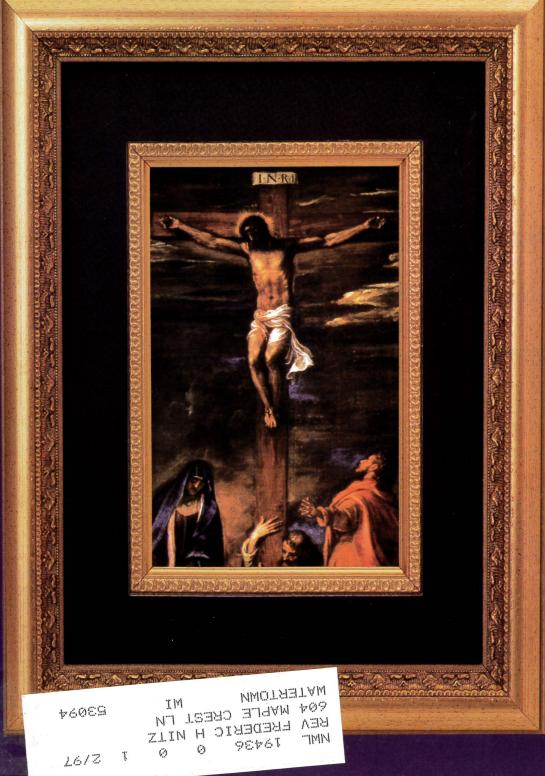
NORTHWESTERN

March 1996

IUTHERAN



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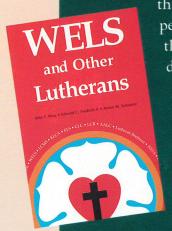
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Why did this have to happen?

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

(John 9:2,3)

Richard D. Balge

The nagging question: When Jesus' disciples saw a man blind from birth they wondered, as people so often wonder: "Why did this happen?" They even suggested that it must be someone's fault.

Was it because of the man's inborn sinful nature? Was it because God knew the boy would be guilty of something that demanded lifelong punishment? Was it something the parents did? It must be somebody's fault. An explanation would not give the man his sight, but the disciples would feel better if only they could assign a reason.

"Why did this have to happen?" How many people have been burdened with guilt, doubt, even despair. It is true that death and disease and deformity—everything that is tragic in the world—are here because sin has spoiled God's good creation. It is true that sometimes children do suffer for the sins of their parents, that some diseases are the result of particular sins. It is also true, however, that most are not.

The divine answer: Jesus' answer in the case of the man born blind was that his affliction was not a sign of God's anger, not punishment for some special sin.

Rather, God was planning to use the man's tragedy for God's good purposes. He would use it to demonstrate that he can make all things work for the good of his own. He would display the power and grace of his Son in the healing of this man. He would demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.

God has his purpose in permitting any tragic situation. A certain Mr. William Moon was blind and invented a system for enabling those who become blind later in life to more easily "read with their fingers." (Moon's invention, still in use, is slightly similar to Louis Braille's well-known system.) Mr. Moon once told a gathering: "God gave me blindness as a talent to be used for his glory." Surely, he learned that from Jesus.

"Why did this have to happen?" How many people have been burdened with feelings of guilt, doubt, even despair.

Why are there sinners in the world? So that you and I can speak God's word of forgiveness to them. Why are there heathen all over the earth? So that you and I can send missionaries to preach the good news to them. Why are there unfortunate people in the world? So that you and I can do what needs to be done, to serve them in Jesus' name.

Jesus has not retired or lost

interest in our problems. He, who solved our root problem by living the perfect life in our place and dying as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, still acts so that the work of God might be displayed in our lives. It's been said: "In useful works you'll soon forget your useless doubts."





- At Christmas, we worry about losing the quiet, reflective observance of Jesus' birth. Ken Cherney wonders if we shouldn't feel the same way about Jesus' suffering and death. At Lent, marvel that there is "No schmaltz needed" to appreciate the most emotional story ever told. Turn to page 6.
- This month we start a unique series—you'll find it in WELS news. For the next few months we'll be running results from our WELS congregational survey. In his editorial on page 34, Gary Baumler shares some good results and some "could-use-some-attention" results. Then, on page 20, we offer the first set of findings. We hope you'll take time to consider what the results mean for WELS as we work together to share the promise.
- Traditional versus contemporary.
 On page 29, Mark Braun addresses those who prefer one—or the other—in "Getting the right rite."
- We end our series "Share the Promise: Let the children come," with this issue. Our thanks to author Laurie Biedenbender for sharing how WELS is reaching its youth. See her final article on page 16.

-LRB

Cover painting by Titian, photography by Gerald Koser Photography

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No schmaltz needed

It's the most emotional story ever told, yet details of Christ's crucifixion are surprisingly stark.

Kenneth A. Cherney



Schmaltz: [via Yiddish, from German schmalz, lit. "melted fat"] 1. anything very sentimental and unctuous, as certain music, literature, etc. [Slang] 2. unctuous sentimentalism [Slang].

You may not find "schmaltz" in your dictionary (happily, mine includes some Yiddish words). But, these days, you'll find it just about everywhere else. In our world, the cloud of schmaltz can sometimes get so thick you need windshield wipers.

Examples of schmaltz include:

- Johnny (he of the Bud Lite commercial) telling his dad: "Ah luv you, man!"
- Jerry Lewis singing "You'll Never Walk Alone."
- The speech the best man made at your wedding (everything that came after "But if I could be serious for a minute . . .").
- TV commercials where the violins sigh and the mother and daughter embrace, after they've discovered together the low-cost secret to wrinkle-free ironing.

You get the idea. You've been "schmaltzed" whenever someone's been trying (usually a little too hard) to get you to grab for your handkerchief. Sometimes the schmaltz is well-meant; it's what comes out when somebody tries to express strong feeling and ends up doing it a bit clumsily. Far worse is intentional, calculated schmaltz. This kind occurs when the schmaltzer wants something from you, and he's attempting to trade on the basic, universal human need to cry a little once in a while. He's counting on most people having very little sales resistance while they're wiping their eyes and blowing their noses.

Popular entertainment, of course, is where schmaltz reigns supreme. The popular theology of the evangelical movement—which is essentially a branch of the entertainment industry—is loaded with it. You can hear the tear-jerking

"testimonies" on any Christian radio station—together with frequent invitations to cry right along.

I heard a broadcast that took religious schmaltz to a new level. A woman was praying. Her voice choked with sobs, she thanked the Lord for the ladies she'd been given to "minister to." She told us several times how much she loved each one of them. Then she said "Amen." The perky dance music began immediately. Her Christian aerobics class was underway.

Now it's not my place to judge that aerobics instructor's faith or, for that matter, her sincerity. However, I wish that religious schmaltzmeisters everywhere would consider the harm they do to the cause of Christ when they smother his message in the spiritual equivalent of blackstrap molasses.

I'd like to direct their, and your, attention to an example of the opposite—of something surprisingly, refreshingly schmaltz-free. Take a close look at the crucifixion accounts in the Gospels.

As you listen to them again this Lent, please notice this. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the most emotional story ever told. There's betrayal. There's injustice. There's gore and unfathomable physical pain. There would have been no end of opportunity here for the sentimentalist and schmaltz-monger—no end to the possibilities for emotional exploitation—had the evangelists been so inclined.

Instead, take John's Gospel as an example: Jesus' trip to Golgotha and his being nailed to the cross occupy just a few words. As Jesus hangs there, the barest details are added, most in an almost offhanded way. Pilate insists on a sign board that asserts Jesus' kingship. The

Scriptures are fulfilled. The deaths are verified. The bodies are taken down. The account ends: "Since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there." Read it again. That's really about all we're told.

Faith can't tolerate being maudlin or sentimental. It's created by the gospel—the good news—not by schmaltz.

Why do you suppose that is? Maybe because the story itself is so powerful! I once heard a review of a certain film version of the crucifixion story which had gone to the other extreme. In the film, Jesus carries his cross up to Golgotha in slow motion. Sweat and blood are everywhere. The violins shriek away full-blast, and the scene drags on forever. The reviewer chided the filmmakers for schmaltzing up (not his word) a tale that needs no such embellishment; for not having the good sense to get out of the way and simply tell the story. Who knows? Already in the first century, the evangelists may have realized that sometimes less is more.

