many—begins with a five-minute worship segment: their own altar and candles, a message, music, prayers, offering. "We try to teach not just the procedures of worship but what's behind the surface," Huffmann says.

Music, from ancient liturgical to contemporary, "teaches students to appreciate and respect what the body of Christ has found beneficial through the years," he adds.

Evangelism skills are taught every week by Believer Beaver, a puppet starring in a series written by a Peace member (now published by Commission on Youth Discipleship). "Every Sunday those kids wonder,



Camp Sonshine, a week-long day camp sponsored by St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., gives youth a chance to participate in Bible studies and worship besides crafts, games, and nature study.

'is C.B. (alias Commandment Breaker) going to believe in Jesus today?' It teaches kids that evangelism isn't a one-shot thing," Huffmann says. "It takes time."

An acolyte program and a lay ministry intern program "help kids take ownership of their congregation," Huffmann adds. "They are excited about serving their Savior."

WELS Kids connected

The new WELS Kids Connection generates that same excitement. Hosted by kids, for kids, the 15-minute videos appeal to today's tech-bred generation. They feature opportunities for service, Bible helps for real life problems, slices of life from world missions and other ministries. "WELS Kids Connection is about keeping kids connected to Jesus," says Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator.

Kids from five Mankato area congregations connected last summer at Camp Sonshine. The week-long day camp sponsored by St. Paul, North Mankato, involved students in Bible study, nature study, crafts, games, and religious drama. Pastor Dave Liggett says that since St. Paul doesn't have an elementary school, they want to "offer as many different part-time Christian education alternatives as possible."

He adds, "I hope it will also serve as an outreach to the community."

An invitation

St. Paul, Franklin, Wis., issued its own invitation to the surrounding community last fall. Their early childcare center provides preschool, daycare, and before and after school care for children ages three to 13.

A June-August summer camp, "Touching Tender Hearts With the Love of God," offers morning struc-

ture and afternoon recreation activities for seven- to 13-year-olds, many of whose parents work everyday.

Pastor Ken Gawrisch explains. "The population is exploding out here. Since everybody's working, some families are desperately lacking family life, morals, ethics. We'd like to try to infuse that back into the community. This center is our invitation. We're here and we want to share Christ."

"There are world missions," adds administrator Michelle Yass, "and then there's the mission right at your front door."

The mission at your front door

Members of New Life, Rockford, Ill., opened their front door one Saturday, and the community walked right in. A large billboard, radio advertisements, and flyers had told Rockford residents that New Life would provide babysitting while they finished their Christmas shopping.

About 30 children attended "Christmas for Kids," learned the real meaning of Christmas, made a Christmas craft, and practiced a song for the next day's worship. Five families did attend church, and two eventually became members.



Clowns entertained kids at Camp Sonshine. Youth from five Mankato area congregations attended last summer.

When a TV news crew showed up at "Christmas for Kids," Pastor Mark Paustian could use yet another medium to tell the whole area: "What we're teaching kids is what Christmas is really all about, which is the birth of Jesus."

So the promise was shared again.

Flexibility, creativity, access to media and technology—and an intense love for the Savior—these are the ingredients congregations are putting together to answer the questions the future poses—and to let the children come.

NL

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



Puppets Hillary the pig, C.B. (Commandment Breaker) the alligator, and Believer Beaver help teach kids at Peace, King of Prussia, Penn., about evangelism.

Raymond L. Wiechmann: home missions developer

With a heartfelt love for people, Wiechmann devoted himself to spreading the gospel wherever he served.

Morton A. Schroeder

The Wisconsin Synod reached the Pacific Northwest in 1918 and the Pacific Southwest in 1950. Five years later, nudged firmly by members of the Michigan district, it turned toward the Southeast.

Although WELS congregations nearest Florida were some 900 miles northward, the thrust into the Sunshine State was not universally applauded. Synod had passed a “no leapfrogging” resolution in 1953, opting for “contiguous expansion.”

The Michigan district, recognizing a ripe mission field in the booming population, sent a team to explore the South in early 1954. Officially unfunded and unblessed, and financed only by congregations in Adrian, Stevensville, and Owosso, Mich., the team defended its free-lancing by comparing its work with that of the apostle Paul. Synod accepted the unorthodox maneuvers, got over its pique, and sent a man to



Wiechmann with the school children at Lawler, Iowa. Wherever he served, schools flourished.

Florida. WELS first public service in the new field was held Jan. 9, 1955.

While this unfolded, a gifted man whose life would be bound with the growth of Florida outreach went about his business—Raymond “Uncle Ray” Louis Wiechmann.

Wiechmann, whose biography can be encapsulated in four words—pauper, pastor, pedagogue, president—then held no official position to encourage wider outreach. But his mission pitches led later to positions of trust. This enabled him to urge use of synodical funds to carry out the Great Command.

Pauper

The product of an impoverished childhood and youth, the ninth of 11 children of a Lutheran pastor and his wife, Wiechmann knew hardship. His father, a German immigrant at 15, never earned more than \$1,000 annually. Food, livestock,

and chickens, promised to augment the salary, were soon forgotten.

Conditions worsened when Wiechmann *père* got Lou Gehrig’s disease. Forced to leave the ministry, he was pensioned at \$40 a month. This pittance was reduced \$15 when he died. Wiechmann *fiils* and a brother delivered newspapers, picked up coal chunks along the tracks, and swept up spilled grain at the elevator. An older brother sent money home from school to help. In spite of pervasive poverty, five Wiechmann children became teachers or pastors.

From 1932 to 1943 Wiechmann attended synodical schools, giving his time to studies, sports, and work. During high school, he cut grass, washed windows, dried dishes. His hourly pay of 25 cents was deducted from board and room charges. Barbering during his college years and choir directing while at the seminary provided needed cash.



Ray Weichmann (left), suited up for football in high school at New Ulm, Minn.

Pastor

Wiechmann's first love was the parish ministry. To it he brought a humanity energized by understanding, optimism, and good humor. Serving in small, rural congregations and in large, urban churches, Wiechmann promoted missions.

Wiechmann's assignment to Lawler, Iowa, included starting a school. When he served Salem, Milwaukee, the congregation reopened its school, built a new building, and then bought a larger existing school. The man who preceded him at St. Lucas, Milwaukee, predicted the demise of the parish school. Within a year the old school was razed. A new one was built; buses were bought. Three teachers and 83 students became 13 teachers and 335 pupils. In Wiechmann's words, one of his greatest Florida joys was founding Bay Pines school.

Pedagogue

Wiechmann was a demanding pedagogue to the vicars assigned him. When his 50 years in the ministry were recognized with a roast at Peace, Holiday, Fla., on Mar. 21, 1993, some of them affectionately called him "Uncle Ray." Others recalled his characterization of them and their potential: "lumps of clay" with "minds of mush." One called him a "fantastic teacher."

Wiechmann's ministry was filled with starting and directing different choirs: elementary school, collegiate, congregational, mixed, and male.

Mission worker

Wiechmann's influence in synod's home mission program began in the early 1950s when he was elected to his district's mission board. In 1957 he was elected chairman of that board. Four years later

his influence widened when he was elected chairman of synod's board for home missions. Then, in 1964, he accepted the call as the first executive secretary of home missions.

It is ironic that the office which should have enabled Wiechmann to do the most good for home missions was the office that ill fit him. Wiechmann's colleague, friend, and relative said, "Ray was a people person. It drove him crazy to sit in his synodical office staring at the four walls and not a person in sight for hours and hours. He was a doer, not an administrator." Because he thought he was isolated, he re-entered the parish ministry.

His love for missions is recognized in the folder used at the devotional service marking his death: "Mission work was the true delight of Pastor Wiechmann's life."

President

In 1973, 21 congregations from six states were represented at Redeemer, Merritt Island, Fla., for the constituting convention of the South Atlantic district. Wiechmann was elected president, a position he held until he retired. Today the district is divided into three conferences with 53 congregations served by 63 pastors. Fifteen schools have 828 students taught by 53 teachers.

Wiechmann's retirement in 1984 lasted a little more than a decade. During that time, he never really doffed his gown. After a brief illness, he was called home. Survivors are his wife Miriam and their four children—Timothy, Joel, Philip, and Margaret—10 grandchildren, and five siblings.

NL

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



Raymond L. Wiechmann

- Born March 3, 1918, Potsdam, Minn.
- Graduated Lutheran Seminary, Thiensville, Wis., 1943
- Assigned to dual parish of Lawler/New Hampton, Iowa, 1943-44
- Married Miriam Ellen Schaefer, 1945
- Served St. Peter, Monticello, Minn., 1944-47; Salem, 1947-59 and St. Lucas, 1959-63, both in Milwaukee
- 1957-61, chairman Southeastern Wisconsin district mission board
- 1961-63, chairman WELS general board for home missions
- 1964-67, first full-time administrator for home missions
- Served Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., Jan. 1, 1967-84
- First president of South Atlantic district, 1973-84
- Died Jan. 27, 1995, Clearwater, Fla.