But surely there's a more important reason than that.

I believe we have evidence here that, as one of my teachers wrote in his *The Life of Christ*, "Christ looked for faith from his followers, not sympathy." I know that comes as a surprise to many people. Tearful contemplation of Jesus' cross is the basis for much of the popular piety of Western Christianity. But it obviously isn't what the Holy Spirit, who inspired the four Gospels, had in mind. What did he have in mind?

That's easy. Faith.

Clear-eyed, sturdy trust. Confidence that during Lent, we are watching Jesus' victory and not his defeat. The certainty that the instant Jesus cries out he is "finished" with sin, so are we.

The Holy Spirit, author of the four Gospels, is aiming at faith—the kind of heroic, energetic trust in this dying and rising man that lets us laugh at Satan, stare down temptation, and charge into a life of good works with reckless abandon. That faith feels most at home when it's on its feet on Sunday morning, roaring out a joyful noise unto the Lord. In other words, don't ask it to sit and "weep elegantly into a lace handkerchief" (Martin Franzmann). Not at Lent. Not at any other time.

Faith can't tolerate being maudlin or sentimental. It's created by the gospel—the good news—not by schmaltz. Nor does faith respond to the gospel with schmaltz. After all, you don't sit in the bleachers and weep while your team is clobbering the opposition. You don't welcome back a conquering hero with a rousing version of "Home, Sweet Home."

Make no mistake. It's to be expected that penitent sinners shed a tear here and there during Lent. But it's extremely inadvisable to work at it. The evangelists certainly don't.

In the crucifixion story, they offer us nothing but the Bread of Life.

There's no schmaltz—no "melted fat"—here at all.



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

Communicating Christ despite challenges

Missionaries, with God's help, combat challenges in Novosibirsk, Russia, to communicate Christ among the two million people there.

Julie K. Tessmer

Think about the challenge of sharing your faith with a person unfamiliar with the Bible. . . .

What about telling someone about Jesus in a different language? . . .

Now consider trying to preach the gospel in Russia to deaf people.

WELS missionaries did just that. When two deaf men began attending services at the Christian Information Center (CIC), missionaries found a professional signer to communicate better with them. Now eight to 10 deaf people attend services and Bible classes.

In one of the newest world missions, at Novosibirsk, Russia, missionaries are combating challenges like these so they can communicate Christ among the people there.



Over 60 people attended beginning Bible classes at the CIC last year. The missionaries used a Russian translation of Communicating Christ, a video course on Christian doctrine, to familiarize people with the gospel.

Finding a place to worship

One challenge was finding a permanent place to worship. The contract for the clinic housing the CIC ended in December 1995 and wasn't renewed. It was extended while the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church searched for another place.

Now the church has found a public school they can rent to house the CIC. Over 50 people attend weekly worship led by a missionary and an interpreter. About 165 people attended Christmas services. Sermons are preached in Russian and English, and hymns—chosen from 35 translated into Russian—are sung first in English, then in Russian.

Between 40 and 50 children attend Sunday school every week. Missionaries also visit public schools to give presentations on the Bible. In 1995 over 75 children attended the first vacation Bible school. "Children are very excited to meet Americans, and they love to practice their English," said Missionary Wayne Oblender.

Showing a need for the gospel

Besides facility problems, missionaries must answer those who don't understand why Russia needs another Christian church.

Missionary Michael Ewart experienced this at an English Club meeting:



Missionaries spread the word to Russian children through Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school, and visitations to public schools.

When we got there, they asked us about [Bible] classes. Then someone asked why we came to Russia. I was able to give a fairly thorough witness about Christ. Many wonder why we are here, since the Russian Orthodox Church is a Christian church. I told them people claim to be Christian, yet aren't in church and know little about Jesus. I tried to make it clear that the reason I was here was because I had some good news to share, and I didn't think many of them knew about it.

Missionaries are working to familiarize Russians with the gospel. They advertise by word of mouth or with flyers. People who stop in receive a Bible and an invitation to attend Communicating Christ classes offered twice every work day. Over 60 people attended last year. Other classes are offered for people who complete the course.

"Most Russians refer to the Orthodox Church as 'their church' even though they may not attend it. They see it as a part of their nationality," said Oblender. "We pray that people living in Siberia and Russia will seek the church where the gospel is shared in truth and purity."

Fighting against false teachings

Much of the work occurs in Akademgorodok, the academic suburb of Novosibirsk. Twenty-two research institutes of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and computers, as well as the Novosibirsk State University and the Siberian Branch of the Russia Academy of Sciences are located there. This poses another challenge to the missionaries—the influence of science on Russians' beliefs.

"These people have been taught and trained in the lies of evolution," said Allan Hess, mission staff member. "I see it in God's call to help these scientists see their science as a result of what God has done for mankind."

Hess teaches a Saturday Bible class on science and the Bible in English, focusing on Genesis. He began this class on Sundays in Russian because of high demand.

Making time for opportunities

Missionaries are also offering classes in Novosibirsk and Iskitim. They hope to have opened a CIC in Novosibirsk in February 1996 and have received permission to open one in Iskitim. Other villages and towns have invited missionaries to visit, giving them more chances to spread the gospel. Finding time, even for these opportunities, still is

Listvyanskiy Shacht. A small town about 50 kilometers from Akademgorodok, a place most Russians haven't even heard of, a poor town filled with bad conditions and unemployment because the mine closed.

But missionaries in Russia began mining there again mining souls for Christ.

A woman attending Bible information classes invited missionaries to come tell the children about Jesus. Little did they know that 42 children



would be waiting at the town's meeting place, some walking over 40 minutes to hear about Jesus.

While Missionary Bornschlegl taught the children about Jesus, Missionary Sullivan shared the gospel with 14 adults.

Missionaries returned to Shacht to preach the Word, never having fewer than 40 children and sometimes teaching as many as 65.

"We praise God for this door he opened wide without any effort on our own," said Missionary Ewart.

Serving in Russia:

Pastors

Michael & Jennifer Ewart Wayne & Beth Oblender John & Maria Sullivan Theodore Wendt

Teachers

Arlin Bornschlegl

Volunteers

Allan and Aleona Hess George Crocevera Robert & Donna Mueller



a challenge for the mission staff.

Yet God led two Russian members to serve full-time. They study seminary courses offered by missionaries and work in the CIC.

With the aid of these students, missionaries will continue meeting challenges head-on and working through them to communicate the gospel throughout Russia. Said Oblender: "By the grace of God, we hope they [Russians] will share their faith and confidently say, 'This is *our* church.'"

NL

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

Amen!

We should use amen not only at the end of our prayers, but also every time we want to say "It is true. I believe."

Eric S. Hartzell

It is said that Martin Luther threw an ink bottle at the devil. Whether he hit him or not, we don't know, but we hope he did. It would be immensely satisfying to clobber the devil with an ink bottle. He causes so much grief and misery. Wouldn't it be good to get offensive with him?

There is a way. There is a way to give our adversary one telling blow after another and leave him reeling and punch drunk. We do it simply. We say, "Amen."

Amen—I believe

It is originally a Hebrew word that in the verb means "it is true." It also comes to mean "I believe." We see the connection right away—if something is true and we know it's true, it becomes the basis of our

belief and lives. The Hebrew dictionary says about another form of the word amen (the one that sounds just like our English word amen) "with this formula the listeners confirm the validity of an oath and declare themselves ready to bear its consequences."

The devil's favorite trick, "Did God really say . . ." is thrown back in his face with "Amen." It's even better than a well-placed ink bottle.

In other words, what they heard was true and they say, "We believe this to be true." So 12 times in Deuteronomy 27 the people said "Amen!" when they heard the 12 threatened curses proclaimed from Mount Ebal. They understood and agreed to the truth of what God was saying to them through the Levites.

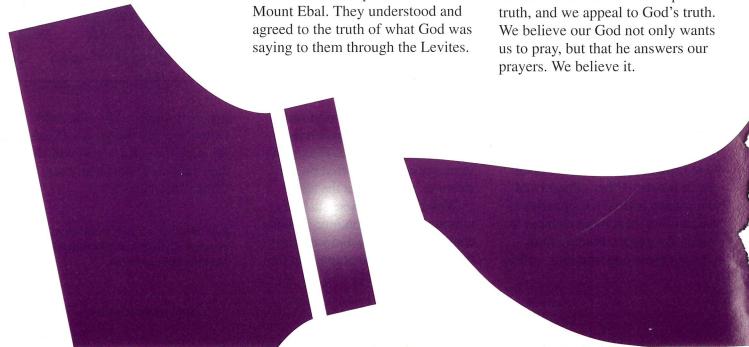
Each time the people were asked by God to respond, "Amen!"

Imagine the effect a well-placed amen has on the great liar and father of liars. God's people stand tall and say in response to God's curses and his promises, "We understand these things our God has told us. They are true. We believe them. There, Amen!"

The devil's favorite trick, "Did God really say . . ." is thrown back in his face with "Amen." It's even better than a well-placed ink bottle.

Amen—it is true

We close our prayers with amen. The amen is not some kind of spiritual period that lets God know we are winding up our prayer or worship. What we have said in the body of the prayer we know to be the truth. We haven't lied to our God or misled ourselves. We have spoken truth, and we appeal to God's truth. We believe our God not only wants us to pray, but that he answers our prayers. We believe it.



Actually, the apostles Peter and John put the amen on the Lord's Prayer for us. As the evangelists Matthew and Luke record Jesus teaching the prayer, there is no amen. But listen to what Peter says, "To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11). And John says, "And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen." There is the amen.

Say the word the devil can't say. Say the word that never is spoken in his haunts. Say amen. It is a heavenly word. Those in heaven are saying it and using it in their worship of the living and true God. They feel compelled to say this word as they see God's plan of salvation from their heavenly perspective. The four living creatures delight in saying amen. Twice we hear them saying amen in the book of Revelation. And the 24 elders say it too. "The 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and

worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: 'Amen, Hallelujah!' "(Revelation 19:4).

Jesus—the great Amen

Amen equals Jesus. He is the truth and the life. To the church in Laodicea, which incidentally he speaks most sternly to of all the seven churches, he identifies himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." Jesus is the truth. What finer way to bring grief to our great tempter than to say the name of the great Amen at the close of our prayers, and to punctuate our worship with this irresistible force.

Christians have learned to love to say amen. In a footnote at the end of 1 Corinthians and Philippians we read, "Some manuscripts do not have amen." It's possible some ancient scribe felt like saying amen as he transcribed God's Word, perhaps even where it wasn't in the original. Neither that scribe, nor we, are ever going to get into trouble when we hear God's Word and insert "It's true. I believe it."

To want to say it is not a pious habit, but a felt need. Our life is a constant battle to stay oriented to the truth and to stand against the lie.

It's a good way to end a prayer, a church service, a day, a life. "Amen and amen," the psalmists said as they finished their songs. God ended his revealed Word with amen. Actually, we end it that way too in John's Revelation. We say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." And we hear, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."

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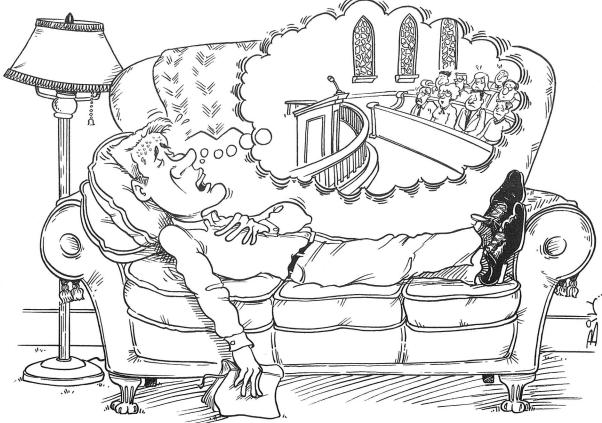
Eric Hartzell is pastor at East Fork, Whiteriver, Arizona.



Preaching is serious business

Every preacher ranks preaching high, if not at the top, of the list of his most important duties.

Gary P. Baumler



I'm not sure exactly how I got myself into such a situation. Everything that went before was just a blur of activity. But here I was, approaching the pulpit without having prepared to preach. I didn't even know what Bible text I would use.

Still, I proceeded, certain that a bolt of inspiration would strike me, and the congregation would never know I hadn't prepared. Instead, when I got into the pulpit, I couldn't even think of a text, and,

completely devastated, I began to stammer an apology to the people.

That's when I awakened. It was just one of those preachers' night-mares. Like the preacher who dreams of getting in the pulpit, and he can't find the text as he frantically pages through his Bible. Or the one who steps into the pulpit while still in his pajamas. Or the one who feels the scorn of his elders pointing fingers at him because he couldn't

find his sermon. Some pastors have waking nightmares, too, that in some way they'll fail to tell God's Word as clearly as it can be.

Time is needed for preparation

Preaching is serious business. And every preacher I know ranks it high, if not at the top, of the list of his most important duties. Pastors spend, on average, 10 hours preparing each sermon, not counting the time to think and meditate on the text as they go through their week. They wish they had the 20 hours available ("one hour of preparation for each minute of preaching") that their seminary professor told them was ideal.

The time races by as the pastor studies God's Word, beginning with the original language and carefully pondering all the related thoughts found in the Word. He arranges the thoughts in an outline, reads what other theologians have said about the text, collects ideas relating to the text, fills in the outline, practices delivery. Each preacher has his own routine, including fervent prayer for the guidance of God's Spirit.

On rare occasions, all leisure is lost such as when the pastor learned one hour before a funeral that he had to fill in for his sick associate. Or when the pastor saw in the wedding bulletin, five minutes before the ceremony, that he had prepared the wrong text, and he adapted his message to the other text. All will agree, however, that those situations are too much like the nightmare for comfort.

A major challenge in preparing the sermon is bringing the message from God to the lives of the people in a fresh and vivid way. The ability to do so depends on understanding the Word clearly, applying it to oneself first, and knowing the people. As one pastor says, "You have to get to know your people, so you can apply the salve where it hurts." Pastors strive to reproduce the thoughts in meaningful pictures and stories, much as Jesus did.

Understanding is needed of human limitations

So preachers pray and prepare and enter the pulpit with all their

human failings. Sometimes those failings show up too obviously. They misspeak themselves: "Your sermon went well," my wife informed me, "but did you know you called 'Joseph' 'David' several times?" One preacher was illustrating a "gratitude attitude" with an illustration from Forrest Gump and his "box of chocolates." But he called him "Forrest Grump" instead. (His wife insists he said "Rump.")

The comfort of that message of Jesus our Savior puts the joy in preaching.

One pastor was illustrating his sermon by telling how a mother hen protected her chicks while being attacked and killed by a weasel. "What's a weasel?" the boy in the third pew had to know. "A furry animal that kills chickens," the pastor replied and continued preaching.

Preachers have had their bad moments, like the time the 250-pound-plus pastor almost tipped over the pulpit that wasn't fastened down, and worse. Those moments serve as good reminders that the preachers are not so important; God's Word is.

Thankfulness is needed for God's powerful Word

About the time the preacher gets too focused on his own failings or his own abilities, he gets refocused by the wonders of God's Word at work. After one of the "worst sermons I ever preached" (my assessment), two elderly women waited to see me after church. "Thank you,

Pastor," they said. "We have had some big problems this week, and that message comforted us."

The comfort of that message of Jesus our Savior puts the joy in preaching. As one pastor put it: "If we had to pay people to let us preach on Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, we would, for the privilege and opportunity to tell the message of the priceless Savior: born, sacrificed, and risen." And since that message is basic to all preaching, his thought applies for all opportunities to preach.

In addition, preachers have their reward in seeing the Word work. While preaching, they will "see in the eyes of the listener a twinkle of understanding of Jesus' love or a smile that says 'that's me,' also when sin is pointed out, or a tear in the eye of a strong man or the telltale blink of a child's eye." Some say they know the message has gotten through, when they learn that children spoke about truths from the sermon on the way home. "If the children are listening, the adults probably are too," asserts one pastor.