Family ties in Hawaii

Members at St. Paul, Honolulu, Hawaii, are more than just friends—they're family.

Julie K. Tessmer

Many people consider holidays an opportunity to spend quality time with family. Immediate family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews often gather around the turkey at Thanksgiving or the tree at Christmas.

Many members at St. Paul, Honolulu, Hawaii, celebrated Thanksgiving with a turkey dinner at church with the congregation.

Not the same thing? Pastor Walter Elgin would disagree. "Our members are family in Hawaii. We have a keen sense of belonging to one another in Christ."

"Immediate" family

Major Danny Burgstiner, president of St. Paul, agreed. "Half of the church members are in the military. We don't have family nearby. . . . We get into the mode that the church becomes immediate family," he said.

The combination of civilians and military works well for St. Paul. "Civilian and military members provide a harmonious mix of exceptional talents and experiences," said Elgin. "Military members bring exceptional leadership skills." Burgstiner added, "Civilians offer continuity in the organizations."

Military members are usually only in Hawaii for a few years. The congregation, therefore, has an annual membership turnover of 20 to 25 percent. Yet there is no shortage of workers in the congregation. New members become involved quickly in congregational activities.

"We say 'Good morning' for the first time to new members—three weeks later we have them involved in organizations," said Elgin.

When holes occur because of vacancies, Burgstiner said the con-

gregation "does what it can, with the Lord leading us."

Family in Christ

Members can be involved at St. Paul in a variety of ways. They can attend weekly Sunday church services as well as Bible studies held on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Sunday school meets at tables along the outside wall of the community center.

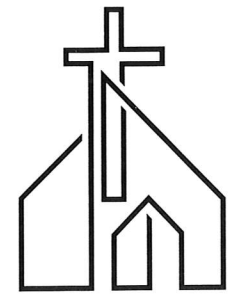
Besides Sunday worship, ladies' groups, choir, and governing committees offer opportunities for congregation members to get involved.

The congregation also plans frequent outdoor social events because of nice weather all year around. "We may be the only WELS congregation to charter an excursion submarine for an outing," said Elgin. Pool parties are popular since a pool is right outside their building.

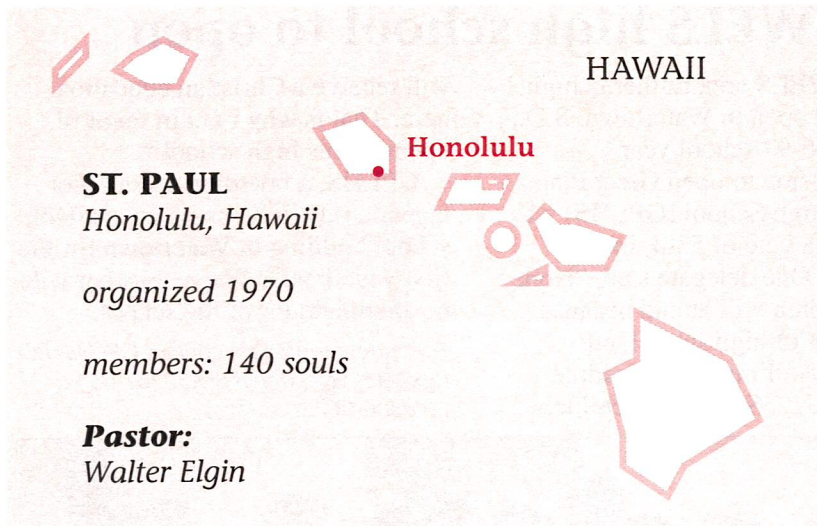
The family home

The St. Paul family conducts worship services at East Foster Community Center, a building they lease for Sunday mornings. "We 'build' our church every Sunday when we convert a multipurpose room into a house of God," said Elgin. All other activities take place at the parsonage.

St. Paul has met in many places since its organization in 1970—homes, schools, a YMCA, hotels, military chapels, a mortuary, and the parsonage. But unlike other congregations without an actual church



Sunday school often meets outside, next to a large swimming pool. Pastor Elgin said "there have been involuntary immersions."



ST. PAUL
Honolulu, Hawaii

organized 1970

members: 140 souls

Pastor:
Walter Elgin



People on the island of Maui participate in a Bible study in Oahu via telenetwork.

building, St. Paul doesn't plan to build a church—mainly because of high property costs. “We feel it's better to spend the money on missions than on building,” said Elgin.

Family across the islands

Although St. Paul, a congregation of 140 souls, holds its services on Oahu, not all members are able to attend. Many live on Maui or the Big Island (Hawaii), which makes attending services a challenge.

But technology made weekly church services on other islands possible. Conveners (teleconferencing machines) and speaker phones transmit Sunday services to homes in Maui, the Big Island, and Oahu. Two-way conferencing allows members to ask and answer questions at Bible classes in their homes.

Emmons Connell, a St. Paul elder, and his wife, Mary, host a weekly Sunday service at their home in Maui. Seven to 13 people attend. “We sing along in the living room, follow along with the service, take a collection—just like we were there,” said Connell.

Besides hosting services, the Connells keep people in Maui informed about services and Pastor

Elgin's visits to the island. Connell also gives communion for members. Pastor Elgin comes once a month to the Connell home to hold services or just to meet with members.

Members in Maui also attend “real live services” when they travel to Oahu. Several came to the recent 25th anniversary service. Pastor Elgin said they have “frequent overnight guests.”

Telecommunicating services to different islands has been happening for a year. Connell said he is “ecstatic” about the opportunities it provides—not only for the group meeting at his home—but also for individual members in their own homes. “It's wonderful to get back into the weekly routine of feeding our faith. It has really helped us grow.”

A growing family

While growing in faith, St. Paul anticipates growing in size. Pastor Elgin declared the recent 25th anniversary of St. Paul as “a time of new commitment to the future ministries of our congregation.” Their mission plan calls for two more worship sites on Oahu and weekly on-site services in Maui by the year 2000.

Additional sites on Oahu will

decrease driving time for members as well as get the church name out to local people. Elders will continue to assume more responsibility within the church to make more services possible. “Our elders already participate in some portion of leading worship every Sunday,” said Elgin. “They are fully capable of conducting services and reading the sermon.”

Local Hawaiians tend to be suspicious of new arrivals, making evangelism difficult at St. Paul. Elgin said he hoped the 25th anniversary showed Hawaiians that the church is staying. The church hopes to open a school; they will begin a feasibility study in the next few years. Elgin said this will allow them “to access a full cross section of the various cultures.” An evangelism committee is also forming.

Members in Maui are excited about the possibility of weekly on-site services. Renting space will give them a building for services and a visible place in the community. Said Connell, “Members here are ready to establish their presence more than just in the living room.”

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

NL



Garden honors members in ministry

Members of Good Shepherd, Beloit, Wis., planted and designed a garden—complete with a limestone wall and well—in honor of their first pastor, Ronald Hillemann and his wife, Grace, in summer 1994.

The Hillemann Garden, located in front of the church, contains juniper, oak, burning bush, dogwood, and black walnuts planted on behalf of members who are in the full-time ministry.



Pastor James Adomeit and Grace Hillemann. The garden—complete with limestone wall and well—honors Good Shepherd's first pastor, Ronald Hillemann and his wife, Grace.

New WELS high school to open

The 21st WELS area Lutheran high school will open in Watertown, S.D., for the 1996-97 school year.

The decision to open Great Plains Lutheran High School (GPLHS) was passed, by a vote of 53-4, in December. One delegate said, "None of my children will attend because they are out of high school, but maybe some of my grandchildren will attend. . . . Someone's children

will receive a Christian education here. That is why I am in favor of opening this high school."

GPLHS, a boarding school (cottage plan), will be using an available school building in Watertown for the first year. Pastor Wayne Fischer will be administrator of the school.

For more information contact GPLHS, PO Box 532, Watertown SD 57201-0532; 605/886-0672.



Great Plains Lutheran High School board. Seated from left: Luther Wurster, Don Mischke, Cameron Buri, Doug Arndt. Standing from left: Don Giese, Terry Krause, Richard Brei, Steve Ristow, Lee Schull, Terry Kemmet, John Carter, Wayne Fischer, Quintin Sulzle, Jon Baumann.

LWMS plans convention

The 1996 Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) convention will be held June 28-30 at the Brown County Arena in Green Bay, Wis. "Last year's convention, in Washington, D.C., drew large numbers of home missionaries," says David Hein, spiritual advisor for LWMS. "Because we're holding the convention in Wisconsin this year,

we're expecting a lot of world missionaries. Most world missionaries on furlough spend part of their time in Wisconsin."

For more information, contact LWMS central office, 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-6212.



rē · li' giōn

Defining religion

rapture: a snatching up of believers from earth to be with Jesus forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Some believe that Jesus will return to "rapture" believers before Judgment Day. The Bible, however, teaches that believers who are still alive will be "raptured" after the dead are raised on judgment day. Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 with Hebrews 9:28, John 11:24, John 5:28,29, and John 6:39.

Homestays offer international experiences

If you enjoy meeting new people and sharing your Christian faith and family with others, homestay may be the program for you. Homestay lets you be a host family to Japanese high school and college-age students.

A phone call from Japan started it all for the Coopers.

They had filled out forms about hosting Japanese students when Missionary John Hering preached at a mission festival at their church. A few months later, when Hering called about hosting a student, the Coopers were quick to accept.

That's how Harold and Paula Cooper and family, St. Charles, Mich., met Mai, a WELS member from Chiba-ken, Japan, in 1994. For two months, she was a guest student at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Mai was baptized before she came to the U.S., but wasn't confirmed until after she returned to Japan. "Every Sunday she took her Bible to church. She read it after church all the time too," said Paula Cooper.

"We cried when she left, like we were sending a daughter away," said Cooper.

Mai returned to the U.S. for college and is in her second year at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.

For information on how to become a host family, contact Missionary John Hering, 4022-3 Ishikawa 1-Chome, Mito City, Ibaraki Japan 310 or Missionary Glen Hieb, 23-27 Komatsu 3-Chome, Tsuchiura City, Ibaraki Japan 300.



Besides learning about life in the United States, Mai taught the Cooper family about Japanese customs, cooking, and artwork.

Obituary

Robert E. Kaschinske 1907-1995

Robert E. Kaschinske was born Oct. 22, 1907, in Winnebago, Wis. He died Aug. 11, 1995 in Saginaw, Mich.

A 1935 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served in Hartford, Mich. He was business manager at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. He also served as representative of the Michigan district on the WELS Board of Support.

He is survived by sister Alma Smith and many nieces and nephews.

A total of 337 WELS elementary schools received \$500 grants to provide in-service training for their faculties. The money will



be used for consultants, resource materials, improving classroom organization, and promoting the role of the school in ministering to families. The grants were given by Aid Association for Lutherans.

Seeking our neighbor— at home and abroad

How can we best reach out with the gospel to the new ethnic groups moving into our neighborhoods? How will we make use of the international opportunities God is laying before us?

The changing face of United States and the changing international scene presents mission challenges and opportunities to WELS congregations.

WELS Seeking Our Neighbor committee is looking at the changing face of the U.S. and the world with an eye to answering those questions. The committee's objectives are to

- review the scriptural principles underlying our outreach programs;
- evaluate the changing conditions at home and abroad by listening to and learning from veteran pastors, missionaries, and lay members working in our mission congregations and foreign fields;
- synthesize some principles, goals, and methods to help guide our congregations and synod in 21st century mission work.

Last November, the SON committee met in Florida with WELS missionaries and lay members from Latin America, Antigua, and several southern states to learn about the challenges facing our synod in these regions.

Two more information-gathering meetings are planned. The next session will be held in Phoenix, Ariz. in February.

John M. Brenner





Sunday school— a first-class opportunity

“It’s time to stop viewing Sunday school as a second-class nurturing agency in our churches,” says Jerry Kastens, youth discipleship administrator. “For most WELS youth, Sunday school is the only opportunity they have to hear God’s Word.” WELS and its congregations are recognizing the importance of putting a quality Sunday school back on the list of high priorities.

“Congregations are calling, asking us to help strengthen their Sunday school programs,” says Kastens. To support congregations, WELS youth discipleship commission is looking into a Sunday school initiative beginning in 1996, offering assistance to congregations that want to have more active programs.

A long-range plan to integrate all youth education includes Christ-Light, a coordinated religion curriculum for vacation Bible school, elementary school, and Sunday school.

Workshops and manuals are available to develop, train, and support the Sunday school staff. The materials will also help the relationship between home and church grow stronger.

“There is no one-size-fits-all approach,” says Kastens. “The marks of a strong Sunday school program include well-trained teachers, good curriculum, a balance between nurture and outreach efforts, parent involvement, well-equipped classrooms, a superintendent, and the prayers of everyone.”

For more information on Sunday schools contact WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3274; FAX 414/256-3899.

Floor plan includes WELS logo

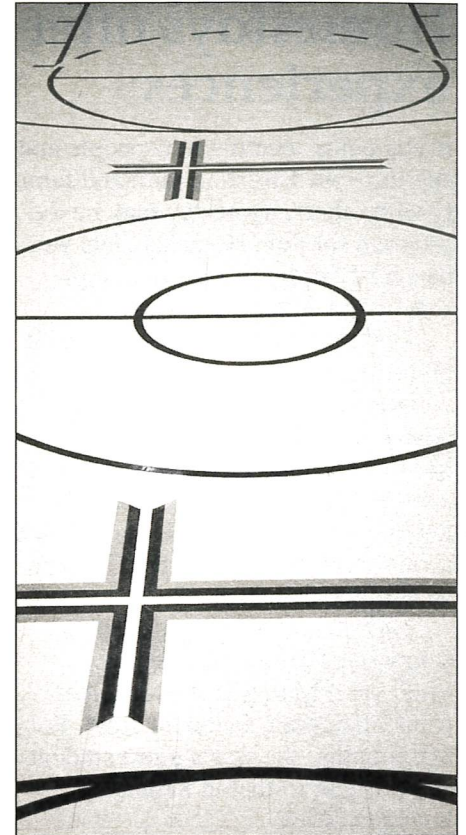
Members at St. John, Nodine, Minn., literally included the WELS logo in the floor plan of their new all-purpose room.

The logo—a cross—was set right into the floor.

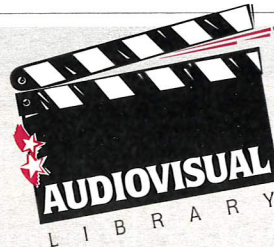
“The logo is a reminder that to God alone be the glory. . . . In all the different ways the room will be used, it will serve to glorify the Lord,” said Pastor Erling Carmichael.

The 64 ft. by 125 ft. all-purpose room (auditorium/gymnasium), dedicated in November, is an addition to the present school and includes locker rooms, storage areas, and a kitchen. It will not only be used for sporting events, but also for other school functions, wedding receptions, and even as a worship facility.

Jerry Zenke, building committee chairman, came up with the idea of putting the logo on the floor as well as designed and installed it.



The WELS logo was installed in the floor of St. John’s all-purpose room. Pastor Carmichael said the logo would remind them that the room “was dedicated to the glory of God.”



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.

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.

Order from Audiovisual Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

Our daughter, Kris, came to Milwaukee from Texas for her high school reunion. Her

husband and three sons stayed home. That weekend, when a tornado threatened to sweep down on them, 10-year-old Ben phoned his mother in terror. “Remember Ben,” she said, “the Bible passage Grandpa says we must lean upon—“there is no one like the Lord, our God.”” Half an hour later Kris called Dallas. The warning had passed and a relieved Ben said in awe, “That is a powerful message. There is no one like the Lord, our God.”

*Helen Albrecht
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin*



MLC volleyball team wins championship

Martin Luther College picked up right where Dr. Martin Luther College left off—winning volleyball championships. This is the second year in a row the women's volleyball team has won the National Small College

Athletic Association national volleyball championship. There's been a total of five championships under coach Drew Buck. The Knights of New Ulm, Minn., defeated Crowley's Ridge College from Arkansas in three

straight games to capture the crown. Two seniors, Staci Meier and Chanda Steele, were named to the all-tournament team. Steele was also named tournament MVP.



The MLC Knights, from left: front row—Angie Duin, Terry Berg, Mary Geiger, Kate Vitale, Shannon Eckert, Trisha Berg, Stacey Walker, Janette Schramm. Back row—Coach Drew Buck, Michelle Engelbrecht, Sarah Meyer, Staci Meier, Jessica Hein, Jenny Perry, Beth Schaefer, Drew Aguilar, Micaela Brown.

Schools of outreach help share the promise

WELS evangelism schools of outreach have served a total of 179 congregations. "These schools assist congregations to evaluate and plan how they share the promise in their communities," says Bob Hartman, evangelism administrator.