And the preacher never knows when God's gospel in his sermon will turn a person's life "from depression and thoughts of suicide to peace and contentment," as one lady told her pastor happened to her once when he preached.

All of this is why each pastor, after preaching, prays once more and says, "Thank you, Lord."

NL

Thanks to the several pastors who shared their thoughts in preparation for this article.

The Word: a key to understanding Revelation

When we see how key Jesus' Word is to understanding Revelation, we will want to give it a key role in our lives, too.

Wayne D. Mueller

A lot of us dream of going to the islands. But sitting on the island of Patmos was no dream for St. John. He was in exile. Separated from the people he loved the most and prevented from pastoring his flock at Ephesus, John was banished to this forsaken place by the Roman government.

We have almost no details. John tells us only what we need to know about why he ended up on Patmos: "because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:9). John was alone on the island because of the Word.

Isolated because of the Word

We are left to fill in the particulars. That's okay, because most of us can relate to being alone on an island because of the Word. To stand up for the Word of God and talk about Jesus often results in isolation for the believer.

Relatives may shut us out because talking about Jesus makes us seem "too serious." Co-workers associate us with the Evangelicals and avoid our lunch table. Members we invite to Sunday Bible class exclude us from their invitation to brunch. The neighbor whose problems we try to solve with Jesus talk doesn't come to the back fence any more. We may as well be on an island.

Rather than eliciting self pity, however, personal isolation for the sake of the Word can be God's way of getting his Word out in the open. It certainly was in John's case. From lonely Patmos, St. John wrote the Revelation. Since then God has used this wonderful book to bring his word of warning and comfort to millions of people.

Connected by the Word

The Word, then, is a key to understanding the book of Revelation. The book itself is God's inspired Word. Standing up for the Word resulted in John's exile to Patmos where he wrote this book. "The Word"—another name for Jesus (John 1:1)—appeared to John there and told him what to write (Revelation 1:19). The Word of God from other parts of Holy Scripture are quoted and alluded to more in Revelation than in any

other book of the Bible.

Revelation intimately connects Jesus' people to his Word. At the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching" (John 14:23). This same Jesus appears in the first chapter of Revelation in a striking picture. "In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword" (1:16). John explains that the seven stars in Jesus' hand are the messengers of the Word, that is the pastors of the churches. The two-edged sword coming out of Jesus' mouth is his message of law and gospel.

The sword coming out of Jesus' mouth is a picture of how Jesus exercises his power among his churches and wins his battles. Revelation teaches that, in the church, the pen is always mightier than the sword. The Word penned by God's prophets and apostles eventually prevails against all the opposition God's people face. To assure his people of this—in all seven of his letters to the churches—Jesus introduces himself as author: "These are the words of the

Seven keys that open the Revelation





Next: the Visions

Son of God" (2:18).

Just as Jesus stands at the center of Revelation's message, so we accept the Word that comes from his mouth as a key to understanding it. In spite of its awesome, symbolic language, we expect the same message from the last book of the Bible as from the first 65 books of God's Word. This Word alone draws us to Jesus and keeps us faithful to him until our final victory. Jesus wields the sword of his Word through his messengers, the pastors and teachers of our church.

Triumphant through the Word

With this key to understanding Revelation, read through the rest of the book. There are frightening pictures of what those who hold to the Word will have to endure: terrible natural disasters, destructive plagues, bloody wars, false prophets, economic hardships, and Satan the great dragon. The enemies of Christ will become drunk with "the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus" (17:6). Some believers will be

"beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God" (20:4).

But Jesus will triumph again and again with the power of his Word. "Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations" (19:15). Believers will overcome Satan "by the blood of the Lamb and by word of their testimony" (12:11). "Those who obey God's commandments and hold to

the testimony of Jesus" (12:17) will triumph with him in this life and in eternal life.

Revelation is Jesus' last word to us before we see him face to face. When we see how key Jesus' Word is to understanding Revelation, we will want to give it a key role in our lives, too. The whole purpose of life with Christ is to hear his Word and share it with as many as possible until he returns. Feelings of isolation we often experience when we testify to his Word do not deter us. If we have Jesus' Word, we have Jesus. We are not alone. From St. John and his Revelation we learn that Jesus often gets his Word out best from lonely islands.

This Word alone
draws us to Jesus
and keeps us faithful
to him until our
final victory.

NL

Wayne Mueller is administrator of WELS Parish Services.

Christian education: it doesn't cost—it pays

"A Christian education provides a worldview—a perspective for events yet to come. It provides a foundation for life."

Laurie Biedenbender

Agnes Nelson. "I told God I really wasn't sure I could do this."

Nelson's decision would affect not only her family, but also about a dozen high-school-age children living in her area. Sturgeon Bay, Wis., is an hour away from the closest area Lutheran high school, Manitowoc Lutheran. These kids, including two of her own, wanted to attend MLHS, but had no transportation. That's where Nelson came in.

It meant testing for a chauffeur's license. It meant driving a bus over an hour every morning and afternoon. It meant working at a fast-food restaurant while the kids were in school. It meant spending less time at home with her family.

But it also meant a dozen children could attend Manitowoc Lutheran High School. She took the job.

Sacrifices

The Nelsons aren't alone in their willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of Christian education.

Members of Calvary, Thiensville,
Wis., send their children to two different area Lutheran high schools,
Luther Prep, and their own
Lutheran elementary school.
Occasionally, lifestyle changes
must be made.



"Sometimes Mom takes on another job," said Pastor Don Scheuerlein. "If Mom and Dad can't do everything, then aunts and uncles help out."

Many families need help with finances. Raising eight children, the Nelsons are well-acquainted with the price of school tuition.

"We sent our older ones to public high because we thought we couldn't afford to send them to Lutheran. We would've had four in high school at the time. But looking back, I can see how foolish that was," said Nelson. "The Lord always provides. I could never figure it out on paper, but the Lord always works it out."

Blessings

Why do hundreds of families like the Nelsons enroll their children in Lutheran schools in spite of the obstacles?

"Parents are willing to make sacrifices of time, effort, and finances in order to provide their children with the best Christian education possible," said Daniel Schmeling, administrator for parish schools.

Parents know that the world will

be pounding at the door of their children's hearts soon enough. A well-grounded faith will stand firm in the face of society's challenges.

"An education centered in God's Word will assist their children to view all things through the eyes of their Christian faith," said Schmeling.

"Our children will have to make decisions on issues that we cannot even imagine now. A Christian education provides a worldview—a perspective for events yet to come. It provides a foundation for life."

Foundations

Parents also remember how the foundation of their faith was established when they attended a Lutheran school. "They recognize the importance of daily instruction in the truths of God's Word. They want their children to have that same foundation for their faith and life," said Schmeling.

Schmeling notes how many generations of a family can be blessed by Christian education. "My grandfather was one of the early supporters of the first Lutheran high school in America," he said. "His children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren received a Christian education in that school.

"Lutheran schools help parents carry out the most important responsibility given to them by God—to spread the light of his Word to their children."

Thanks

As we continue to share the promise of Jesus Christ with our children, we thank our heavenly Father for parents like the Nelsons who recognize the importance of Christian education—for congregation members who commit financial

resources to support Lutheran schools—for pastors and teachers who faithfully share the promise with children every day.

"And we thank our Father for the gift of his Son," said Schmeling, "who has redeemed all of us from the bondage of sin and has invited little children to come to him to receive his blessings—for this life and for eternity."

NL

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

The blessings that come from Christian education are priceless. Yet, education does have a price. Here are WELS elementary and high school tuition statistics for the 1995-96 school year.

Lutheran elementary schools

number of schools: 361

average annual cost per student: \$1,675

average annual tuition for congregation members: \$607

average annual tuition for other WELS/ELS members: \$1,203

average annual tuition for nonWELS/ELS: \$1,430

36% charge tuition to members

82% charge tuition to other WELS/ELS members

90% charge tuition to nonWELS/ELS members

Area Lutheran high schools

number of schools: 20

average annual cost per student: \$4,365

average annual tuition for association members: \$2.129

average annual tuition for other WELS/ELS members: \$2,734

average annual tuition for nonWELS/ELS: \$3,832

Statistics provided by WELS Commission on Parish Schools.