From 1987 to 1992, one school each year was held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. In 1993,

schools of outreach started reaching out to districts across the U.S.

In 1995, schools in seven cities served 59 congregations. Eight schools, one in each of eight districts, are planned for 1996. For more information, contact Commission on Evangelism, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3288; FAX 414/256-3899.

rē·lī·giōn

Defining religion

they substituted *the LORD* whenever they read it in the Old Testament. Our English translations also usually translate this Hebrew word as *the LORD*.

Jehovah (Yahweh): The proper name of the Triune God, signifying his steadfast love (Exodus 34:5-7). This name was so sacred to the people of Israel that they would not pronounce it. Instead

NAMES

in the news

Jane Zimmerman Mose received the Christian Service Award for Volunteers from Bethesda Lutheran Home and Services, on Nov. 11, 1995 in Watertown, Wis. Mose is editor of *Share*, a WELS newsletter that promotes services to people with disabilities. Mose is a member of Eastside, Madison, Wis.

Ric Gibson, principal at Emmanuel, West St. Paul, Minn., was named Teacher of the Week by WCCO television. Gibson also serves on the Board of Regents for Saint Croix LHS.



District news



Pastor Vilas Glaeske, Carol Tang, and vicar Daniel Habben. Vicar Habben and Carol Tang met in Taiwan during the summer. Carol moved to Houston from Taiwan and is now attending Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.

Arizona-California

Starting July 15, 1995, the two week **Southern California Bible Camp** ran for students in grades four through 10. There were 135 campers and 39 staff members the first week, and 86 youth and 26 staff the second. . . . On Oct. 19, 1995, over 65 volunteers showed up to lay 45,700 square feet of sod on the football field at **California LHS, Wildomar**. . . . **St. John, Victorville, Calif.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary and dedicated its preschool building on Aug. 13, 1995. . . . The combined congregations of **Grace, in Warren**, and **St. Paul, in Douglas, Ariz.**, celebrated Grace's 75th anniversary on Oct. 8, 1995. The 75th anniversary of St. Paul, and of the joint parish, will be held on Feb. 4. . . . **Reformation Lutheran**

School, San Diego, Calif., celebrated its 25th anniversary on Nov. 19, 1995. . . . Anniversaries in the district: Pastor **William Bein**, 40 years; Pastor **Terry Deters**, 25 years; Pastor **Charles Found**, 55 years.

Hermann John

South Central

Lord of Life, Friendswood, Tex., celebrated its 25th anniversary on Sept. 17, 1995. . . . **Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.**, is developing an active cross-cultural ministry. Since March 1995, Pastor James Bourman has been reaching out with the gospel to the large Chinese and Vietnamese population on Houston's west side. Carol Tang moved to Houston from Taiwan and will help in outreach.

Charles Learman

Michigan

St. Paul's Ladies' Aid, Stevensville, Mich., celebrated its 75th anniversary.

David M. Zahn

Minnesota

Pilgrim, Minneapolis, will celebrate the retirements and anniversaries of **Darrell and Naomi Knippel** on June 15 and 16. Darrell Knippel has served 40 years and Naomi Knippel has taught 25 years.

North Atlantic

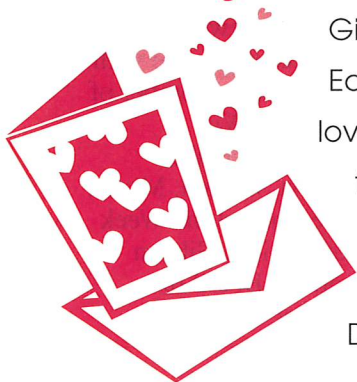
St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, celebrated the retirement of Pastor **Thomas Pfothenauer** in December 1995. Pfothenauer spent the last 31 years at St. Paul.

South Atlantic

The **1995 Labor Day retreat in Pine Mountain, Ga.**, enjoyed its highest attendance ever—150 people came from Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Holland, France, Italy, and Sweden. The retreat offered Bible studies, Christian fellowship, and light-hearted fun—a successful "rest from labor" for everyone. . . . **Ocean Drive, Pompano Beach, Fla.**, celebrated its 30th anniversary on Nov. 19, 1995 and dedicated remodeled facilities. . . . **Marti Ellingboe** retired from teaching at Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla., in January.

Philip Wilde

Looking for the right Valentine's Day gift?



Give the love of your life *Northwestern Lutheran*. Each issue shares the message of a Savior who loved us so much that he gave up his life. 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.

rē · li' giōn

Defining religion

excommunication: the declaration by the church that a person has placed himself outside the kingdom of God by his stubborn impenitence (Matthew 18:15-18); excommunication is an act of love intended to call a sinner to repentance.

Worship workshop has something for everyone

Whether you are a pastor, teacher, organist, choir director, or a student, the first National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts is something you won't want to miss. Sponsored by WELS Commission on Worship, the conference will be held July 21-24 at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.

Conference opportunities:

- ✗ worship—attend worship services as well as demonstrations on how to enhance public worship.
- ✗ education—participate in six to eight workshops covering subjects relating to many aspects of worship.
- ✗ experimentation—try out worship-related computer software. Look at music, musical instruments, and other worship-related products available through retailers.
- ✗ fellowship—interact with other WELS members interested in worship. Share ideas and gain knowledge from others.

Confirmation was a new thing in our family. My stepfather had been confirmed as a youth and my mother as an adult, but I was the oldest of six children. My pastor came to the party. When



he left, my stepfather and mother walked out with him. They were talking intensely.

After the party, my mother and stepfather blurted out, "Pastor thinks you should go to Michigan Lutheran Seminary and train to become a pastor. What do you think?" I stood there in stunned silence and then answered the way any normal 13-year-old could: "I guess so."

I laid in bed, thinking of my

recreation—swim, play volleyball and tennis, or walk along the lake. Plenty of free time is available to relax with fellow WELS members.

These opportunities will strengthen your faith, as you observe a variety of different models in worship and understand how worship retains and renews members as well as attracts new people.

Although the conference will offer advanced resources, people from small or mission congregations will also find valuable help for their worship planning.

Teenagers and college students are encouraged to attend. Classes designed especially for teenagers as well as worship services including younger instrumentalists and singers are available.

For more information, contact the Commission on Worship after Feb. 12, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3265; FAX 414/256-3899.

confirmation vows and the passage I had blown in examination. I thought about being a pastor. "Why me? What could he see in me?"

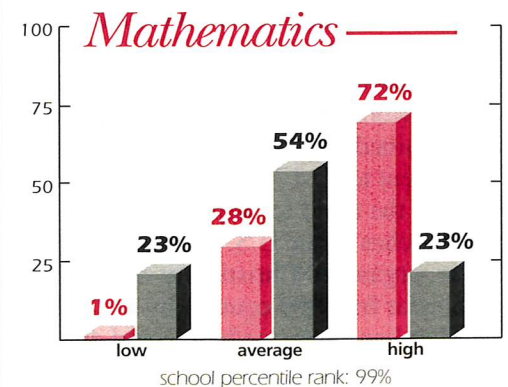
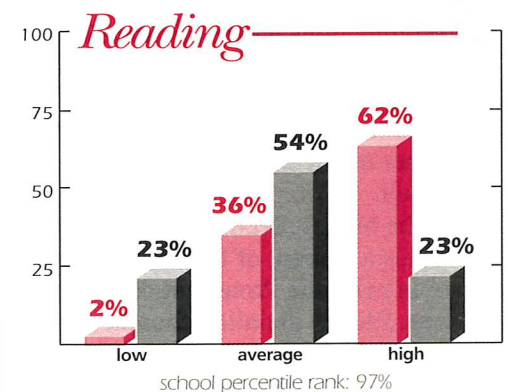
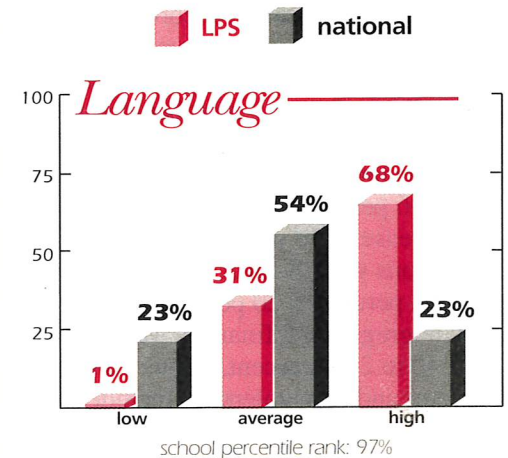
I don't know what he saw in me—a kid ignorant of Lutheranism, Christianity, and the Bible. I do know if the encouragement hadn't begun with him, it wouldn't have come from anywhere else.

As we consider recruitment to our ministerial education schools, I wonder how many young people got that kind of encouragement—and how many should. Then I say, "Thank you, Lord, for sending someone to speak words of encouragement. Thank you, Lord, that you made it possible for me to speak to others too."

David R. Clark
Peoria, Arizona

Luther Prep students excel

In the fall of 1995, Luther Prep freshmen took the "3-R's" test. This test compared the scores of these Watertown, Wis., preparatory school students with those of students around the country. Overall, the LPS ninth graders scored better than 98 percent of all schools that participated. Here's how the LPS freshmen measured up in individual areas:





Membership and giving don't measure up to 1968 figures

Trends in membership and giving for Christian churches in the United States remain down according to a Nov. 1995 report from empty tomb, inc. From 1968 to 1993 (the latest available figures), membership as a percentage of U.S. population in 29 Protestant denominations went from 13.86 percent to 11.52 percent, a decrease of 17 percent. Total contributions went from 3.14 percent to 2.52 percent, a 20 percent drop. Congregational finances went from 2.48 to 2.09 percent, minus 16 percent, and benevolences (includes missions giving) from .66 percent to .43 percent, minus 35 percent.

The study also indicated that in denominations where membership has risen, the per member giving to overseas ministries has also risen. But where membership has declined, the per member giving has declined as well.

The biggest declines in membership as a percent of U.S. population are in mainline Protestant denominations. Eleven mainline churches have gone from 12.9 percent of the population to 7.8 percent from 1968 to 1993, according to the report. In contrast, 15 conservative and evangelical protestant denominations have increased from 7.52 percent to 8.1. The Roman Catholic Church has remained almost constant: 23.65 percent to 23.17.

If the trend for all Christian churches in the U.S. were to continue, organized Christianity would disappear from the country by AD 2203. Mainline Protestantism would disappear already by AD 2023.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act declared unconstitutional

In 1993 Congress enacted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to strengthen the first amendment guaranty of religious freedom. They were responding to a 1990 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court holding that a government law or practice that burdens the exercise of religion need not be supported by a "compelling governmental interest" to be permissible under the Constitution. In so ruling, the Court repudiated a quarter of a century of precedent. The Act restores the "compelling governmental interest" standard.

A federal district court in Texas ruled that the Act is unconstitutional for the following two reasons: (1)

Congress can only enact legislation in furtherance of an "enumerated power" granted to it by the Constitution, and nowhere in the Constitution is Congress given the authority to expand the protection of religious freedom; and (2) any attempt by Congress to reverse an interpretation of the Constitution by the Supreme Court violates the separation of powers principle.

The decision has been referred to a federal appeals court.

(Reported by *Church Law & Tax Report*, Sept./Oct. 1995)



Catholic, Anglican membership declines in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's Anglican and Roman Catholic churches continue to suffer declines in membership as the nation's smaller Pentecostal, independent, and Orthodox churches are growing, according to the latest edition of the *UK Christian Handbook*.

Overall church participation for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland was also reported down for last year. The Christian

Research Association, which publishes the handbook, noted that just 13.9 percent of the United Kingdom's total population was active in its churches last year.

The figure was 14.7 percent in 1990 and 16.9 percent in 1980. It is estimated the figure will have dropped to 10.8 percent by the year 2010 because of ongoing secularization in the United Kingdom.

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Luther's own Bible reported found

A Latin version of the Bible that several scholars believe belonged to Martin Luther has been discovered in a library in Stuttgart, Germany, the German Protestant news agency reported.

The Bible, which has been in the library since 1784, was printed in 1519, two years after Luther posted the 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg and prompted the Reformation.

Scholars said they believed the Bible served Luther for many years as his personal working one and was used to prepare lectures and his translation of the Bible into German.

Of particular interest are numerous handwritten marginal notes—many, but not all, believed to be in Luther's handwriting—that they think will provide a glimpse into Luther's mind at a crucial period in his development.

Churches fear proposed Japanese religion rules

Representatives from a number of U.S. religious groups are opposing proposals in Japan that would give the Japanese government greater power to regulate religion.

The proposed regulations would give the government authority over religious groups when they engage in activities in more than one prefecture, similar to a U.S. state. The regula-

tions also would permit the Japanese government to define—and, the U.S. groups fear, perhaps limit—what constitutes religious activity.

The proposed measures stem from reaction to last spring's deadly nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, allegedly carried out by members of the Aum Shinri Kyo sect.

Alabama state school board takes stand on evolution

The state school board in Alabama has voted to note in its biology textbooks that evolution is a theory rather than a fact.

The 250-word insert describes evolution as a "controversial theory some scientists present as a scientific explanation for the origin of living things, such as plants, animals, and humans," the Associated Press reported.

"No one was present when life first appeared on earth," the note continues. "Therefore, any statement about life's origins should be considered as theory, not fact."

The measure was adopted by a vote of 6-1 with one abstention.

Colorado group seeks to tax churches and other nonprofits

Supporters of a Colorado initiative that would impose property taxes on churches and other nonprofit groups say they have enough signatures to place the measure on next November's ballot.

If the measure makes the ballot and is passed, Colorado would become the first state to make churches pay property taxes. The proposal divides nonprofits into two groups. Those that house orphans, the disabled, the elderly, and the homeless would be exempt from taxes, while all others, including churches, hospitals, and soup kitchens, would have to pay.

In brief

- **The Sea of Galilee's natural splendor is being threatened.** Massive new hotel and tourism development is planned along the ancient hills and beaches hugging the 32-mile-long coastline. Israeli Tourism Ministry officials want to triple the number of hotel and resort rooms around the lake from 4,500 to 11,000 or more.
- **The Seventh-day Adventist Church** has reported that worldwide it is **gaining one new member every 48 seconds.** The church claims to have added 149,598 new members in East Africa alone in the last year. The denomination's total membership is over 8.6 million.
- The U.S. Supreme Court has turned down a request that it hear a case challenging a Clay County, Fla., law **barring the sale of alcohol Christmas Day.**
- Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention have expressed dismay over a decision by the **Walt Disney Co. to provide health insurance benefits for live-in partners of homosexual employees.** The policy, announced Oct. 2 in a newsletter to Disney's 70,000 employees, went into effect Jan. 1.
- The United Methodist Church in 1957 counted 40 percent of its members 50 years or older. In 1994, that figure was 61.4 percent. (Only 25.5 percent of the general population are over 50.) **Three percent of the United Methodist laity are younger than 25,** while 32.8 percent are 66 to 99. (Cited in *First Things*, Dec. 1995)
- **Attendance at all U.S. sporting events in 1990 totaled 388 million,** according to one tally. Religious services, it is estimated, drew about 5.2 billion or 13 times more people. (Cited in *First Things*, Dec. 1995)



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:

Else, Ross, from Riverview, Appleton, Wis., to exploratory, Farmington, N.M.

Hussman, David C., from St. Matthew, Milwaukee, Wis., to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Kempf, Jay P., from English, Viroqua, Wis., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.

Malchow, David, to St. John, Stillwater, Minn.

Schallert, Jeffrey L., to St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn.

Stuebs, Erich A., from Our Savior, Lexington, Ky., to St. John, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Voigt, Brett E., from Our Savior, Springville, N.Y., to St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Weiland, James D., from First Evangelical, Racine, Wis., to Christ, Merrill, Wis.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Martin Luther College invites voting members of WELS to submit nominations for two professorships:

Professor in education—would teach courses involving early childhood and serve half-time as director of women's housing.

Professor in Spanish and German—would teach intermediate and advanced courses in both languages to students preparing to teach these languages on the elementary level.

Send nominations with pertinent information by Feb. 16 to Mr. Philip Leyrer, MLC Board of Control secretary, 3209 Nightingale Ln, Middleton WI 53562.

REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY

Rev. Guy Bergenthal, San Antonio, Tex., formerly a pastor in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, has requested a colloquy for the purpose of entering the pastoral ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Correspondence relative to this request should be addressed to President Vilas R. Glaeske, South Central District, 4410 S Kirkwood Rd, Houston TX 77072.

ANNIVERSARIES

Elkhorn, Wis.—First (125). Feb 25. Service, 10 AM, meal follows. Call for reservations, 414/723-4191.

NAMES WANTED

Irmo, S.C.—Formerly Columbia, S.C. Names and addresses of former members for 25th anniversary celebration. Contact Hope, PO Box 854, Irmo SC 29063; 803/781-8673.

Cartersville/Kingston/Acworth/Adairsville/White/Rome, Ga.—Joel Willitz, Lamb of God, 80 Oakridge Dr, Cartersville GA 30210; 770/382-9888.

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 for home schoolers. 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.