A motto for Cuban ministry

Through the decay of communism, churches in Cuba are emerging stronger than ever.

Paul J. Hartman

It's an old plaque now. It's chipped and it quotes the Bible in old English. It hangs in a house where the people speak Spanish, not English.

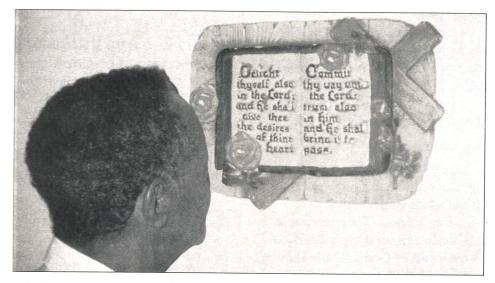
A missionary's wife left that plaque hanging on her living room wall when she closed her front door for the last time. She left for the U.S. to join her husband who could no longer return to communist Cuba.

Dwindling church

How long would it take before the plaque would be cast aside as an unwelcome reminder of Yankee imperialism and unwanted evangelism? Since the Revolution triumphed two years before, Americans and soon after hundreds of thousands of Cubans were abandoning the island. Church attendance was falling to 10 percent of the population. There were 60,000 Protestants in Cuba when Castro came to power in 1959. A tiny number were Lutherans. Would they be cast aside?

Missionaries had worked faithfully for years. Two impressive churches had been constructed in Havana. National pastors and evangelists were serving. By the early 1970's both church buildings were closed to worship, the national pastors had fled, many of the strongest members were gone, and the one pastor who remained had received only the most basic training in Lutheran doctrine.

That was Pastor Roberto Bartutis. The missionary residence had stayed in his hands, just as the



missionary's wife had left it. The neighborhood was occupied by military officers and party officials; his own son was on his way to becoming a major in the Cuban army. The Soviets had come. But the plaque still hung on the living room wall. And Pastor Bartutis continued to serve his tiny flock as best he could.

Developing church

Then the Soviets left, and communism collapsed around the world. It hung on in Cuba, but allowances were made. The people, no longer enthralled with the promises of socialism and needing hope, started coming back to the churches that had never been entirely closed. Many gathered for home Bible study and worship. The Protestant population increased to perhaps two million, about 18 percent of the population. And people living in Florida sent Pastor Bartutis names of people to visit. His ministry grew.

Missionaries are coming back now. The Cuban government allows them to enter for short periods as tourists, and the U.S. government permits them to investigate the possibility of working with a Lutheran church in Cuba. Classes gather for instruction in Christian doctrine, one of them in Pastor Bartutis' home, where that plaque still hangs.

It reads "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:4,5). Pastor Bartutis does not read English, but during his ministry he understood the meaning of those words. He committed his way to the Lord and the desire of his heart was satisfied—the gospel is still being preached in Cuba, now more than it has been for 35 years.

Paul Hartman is the director of mass communications to Latin America.

Repeating courses for adult Bible study coming

Are you missing the best part of listening to God? You can read and learn the Bible for all kinds of reasons. Get straight answers about world history, about what's right, and about what's wrong.

and Marks

Here's the best part of listening to God, though: you learn about his heart. That's the good stuff. Look at Jesus and you see God's heart. Look at him crying over people who were rejecting him. Look at him caring for children. Look at him leading people into God's Word. Look at him confronting people who were cheating God out of his honor. Look at him nailed to a cross for you. Look at him inviting everyone to believe and live. That's God's heart.

To open the Bible and learn without learning about God's heart is like listening to a joke and leaving just before the punch line. You miss the best part. WELS is committed to helping people listen to God and learn of his heart through Bible study. His Word makes all the difference in your life.

"His Word—My Life" is a curriculum of 16 adult Bible studies. The studies fall within four categories. With multiple application and discussion questions, each lesson probes the difference God's heart makes in your life.

"His Word—My Life" is a *core* curriculum. It can serve as the centerpiece for Bible study in your church. It's for everyone.

"His Word—My Life" is a *repeating curriculum*. Since these classes provide the foundation for Bible study, your church may offer them.

The size of your church, space available, and teachers capable of serving will determine how you might use "His Word—My Life." Some will use it only on Sunday mornings. Others will offer studies in smaller groups throughout the week. Because several studies may run simultaneously or several times over the years, these courses have been written for lay people, teachers, or pastors to lead.

Each study is eight lessons; each lesson about an hour long. Student guides, leader's notes, and extra resources will be packaged in copier-ready sheets and on computer diskette. Make as many copies as you like. Tailor the study for your church. "His Word—My Life" will be available at Northwestern Publishing House beginning this summer.

Randy Hunter St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin Each of the 16 Bible studies comprising "His Word—My Life" falls into one of four categories. Here are the Bible studies that will be offered, followed by a general summary of what each contains.

Bible book

Genesis: getting to know an almighty, orderly, just, and compassionate God Jonah: when God and I disagree—God's grace, prophets, Bible, and mission Galatians: justification and sanctification
1 John: faith and works, Christian love

Biblical life

Christ: his mission and ministry on earth Abraham: trusting God with your life Moses: leadership under God David: God's control of the believer's life

Theology

The Church and ministry: historical, biblical concepts of church

Christianity and world religions: the uniqueness of Christianity

Worship: what God says about our worship

Prayer: understanding prayer for practical living

Christian Life

Lifestyle evangelism: using every aspect of our lives as a witness to Christ

Managing your life under grace: learning to make big and little decisions with our Lord in mind

How to study the Bible: learning a method for personal study Burden bearing for believers: what to do and say when you don't know what to do and say



Give it away!

- One reader wrote to tell us that she sends Northwestern Lutheran to Paul Mitra, national pastor in India.
 - Another called to tell us that his son leaves copies at truck stops across the country.

How have you shared your NL?

Write or call to let us know how—and, if you want, why—you shared your copy. We'll send you another. Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3232; FAX 414/256-3899.



WELS members care about nurture and outreach

In the summer of 1995, surveys were sent to all our WELS churches, seeking responses from the pastor and nine others from each congregation. In all, 615 pastors responded, 203 teachers, and 1,759 laity (89 did not identify their status), for a total of 2,666 responses. Seventy-two percent were male, 27 percent female. The survey has a confidence level of 95

percent accuracy with a \pm 5 percent margin of error.

The respondents can be categorized as "strong WELS members."

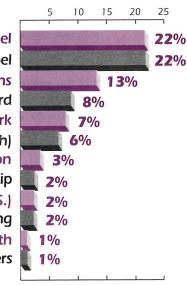
- 84% of lay people have been WELS members 16 years or more
- 26% of lay people read their Bibles daily
- 19% of lay people conduct family devotions daily

- In a three month period, lay people averaged attending church 14 times
- · Lay people attended Bible studies an average of 36 times last year
- 86% of lay people read Northwestern Lutheran and 68% Meditations

The first five questions were open-ended and without prompts. A compilation of results follows.

What should be the most important mission of WELS?

Teach God's Word—the gospel Preach law and gospel World missions Keep true teachings of God's Word General mission work Evangelism (local outreach) Education/instruction Increase membership Home missions (U.S.) Worker training Ministering to youth Strengthen and maintain members



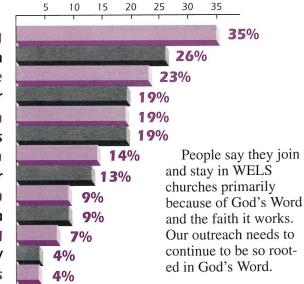
In all, 55 percent of the responses related to nurture and 30 percent to outreach. However, preaching and teaching God's Word is part of outreach as well as nurture. In general, WELS people recognize the mission of the church in the context of the great commission from Christ.

35%

What are the top three reasons you are a member of your congregation?