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

Camp Verde/Rimrock/Lake Montezuma, Ariz.—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.

NEEDED

Altar cloths—White and green for altar and pulpit, 84 x 21.5. Contact Darlene Johnson, 608/582-4274 or Pastor Dan Schoeffel, 608/526-4829.

Devotional booklet—*God be with You*, copyright 1967. Contact Rachel, 517/652-8566.

Film strips—Bible story film strips and projector. Contact Pastor Tim Poetter, 970/249-0508.

Hymnals—*The Lutheran Hymnal*. Need 100. Contact Ron Rock, Our Saviour (LCMS), 6770 Monaco St, Commerce City CO 80022-2875; 303/288-9577.

Videos and ideas—Of special projects, programs, and events of Lutheran elementary schools, Sunday schools, and youth groups. For WELS Kids Connection monthly video. Send to WELS Kids Connection, Commission on Youth Discipleship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Camp Phillip—Bible study leaders, craft leaders, cooks, and maintenance workers needed for this summer. RNs or EMTs needed to serve as health care director for one week and half-week sessions this summer. Contact Pastor Tom Klusmeyer, c/o Camp Phillip, Rt 3, Box 190-4, Wautoma WI 54982-9330; 414/787-3202.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Summer jobs—Camp Phillip, a ministry of the Milwaukee Federation of WELS Churches, needs counselors, waterfront director, life-guards, adventure coordinator, cooks, junior staff director, family programming specialist. May 26-Aug. 14. Room and board plus \$1,500-\$2,200. Contact Pastor Tom Klusmeyer, c/o Camp Phillip, Rt 3, Box 190-4, Wautoma WI 54982-9330; 414/787-3202.

Graphic Designer—Production experience needed in Quark XPress, Illustrator, and Photoshop; conceptual, creative, and organizational abilities; detail and schedule oriented; and willing to work as a member of a team to produce quality products and advertising. Full-time—work schedule and position responsibilities somewhat flexible. Call Todd Rebillot, Director of Human Resources, Northwestern Publishing House, 414/475-6600, ext. 124, or complete an application at 1250 N 113 St., Milwaukee WI 53226.

COMING EVENTS

Alcoholism Awareness Retreat—For recovering Christian alcoholics or family members. May 3-5. Cousins Retreat Center, Milwaukee, Wis. Contact John Cook, Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, PO Box 23980, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5000.

Ladies' time out—Salem, Milwaukee, Wis. Mar. 16, 9 AM; 353-8141 or Debi Witte, 354-0051.

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.

WELS-CLO spring meeting—WELS church librarians' organization. Apr. 20, St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis. Registration 8:30 AM. Topics: selecting fiction and summer reading programs. Fee: \$7. Call 414/256-3222.

WELS Expo—You and your church. Apr. 19-20 at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Displays and presentations from over 30 WELS divisions and organizations. Question-and-answer period with synod officials. 414/771-6848 or 1-800-466-9357.

Worship workshop—A national conference on worship, music, and the arts. July 21-24. Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis. Contact the Commission on Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3265; FAX 414/256-3899.

Martin Luther College 1996 choir tour—

Contact Martin Luther College, 507/354-8221.

Feb. 16—St. John, Goodhue, Minn., 7:30 PM

Feb. 17—St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., 7 PM

Feb. 18—St. John, Milwaukee, 8:30 AM, 10:45 AM

Feb. 18—St. John, Watertown, Wis., 2:30 PM

Mar. 1—Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn., 7:30 PM

Mar. 2—Trinity, Marinette, Wis., 6 PM

Mar. 3—Salem, Escanaba, Mich., 9 AM; St. John, Bay City, Mich., 7:30 PM

Mar. 4—MLS, Saginaw, Mich., 10:09 AM; St. Paul, Livonia, Mich., 7 PM

Mar. 5—Huron Valley LHS, Westland, Mich., 9:10 AM; Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich., 7 PM

Mar. 6—Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis., 7 PM

Mar. 7—WLA, Fond du Lac, 9:28 AM; Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis., 1:30 PM; Grace, Milwaukee, 7 PM

Mar. 8—Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., 9:30 AM; St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis., 7 PM

Mar. 9—St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis., 2 PM; Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., 7 PM

Mar. 10—Emanuel, St. Paul, 7:45 AM, 10:15 AM; Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn., 3 PM

Mar. 17—St. Paul, New Ulm, 7:30 PM

Mar. 22—St. John, Red Wing, Minn., 7:30 PM

Mar. 23—Zion, Rhinelander, Wis., 2 PM; St. Peter, Schofield, Wis., 7 PM

Mar. 24—Salem, Wausau, Wis., 10 AM

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.

Stagelight dimming system—Best for use by a college or high school. Installation and operation assistance available. Kevin Kastenschmidt, 933 Park Place, Onalaska WI 54650; 608/783-0857 or 608/781-1615.

Heart to heart

Karl R. Gurgel

We've all seen them, we might be them, a couple very much in love. There they sit, or stand, in a crowd of other people. But they only have eyes and ears for each other.

Haven't we witnessed it: little children, with rapt attention, catching every word that drops from their parents' lips? The earth could move, the sky could be falling, and still they would not move their gaze or let a single word fall to the ground, unheard.

Hopefully, we're part of it, too: listening intently to every word coming from our pastor's pulpit on Sunday morning or from the lips of our Sunday school teacher. Nothing else matters quite so much for the moment.

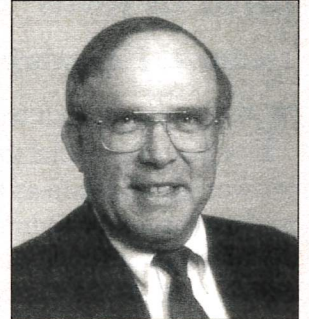
But we have also seen, or been part of, the opposite as well. There he is, hiding behind his newspaper, while she is scolding him with a thousand words. There they are, parents and children, you and I, yelling and screaming at each other, mouths wide open and ears tightly shut. Or, it's an ugly scene, called workers and those who called them, shaking their fingers in each other's faces, neither being willing to listen, each only wanting to be heard.

That's not heart to heart. It's only heartbreak and heartache.

Heart to heart, it's what God's love for us is all about. His heart speaks with a father's love, a love that says what needs to be said, even if it hurts for a little while. His heart listens like a mother, bidding us to speak and waiting long enough to listen to what we have to say to him.

Heart to heart is the way he would have us speak as well as listen to each other. God would have us speak the truth in love, using his law to uncover sin, covering it only with the good news of forgiveness in Christ. Like God we are to listen from the heart, sensitive to what others are saying to us, their hurts, their dreams.

Heart to heart, it's not just the way young lovers talk and listen to each other. It's to be the way Christians, loved by Christ, speak and listen to each other. Husbands and wives, parents and children, clergy and laity, speaking from their hearts, listening with their hearts, communicating Christ's love, heart to heart.



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

*Like God we are
to listen from
the heart,
sensitive to what
others are
saying to us,
their hurts,
their dreams.*

The church as a social gathering

When we treat each other as Christian brothers and sisters, we express faith in Jesus' salvation.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

Years ago, church was as much a place for social gathering as for worship. Grandmas and grandpas, parents and children, aunts and uncles often attended the same church. Sunday mornings, they saw how everyone was doing, learned the latest news, and arranged to get together during the week.

Today, because most church members are not related by blood, many feel little motivation to socialize. They zip into church and right out again. They hardly say a word to anyone except maybe "good morning" to an usher or a pastor. Yet they sometimes wonder why they don't enjoy a greater fellowship with church members, or why no one seems to miss them when they are absent.

Showing Christian brotherhood

The writer to the Hebrews presents an old-fashioned idea to church members: **"Keep on loving each other as brothers"** (Hebrews 13:1). The tie that church members have with one another is even stronger than the tie with their own family. Natural brothers and sisters are born to the same parents, nursed with the same untiring tender care, dependent

on the same protection, share the same blessings, and are expectant heirs of the same inheritance. Those same spiritual ties bind brothers and sisters in the faith to each other and to their Father in heaven.

Someone once told Jesus his mother and brothers were standing outside. Jesus asked, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:48-50).

Now we know why extending family love to one another in the church is so important. In this way, we express faith in Jesus' incarnation and salvation. Jesus came into the world as one of us, in the flesh. But he did more. As God's Son he came to save souls from sin. All who believe in Jesus as Savior, and show it by doing the will of the Father, are Jesus' true brothers and sisters. He makes us brothers and sisters in the faith. We express that relationship especially when we practice love and concern for one another.

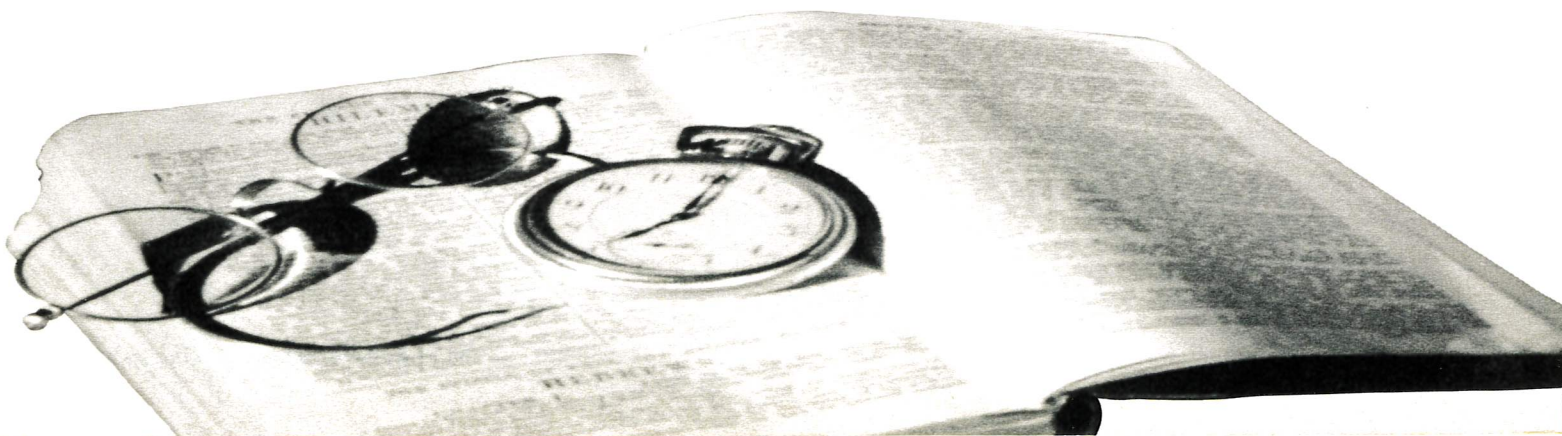
Living Christian brotherhood

Some churches do a better job of this than others. Writing to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul said, "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:9,10).

How often it happens that after a church service members hang around in the narthex talking to each other. Finally, the ushers have to politely ask them to leave so they can lock the doors. The members then go out to the parking lot and talk some more there. They just can't seem to part. They truly enjoy each other's company and take an interest in each other's everyday lives.

That's brotherly love. And this verse in Hebrews tells us to continue loving like that, and to extend that love to even more members of the family of believers. That may sound old-fashioned, but it's still taught in the Bible.

Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.



God's teachings, an acquired taste

Walter F. Beckmann

We hear many Catholics want to be “Smorgasbord Catholics,” free to choose from the Vatican’s doctrinal menu. If their church’s stand on abortion, birth control, or women’s ordination isn’t their taste, they’re not going to put those papal offerings on their plate of personal beliefs.

No surprise. The Catholic Church itself has accepted only what it wanted from the menu of God’s Word. If the recipe, “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” seemed too sweet, they replaced it with a sour dish called, “Purgatory.” If the words, “There is . . . one Mediator . . . between God and man,” didn’t offer enough variety, they added a few specials, “the mediation of the saints and the blessed virgin.”

Human reason led them to such changes. One adult instruction manual explains, “Common sense proves the existence of purgatory.” Why, then, shouldn’t their members use common sense when selecting from the church’s menu?

Not only Roman Catholics decide doctrine by taste. One poll reported that 51 percent of Christians feel their salvation depends upon how good they are. The scriptural teaching, “By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified,” seems to be too self-effacing for many tastes. And why shouldn’t church members pick what they believe, if their churches tell them the Bible is only a human concoction, flavored by personal tastes and opinions?

As a church body, we have to make sure we offer a proper doctrinal menu. If you go into an ethnic restaurant, you want to be served authentic ethnic cuisine. The same goes for our churches. We must always serve only authentic scriptural

fare, unseasoned with human opinions.

As church members, we should appreciate the spiritual food Scripture sets before us. In Lent, for example, our churches serve large extra portions of the passion history. It’s often a bitter message, but rich in the spiritual protein through which the Holy Spirit adds strength to our faith.

As we appreciate that main course, let’s develop a taste for all of God’s great side dishes, every doctrine of Scripture. Sometimes when you first taste a recipe, it may not agree with you—you have to acquire a taste for it. Likewise with many scriptural recipes. They may not be pleasant to our spiritual taste buds, because they are flavored with God’s wisdom—not ours. Don’t push them aside saying, “I don’t think I care for this.” Study God’s own recipe book, and see if you don’t agree with the prophet Ezekiel: “This tastes sweet as honey in my mouth.”

The Holy Spirit must give us a taste for doctrines, but we can do some things to try to acquire a taste for them. We can study Scripture passages, sit in on Bible information classes, read and study *The People’s Bible Teaching**, the coming companion series to *The People’s Bible*.

Before we swallow any study, we should make sure it’s based on Scripture alone and not mixed with any human opinions. Then pray the Holy Spirit will teach us to enjoy the taste and benefits of it in all of our churches.

**The first volumes of this series are due at Northwestern Publishing House in June 1996.*

Walter Beckmann is pastor at Grace, Falls Church, Virginia.

Many scriptural recipes may not be pleasant to our spiritual taste buds, because they are flavored with God’s wisdom—not ours.

A fair hearing and a proper conclusion

John F. Brug

Is a woman facing excommunication permitted to plead her case before the voters' assembly, or must she remain silent (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:13)?

Although excommunication has the evangelical purpose of gaining the offender, it is, nevertheless, a judicial procedure and subject to the standards of justice that govern any case of law. They include the rights to speak in one's own defense, to give testimony, and to confront one's accusers.

The New Testament does not describe any case of church discipline involving a woman, but it does refer to the principle of Jewish law that a person cannot be condemned without a hearing (John 7:51). (The Greek word the NIV translated "man" here refers to a person, not necessarily a male.) Scripture also states that hostile witnesses must confront each other (Deuteronomy 19:16-19) and that cross-examination is necessary to arrive at the truth (Proverbs 18:17).

Scripture describes numerous instances of women speaking in their own behalf during a hearing (Numbers 27:1-11, 2 Samuel 14:1-11, 1 Kings 3:16-28, and Luke 18:1-5). All of these stories assume that women could present an accusation or a defense before a tribunal. A woman could, of course, also be defended by a man acting as her representative, if this was in her

best interest (Deuteronomy 22:16, Ruth 4). Every defendant has a right to a fair hearing, which includes the right to speak in one's own defense.

Furthermore, the passages cited in your question would not deprive a woman of speaking in her own defense, since they forbid a woman to speak or teach in the church only when such actions exercise authority over men. An accused person testifying at a trial is not exercising authority, but is being judged by an authority.

In its legal proceedings, the church must conduct itself in such a way that an unbiased observer would conclude that the accused person, female or male, received a fair hearing.

Scripture says it is entirely due to God's grace if a person is saved, but it is entirely due to a sinner's unbelief that he or she is lost.

*Have a question?
Send it to Your question, please,
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FAX 414/256-3899.*

Does the term "the very elect" imply there were others not elected by God? Since it is the will of God that all men be saved, please clarify election.

The Bible tells us God elected specific individuals to be saved. Paul told the Ephesians, "In love God predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:5). The fullest description of this election to salvation is found in Ephesians 1:3-14.

The Bible also tells us, "God our Savior . . . wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) and that "the man, Christ Jesus . . . gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:6). We, therefore, cannot accept the Calvinist claim that God predestined some people to be damned and that Christ died only for the elect.

Our reason tells us that if God elected some people to be saved, he must have elected the rest to be damned. But Scripture does not allow this conclusion.

Scripture says it is entirely due to God's grace if a person is saved, but it is entirely due to a sinner's unbelief that he or she is lost. How this can be is a mystery to our reason, but we simply let both statements of Scripture stand.

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



In "Faith on earth?" (Nov. '95), Pastor Trapp presents illustrations of attacks on the Christian faith.

These attacks are dangerous. But I suspect an even more critical issue is simply lack of interest in the Christian faith. The reason two-thirds of members miss church on any given Sunday is probably not because they've been influenced by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, but because their sinful natures have convinced them real freedom comes from using the worship hour for fun.

Perhaps open attacks on our faith will ultimately pose the greatest threat. Or perhaps Satan will simply continue to lure us away, as he has been, using the things of the world to make Christianity seem unattractive. Perhaps the world will end as the poet said, "Not with a bang, but a whimper."