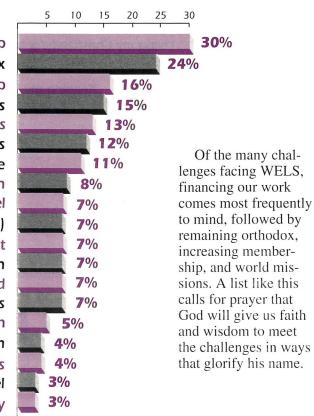
Bible based/follows Bible teaching Stands for what I believe in/my faith Fellowship/feel welcome Born and raised a member Accessibility/location of church I like the members/called workers Ministers teach the truth I'm a called worker To nurture my faith Family/children Church has an elementary school

The worship service/liturgy Church activities/organizations



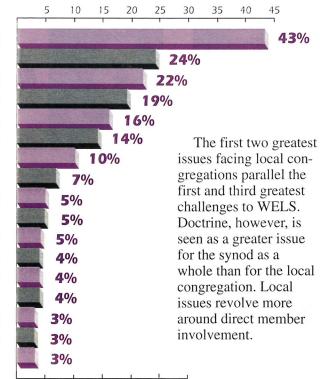
What do you think are the three greatest challenges facing our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)?

Finances/stewardship Remaining orthodox Increase membership World missions Getting enough pastors Women's issues Moral climate Keeping our youth Teach God's Word—the gospel Evangelism (local outreach) Apathy/lack of commitment Education/instruction Satan and the world Home missions Attendance/member retention Maintaining strong educational system Getting enough teachers Preach law and gospel Family ministry



What do you think are the three greatest issues facing your congregation?

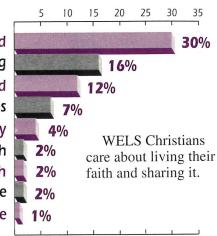
Finances/stewardship Build membership Church member involvement Keeping interest of the young Witnessing/evangelism/outreach Attendance/member retention Bible classes/SS/VBS attendance Lutheran elementary school Build or maintain church space **Apathy Fellowship** Delinquents Women's issues Getting enough pastors Family issues Unity/harmony/trust Fight liberalism/maintain doctrinal integrity





What is your greatest challenge as a Christian?

Living my Christianity/doing what's right/being dedicated Sharing the gospel/witnessing Keeping my faith/loyal to God and his Word Peer pressure/avoid temptations Bring up children correctly Studying the Bible/growing in faith Fight devil/world/sinful flesh Finding time Remain positive



Next month we will bring you more overall results from this survey. The costs for the survey were covered primarily by a generous grant from AAL. The Leede Research Group of Manitowoc, Wis., collected and reported the data.



Megen R. Gross Watertown, Wis.

Martin Luther College

On Dec. 21, 1995, 11 graduates of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., received Bachelor of Science in Education degrees. Names followed by an asterisk are elementary/secondary education graduates. The rest received elementary education degrees. These are the first graduates to receive degrees from the new Martin Luther College.



Carrie B. Hillmann Hilbert, Wis.



Nathan W. Hintz * Onalaska, Wis.



Paul C. Hoffman



Chandler, Ariz.



Brett T. Kriese * New London, Wis.



Jennifer L. Letzgus Beaverton, Mich.



Janelle M. Norder Laingsburg, Mich.



Jennifer N. Pacl LaValle, Wis.



Jennifer R. Papenfuss Winona, Minn.



Anna G. Potter * Laingsburg, Mich.



Steven J. Sylvester St. Georges, Grenada, West Indies

CLIP—introducing congregations to Christ-Light

You can learn more about Christ-Light, the synod's new religion curriculum, through CLIP, a Christ-Light Introduction Program, and *CLIP-Notes*, CLIP's biannual newsletter.

CLIP will provide:

- techniques and resources to help parents use Christ-Light with their children at home
- familiarity with Christ-Light's various options and the teaching methods used in the lessons
- help in selecting options from Christ-Light for developing the congregation's religion curriculum.

Workshops, led by trained congregational leaders, will be held in each district. The first workshop (1996-97 school year) will focus on helping families teach Bible truths at home. The second (1997-98 school year) will provide resources and ideas to congregation leaders to help them establish a religion curriculum for youth from birth to grade 12.

CLIPNotes will keep congregations informed about Christ-Light's progress as well as excite readers about the upcoming curriculum.

The Christ-Light committee is concepting artwork for lessons, activities, and teacher's guides as well as editing, formatting, and preparing for the 469 lessons due out in 1998. A \$2.5 million gift will provide for additional editors and writers, as well as enhanced artwork.

"God continues to bless this important publication effort," said Jerry Kastens, administrator for the Commission on Youth Discipleship. "We're confident our efforts will provide many spiritual blessings to families and children."

To receive CLIPNotes, contact Commission on Parish Schools, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3221. Christ-Light is being phased into congregations over a four year period, beginning in 1998. Here is what's being offered.

1998-

New Testament Bible stories for children in grades prekindergarten through six

Topical Bible lessons for grades 7-8

Vacation Bible school course.

1999-

Old Testament Bible stories for children in grades prekindergarten through six

Bible study course for high school students, grades 9-10

Vacation Bible school course

2000—

Cradle roll materials for ages birth to four
High school Bible study and topical Bible study courses, grades 9-12
Vacation Bible school course

2001—

High school topical and Bible study courses, grades 9-12

Vacation Bible school course

World mission updates

WELS world missions office reports on some of our missions:

Native American

In Arizona, a large number of lay people who want to use their gifts for the church are in the Apache Adult Leadership Program. In Mission, S.D., exploratory work is being done to reach the Lakota Sioux. Other places receiving attention are the Navajo in New Mexico and Arizona, the Blackfoot and Flathead reservations in Montana, and the Nez Pierce reservation in Idaho. In Montrose, Colo., Pastor Tim Poetter is working among the Cora Indians.

Africa

Ray Cox, after several bouts with malaria, was advised by his doctor not to stay in Cameroon. He returned home in January.

Latin America

Bogota, Colombia, held its first service with 116 people—mostly members of a Communicating Christ class. Spanish-speaking missionary teams are visiting Cuba every month with over 40 contacts there.

N THE NEWS

Martin Luther College professor **Paul Boehlke** attended "Faculty for the 21st century," a national assembly of 200 scientists. At the Nov. 3-5, 1995, workshop in Minneapolis, scientists studied what it would take to get the U.S. scientifically literate.

Boehlke applied his experience to MLC, "We are looking at our own science curriculum—what do our future pastors and teachers need to know?"



Calvary Academy buys WELS grade school

Calvary Academy, a school for in-crisis WELS children, is another step closer to opening. The academy purchased Zion Lutheran School, a WELS elementary school in South Milwaukee, Wis.

Plans call for the opening of Calvary this summer, after the facilities are remodeled and a director and staff are called. The school will provide residential schooling and therapy centered on Jesus for ages six to 18.

This is the second building Calvary has purchased. The first building posed zoning problems that couldn't be overcome. Calvary still faces some zoning problems. The school is intended to be a boarding school, but so far is zoned only as a day school. Calvary must get a zoning variance to house students.

For more information, contact Calvary Academy, Robert Wasser, president, 1147 S Lake Shore Dr, Fontana WI 53125.

Obituary

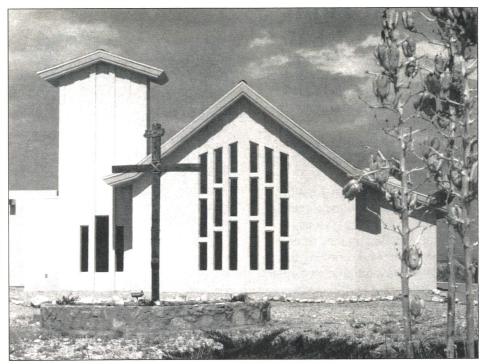
A. Hugh Reaume 1936-1995

Hugh Reaume was born Aug. 2, 1936 in Detroit, Mich. He died Dec. 1, 1995 in Tempe, Ariz.

A 1961 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served at Immanuel, Tyler, and Zion, Island Lake, both in Minn.; Trinity, Winslow, and Salem, Scottsdale, both in Ariz. He served as member and chairman of the Arizona-California District Mission Board and was a member of the Board for Home Missions.

He is survived by wife Betty; children Leslie (Dean) Vlisides, Jeffrey, and Daphne; four grandchildren; mother Connie; brother Don; and half-brother Bob.

District news



Beautiful Savior, El Paso, Texas, dedicated a new chapel on Sept. 10, 1995. The congregation had met in bank lobbies, a city recreation facility, a Messianic Jewish center, an antique store, a motel, and a worship, education, fellowship (WEF) building before the chapel's completion. The congregation, begun in 1980 with 10 people, serves 100 members.

Western Wisconsin

Two congregations dedicated new church buildings: **St. John, Kendall**, on June 4, 1995; **St. Paul, North Freedom**, on July 9, 1995.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Good Shepherd, Downer's Grove, Ill., celebrated its 20th anniversary on Nov. 12, 1995. It also celebrated Pastor David Rutschow's 25th anniversary in the ministry. Rutschow is the president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District.

George Ferch

Arizona-California

Ascension, Escondido, Calif., opened its preschool on Jan. 8. Carol Campbell serves as the director and teacher.

Hermann John

Duane Behm, teacher at Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz., celebrated 25 years in

the ministry. . . . Prince of Peace, Yuma, Ariz., celebrated its 25th anniversary on Sept. 11, 1995. . . . On Oct. 15, 1995, Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz., dedicated a new school building. The building replaces portable classrooms used since 1980.

Kenneth Pasch

In October 1995, St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif., honored Eunice Stenmark for 56 years of playing the organ for the church. Stenmark started playing the organ in eighth grade in Litchfield, Minn. Since then she has served as organist in congregations and chapels in the U.S. and Europe.



Festival concerts prepare for worship conference

More than 200 voices, a full orchestra—strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and organ—and an assembly of over 1,000 will gather for festival concerts that highlight and inaugurate the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, July 21-24.

The 200 voices are drawn from four WELS choirs: Martin Luther College Choir, Wisconsin Lutheran College choir, the Seminary Chorus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee. The instrumentalists are WELS musicians. There are no tickets; admission is free. Each hall seats over 1,000.

The concert will be presented:

7 PM, Sat., Apr. 20, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

2 PM, Sun., Apr. 21, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

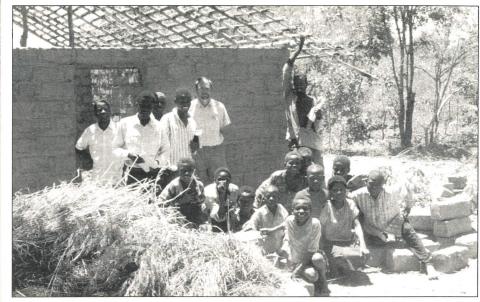
7 PM, Sat., May 4, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

The final performance will inaugurate the conference itself:

8 PM, Sun., July 21, Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis., the site of the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts.

James Tiefel

Zambia congregation builds church



Missionary Dan Kroll and members of Kafulafuta congregation stand in front of the new church building they built by themselves.

"We're going to be in trouble," said Ted Muquita, chairman of Kafulafuta congregation and the headman of the Kasamba village. He is trying to get his congregation to gather grass for the roof of their new building. If the rains come before the roof is up, the mud bricks will melt, and all the work will be for nothing.

In 1995, the small congregation—four active members and three more studying to be confirmed—built their own church. After one failed attempt and several obstacles, they completed the work. On Nov. 26, the first worship was held in the new building.

The congregation will receive

money for iron sheets for the roof (termites would demand rethatching every two years) and several bags of cement for the floor and plastering of the mud brick walls.

Members have high hopes for growth and feel secure in their own building. The spirit here is one of cooperation, hard work, and enthusiasm—it must be contagious, contracted from our faithful brothers and sisters in WELS. Thank you for your work in spreading the kingdom of our Lord.

Missionary Dan Kroll Ndola, Zambia, Africa



From the South Atlantic District newsletter:

Faith, St. Petersburg, Fla., discovered that their pastor is not only a good preacher and faithful pastor, but also a good cook. He had 16 members for Thanksgiving dinner. Word got around. He was asked to cater the ladies' Christmas dinner.

The number of ladies planning to attend more than doubled.

The church is held together by the apostles' doctrine, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Fellowship is an outward mark of inward fellowship. When you have a German Lutheran background, outward fellowship usually includes the stove and the coffee pot.



In brief

- Hate-free Bible circulated. A new Bible translation by the American Bible Society (ABS) claims to be free of anti-Jewish bias. The Contemporary English Version Bible (CRV) took 10 years to complete, and the ABS has printed and begun to distribute nearly half a million copies. The Bible takes its place with other "politically correct" Bibles of the day that determine translation from social issues rather than actual words of the text. (Reported in *Ecumenical News International* [ENI], Dec. 5, 1995)
- In 1969, students in U.S. seminaries studying for the M.Div. (Master of Divinity) or B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) were 79.5 percent of the total. In 1993, they were 42 percent of the totalalmost a 40 percent drop in the number of students taking a full theology course in preparation for lifetime ministry. (Cited in First Things, Dec. 1995. Note: All students of WELS Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary study theology for lifetime ministry.)
- During the 25-year period ending in 1993, more churches were started in Boston than in any previous period of the city's 365-year history. The 500 congregations that researchers found in 1993 represented a 50 percent increase. (Pulpit Helps, Dec. 1995, reported in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, Jan. 1996)
- After decades of brutal repression of religion, the Communist Party in Russia has announced that Russian Communists have abandoned atheism. (Reported by ENI, Dec. 18, 1995)

Clergy divorces on the increase

Between 1970 and 1990, clergy divorces in the United States increased by 65 percent. Now one-fifth of all clergymen (and one-fourth of all female clergy) have been divorced.

The Unitarian-Universalists have the highest rate of divorce among ministers (44 percent of men and 47 percent of women), followed by Episcopalians (25 percent of men and 30 percent of women).

Among Southern Baptist pastors, 4 percent of male clergy and 17 percent

of female clergy are divorcees. In many of these cases (particularly the women), the person was divorced before entering the seminary or full-time ministry. (*Christianity Today*, Oct.

23, 1995, reported in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, Jan. 1996)

Germany exercises selective religious neutrality

Although the principle of "state neutrality" toward religion has been interpreted by Germany's highest court to ban the crucifix from public schoolrooms if even one person objects, the *Land* of Lower Saxony did not find it lacking in neutrality to rename the Wittekind Thermal Spring in Bad Oeynhausen, a famous spa, the Bali Thermal Springs; to

post statues of Hindu deities in the "Bath paradise," as the springs were called; and to have a dedication ceremony performed by a Brahman from Indonesia.

Both the Protestant and Catholic churches have protested against the "takeover" of a state facility for the Hindu religion. (*The Religion & Society Report*, Jan. 1996)

Reformed seminary professors: "Label gay activity sin"

Fourteen professors at Calvin Seminary, the Grand Rapids, Mich., theological school of the 140,000-member Christian Reformed Church, are asking that the local church body where the school is located condemn homosexual practice as sin.

The extraordinary action said that the Classis Grand Rapids East (a body of churches similar to a WELS conference) had created "unrest in the church" by failing to clearly condemn homosexual activity when it considered a report on ministry to homosexuals. The report deliberately sidestepped taking a stance on whether homosexual practice or orientation is a sin.

That refusal prompted the seminary professors' letter. "In our judgment, the church cannot afford to be anything less than clear on this subject," the Rev. John Bolt, one of the signers of the letter said. "We (the church) have a clear position on this issue, and we are convinced as a seminary faculty that that (position) is biblically, theologically, (and) morally the right position to take, and any ambiguity on that is troubling."

The denomination has a 1973 statement that "homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture."

Lutheranism "dying" in the 450th anniversary of Luther's death

On Reformation Sunday 1995, the "Luther Year" was opened in Wittenberg, Germany, commemorating the 450th anniversary of Martin Luther's death in 1546.

The rich heritage of Lutheranism in "the land of the Reformation" seems hardly to inspire many Germans today, for the state-related, largely Lutheran churches often remain virtually empty on most Sundays. And in Luther's own native region of Saxony (formerly East Germany), the churches are on the verge of financial catastrophe, surviving only thanks to contributions from the better-funded Protestant churches of the west. (*The Religion & Society Report*, Jan. 1996)

"Toronto Blessing" church loses denomination's backing

The Canadian congregation that gave birth to the ecstatic Pentecostal worship style known as the "Toronto Blessing" has been asked to leave the Association of Vineyard Churches for placing "extra-biblical" meaning on the animal sounds and other "exotic" occurrences that are the hallmark of its prayer meetings.