*Mark Porinsky
 Dexter, Michigan*

Concerning John Brug's answer in Dec. '95 about celebrating Jesus' birth with a party: I would feel sorry if children couldn't go to Jesus as their "buddy down the block." My children learned Jesus was their buddy because he loves them, he's with them all the time, even in their hearts. I'm sure my babies' child-like, Spirit-prompted response pleases God as much as the staid response of the Wise Men. If the children in the temple on the first Palm Sunday had settled down and become more reverent (Matthew 21), the rocks would have cried out.

*Melissa Rhyne
 Waukegan, Illinois*

Regarding your answer about Jesus' birthday. I am an early childhood educator and use a birthday cake and singing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus as part of my classroom Christmas celebration. We learn about

Mary, the angels, the shepherds, the stable, and the promise kept. For a child, it wouldn't be a birthday without cake. We tell children this is the birthday of a King. We need to make the celebration complete with cake, Bible readings, hymns, and joy in the promise kept and the promise spread.

*Monica Weiss
 Monroe, Michigan*

Concerning Prof. Brug's article:

I've been a Sunday school teacher for 25 years. We teach that Jesus as God came from heaven and took on human form to fulfill the law perfectly. We teach that the virgin birth is a miracle of God. We also celebrate his birthday with a cake. The reason is because little ones do not understand the theology of Christmas. (Many of us adults do not as well). If little ones realize it is Jesus' birthday rather than a day for presents, it's worth the effort.

I don't feel because we have a birthday party, they feel he is like one of their buddies. We do teach, though, that Jesus is their best friend and with them all the time. The children enjoy celebrating the coming of their best friend. We also ask people to join us for birthday cake. Can one think of a better way to welcome visitors?

*Mark A. Becker
 Sarasota, Florida*

I was disappointed when I read Prof. Brug's comments. His concerns are understandable. Yet any WELS congregation that conducts such a party would teach children "the Christmas story and hymns that focus on the miracle of God becoming man" and do so in a reverent way.

Let me tell you about 10-year-old Ashleigh. Two years ago she got an invitation to our "Happy Birthday Jesus" party. She attended, even though her parents didn't belong to the church. This fall, she came to our vacation Bible school. She brought her older sister and a friend. On

Thanksgiving Eve, Ashleigh and her sister sang in the children's choir, and their father was in a pew for the first time. Ashleigh attended the party again this year. She was in the children's Christmas service and calls Grace "her church." Only God knows what blessings will come from a "Happy Birthday Jesus" party.

*Richard D. Starr
 Muskegon, Michigan*

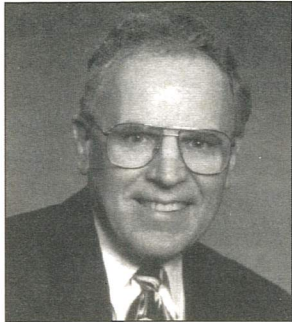
Editor's note: Professor Brug positioned his "Happy Birthday Jesus" answer as a caution, but not as an official, biblical position of WELS.

Through my Bible in 3 years

March 1996

1. Hebrews 10:1-18
2. Heb. 10:19-39
3. Heb. 11:1-22
4. Heb. 11:23-40
5. Heb. 12:1-17
6. Heb. 12:18-29
7. Heb. 13:1-8
8. Heb. 13:9-25
9. Numbers 1, 2
10. Num. 3, 4
11. Num. 5:1-6:21
12. Num. 6:22-7:89
13. Num. 8:1-9:14
14. Num. 9:15-10:36
15. Num. 11, 12
16. Num. 13:1-14:10a
17. Num. 14:10b-45
18. Num. 15
19. Num. 16:1-35
20. Num. 16:36-18:7
21. Num. 18:8-19:22
22. Num. 20
23. Num. 21
24. Num. 22
25. Num. 23, 24
26. Num. 25, 26
27. Num. 27, 36
28. Num. 28, 29
29. Num. 30
30. Num. 31
31. Num. 32

Rich man, poor man . . .



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

*Thank God for
all his servants
and all his
opportunities
to serve.*

He was neither rich nor poor. . . .
Correct that! Pastor James P. Schaefer would have counted himself rich. Not millions of dollars rich, but millions of blessings, including material comforts.

Today, the *Northwestern Lutheran* staff is operating with a sense of loss at the death of the magazine's previous editor. Only two years ago, we bade him farewell and prayed for his "golden" retirement. Now he has been called to Jerusalem the golden, with the sudden failing of a replacement heart valve.

"Pastor James," as he was affectionately called by his former parishioners, will be remembered for many things. God gave him immense talents, a keen intellect, and tireless energy and desire for ministry. God made him a leader in the WELS Lutheran mission.

Today, however, I wish to pay tribute especially to what Pastor James, by God's grace, did for *Northwestern Lutheran* in what he termed the "most exciting" years of his ministry. He had a vision of getting all of WELS lay people to read NL. He introduced lay-oriented articles, expanded news coverage, added more photos, a friendlier format, more authors, and even color covers. He retained the Scripture-based moorings of the magazine. And readership grew by over 50 percent during his 12 years as editor. Thanks to God.

So, once again, after two years, we take leave of James P. Schaefer, with also a touch of envy for the fullness of glory he now enjoys with Christ.

This next man was truly poor, with a family of eight children. Ger Yang came into this country as a refugee from Laos and settled among his Hmong people in

Minneapolis, Minn. But, just two months ago, he died suddenly while serving the Lord in Thailand.

Ger Yang's heart was filled with the richness of the gospel of Jesus, and he had studied God's Word to the point of reaching the equivalent training of a national pastor in world missions. The doors were open, and he looked forward eagerly to bringing the good news of the Savior to fellow Hmong in Thailand and Laos, as well as in Minnesota, an unprecedented opportunity in WELS mission work.

But it all ended abruptly from natural causes, "a fever." God alone knows why.

We also remember a rich man, once a billionaire, whom God blessed with a widow's-mite heart. Some two years after Marvin Schwan's passing, his legacy to the Lord's work on earth has only recently come to light. Through his gifts, the support to expand our mission on earth is increasing. Already, WELS envisions new mission openings and increased ministry once beyond our reach. More than money, though, Marvin Schwan gave us all an example of the blessedness we experience when we, in faith, give for God's kingdom.

Rich man, poor man—yes, and beggar man, thief. Jesus reaches out to all of us with his forgiveness and eternal life. And he gives all of us who believe in him ways to serve him. Thank God for all his servants and all his opportunities to serve.

Gary P. Baumler

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Christian sense vs. common sense

**Morality is an essential part of Christian teaching.
But it's only a preamble to what really matters.**

Kenneth A. Cherney

In case you missed it, Zondervan publishers came out with *A Christian's Guide to Worry-free Money Management*. In it we're told that Christians should pay no more taxes than the law requires. The point is duly supported with a Bible verse, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. . . ."

Richard John Neuhaus, editor of the journal *First Things*, finds it interesting that someone saw a need for *A Christian Guide* to something every sensible person does already. He wonders whether we'll be reading *A Christian Guide to Coming In Out of the Rain* next.

Nothing uniquely Christian

It is surprising when people think there's something uniquely Christian about common sense. It's similar to an idea one meets with even more frequency: there's something uniquely Christian about trying to do what's right. For example, these days many well-intentioned people want to reorganize society along the lines of "Christian principles," by which they mean such solid, time-tested values as hard work and fairness and strong families.

Their "principles," usually, are excellent. The trouble is, there's nothing uniquely Christian about them.

Christians didn't invent morality, and we have no monopoly on it now. Judaism teaches loyalty and honesty. Islam stresses community. Buddhists emphasize self-control. When you study the moral codes of the world's great religions, what strikes you is not how different they are, but how basically similar. If everyone always did the right thing as Jews understand "the right thing," or as Buddhists understand it, or as Christians understand it, the result would be pretty much the same. And in any case, we'd have a better world than we have now.

Something uniquely Christian

But for Christians, that simply isn't the point. The point is, nobody does the right thing—not as perfectly and consistently as God demands it. Morality is an essential part of Christian teaching.

But it's only
a preamble
to what

really matters: the good news that we're all forgiven for having so often done the wrong thing—through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

It's that good news which is distinctively Christian—not the "Christian principles" you hear so much about these days, not right and wrong, not common sense. What's disturbing about all the talk about "Christian principles" is that the real good news—the message only Christianity has—very quickly gets pushed into the background.

When that happens, we end up with a Jesus who's just another philosopher, or an advice columnist, or even an economist or politician—in a world that really didn't need one more of those.

And the one thing the world does need—a Savior—quietly drops out of sight.



Ken Cherney is pastor at Living Hope, Mandeville, Louisiana.