Six nights a week, worshipers laugh, weep, groan, fall to the ground, and utter sounds described as animal-

like. In the past year, some 750,000 people from around the world have visited the congregation to participate in the "renewal" meetings.

Pentecostals consider such events to be signs of the Holy Spirit. However, the parent body withdrew its "endorsement" because the church encouraged such "extra-biblical," "exotic" expressions to draw attention to itself.

Pastors pink-slipped

A recent survey of Protestant ministers in the United States reveals that 23 percent of them have reported being fired or forced to resign their pastorates at some point during their career.

According to the survey, clergy said conflicting visions for the congregation between themselves and members was the top reason given as to why they were terminated. A number of congregations have forced out more than one pastor. According to the survey, 62 percent of the forced-out pastors said that the congregation had driven out at least one previous pastor and 41 percent reported that the congregation that expelled them had forced out pastors more than twice in the past.

rē·li giŏn Defining religion

real presence: the scriptural teaching that in the Lord's Supper Christ's true body and blood are actually present with the bread and the wine. As the Bible declares, "Is not the cup of thanksgiving

 \dots a participation in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread \dots a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Turkish Christians face shortage of clergy

The Armenian
Orthodox Church
in Turkey, the
largest Christian
denomination
in the country,
is facing a critical shortage of cler-

gy and has ordained only five new priests in the last five years.

There are 82,000 Armenian Orthodox Church members in Turkey, 60,000 of them in Istanbul. But the Istanbul diocese has only 28 priests, 10 of them over age 60.

Under Turkish law, the Armenian church's clergy are required to be Turkish citizens, and the government has banned Orthodox churches in the country from setting up seminaries. For the past 10 years future priests have been informally trained by bishops of the church in Turkey and by pastors and academics from other denominations.

Ecumenical channel breaks the 25 million subscriber mark

The Faith & Values channel announced that it has achieved more than 25 million subscribers, becoming the eighth fastest-growing, adsupported cable network of the 32 monitored by the A.C. Nielsen company.

The cable channel gained 4.5 million new subscribers in the last year, a 19 percent increase. It is operated by a consortium of 64 Protestant, Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox faith groups.

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

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors:

Carter, Jeffrey R., from Yolm, Wash. (ELS), to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.

Hildebrant, John R., from Willow Lake, Willow Lake, S.D., to St. John, Westaskiwin, Alberta, Canada

McKenney, Kevin P., from Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., to Messiah, N. Hollywood/St. John, Tarzana, Calif.

Mose, Larry N., from Hope, Portland, Mich., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.

Paul, Norman T., from St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., to exploratory, Peoria, Ill.

Petersen, Timothy, from Redeemer, Scottville, Mich., to Good Shepherd, Beaverton, Mich.

Soukup, Timothy R., from Lutheran Church of Central Africa, Blantyre, Malawi, Africa, to Our Savior, San Antonio, Tex.

Stratman, Paul C., from St. Jacob, Grass Lake, Mich., to Zion, St. Louis, Mich.

Tackmeier, Bill J., from Zion, St. Louis, Mich., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.

Teachers:

Gross, Megen R., to Zion, Torrance, Calif. Hillmann, Carrie B., to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.

Hinz, Nathan W., to Resurrection, Aurora, III. Hoffman, Paul C., to St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.

Kriese, Brett T., to Grace, Falls Church, Va. Letzgus, Jennifer L., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield,

Norder, Janelle M., to Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn

Potter, Anna G., to St. John, Baraboo, Wis. **Sylvester, Steven J.**, to Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.

REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY

Rev. Guy Bergenthal, San Antonio, Texas, 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

Des Moines, Iowa—Lincoln Heights church (50) and school (40). June 1–service, 5 PM; hog roast, 6 PM. June 2–service, 9 AM; brunch, 10 AM. Contact Paul Menzel, 515/285-7284; or the church, 1217 SW Watrous Ave, Des Moines Iowa 50315.

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

Plover, Wis.—Divine Word (25). June 9. Services, 10 AM and 2 PM; dinner at the Sky Club, noon. 2501 Plover Springs Dr, Plover, WI 54467; 715/341-2915.



Elkhorn, Wis.—First (125). June 2–Christian education, 10 AM service. Oct. 27–evangelism and mission outreach, 10 AM and 7 PM services; 414/723-4191.

Madison, Tenn.—Rock of Ages (25). Mar. 24. Services 9:30 AM and 4 PM; luncheon noon; dinner and program 5:30. History journal and cookbook available. Anniversary Committee, Rock of Ages, 741 Campbell Rd, Madison TN 37115-2556.

COMING EVENTS

Ladies' time out—Salem, Milwaukee, Wis. Mar. 16, 9 AM, 414/353-8141; or Debi Witte, 354-0051

Festival concerts—Includes singers from Martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and the Lutheran Chorale plus a full orchestra. 7 PM, Apr. 20 and 2 PM, Apr. 21 at WLS, Mequon, Wis.; 7 PM, May 4 at MLC, New Ulm, Minn.; 8 PM, July 21 at the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.

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. WELS Kingdom Workers, 414/771-6848 or 1-800-466-9357.

Annual women's day—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn. Apr. 27, registration 8 AM. Beth Hauf, 507/354-3256.

Regional youth rallies—

July 8-11. School of Mines, Rapid City, S.D. Tim Johnston, Great Falls, Mont.; 406/452-1286.

July 26-28. Tacoma Pacific Lutheran Univ., Wash. Contact person: Earle Treptow, Langley, B.C., Canada, 604/532-7829; for registration: Jeff Kurbis, Kent, Wash., 206/946-4488.

July 29-31. LPS, Watertown, Wis. Dale Raether, Juneau, Wis.; 414/386-3313.

1996 district conventions-

A-C, June 17-19, 714/534-5617. D-M, June 11-13, 605/845-3704.

MI, June 11-13, 517/835-1776.

MN, June 18-20, 507/282-8280.

NE, June 17-19, 402/656-3176.

NA, June 11-13, 703/534-1719.

NW, June 17-19, 414/722-6712.

PNW, June 14-16, 503/253-7338.

SA, June 10-12, 404/928-7919.

SC, June 10-11, 713/498-2634.

SEW, June 11-12, 708/852-1519.

WW, June 3-5, 715/834-2595.

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.

Youth ministry workshop—Biennial teen ministry training workshop. Sept. 20-22. Wonderland Conference Center (45 miles south of Milwaukee). Registration information will be mailed to congregations. Contact Commission on Youth Discipleship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3274.

European tour—A tour of the Luther lands hosted by OWLS. Sept. 16-30. Highlights include spending a night with fellow Lutherans in Steeden or Zwickau, Germany. Contact H. Kaesmeyer, 3317 Kipling Dr, Saginaw MI 48602; 517/793-1020 or the tour company at 1-800-658-2551.

OWLS 1996 annual convention—Marriott Hotel, Racine, Wis. July 9-11. Contact OWLS, 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-9977.

ITEMS AVAILABLE

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.

Evangelism big books—"Jelly Bean Easter Stories." Commission on Youth Discipleship has published the fourth in a series of big books for pre-K through fourth grade. To order this teaching resource (catalog item 38-005) contact Northwestern Publishing House; 1-800-662-6022.

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.

Farmington, N.M./Durango, Colo.—Ross Else, 2707 N Sullivan Ave, Farmington NM 87401; 505/325-6503.

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.

NEEDED

Book—Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries by Werner Elert, copyright 1966 (out of print). Contact Pastor Mark Tuffin, 24 Boardman St, Kallangur, QLD 4503 Australia; 011 617 3204-6118. (Note a 16 hr. time difference.)

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

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

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

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Summer jobs—Camp Phillip, a ministry of the Milwaukee Federation of WELS Churches, needs counselors, waterfront director, lifeguards, adventure coordinator, cooks, junior staff director, family programming specialist. May 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.

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.

Getting the right rite

Mark E. Braun

It's not often one recalls a test question from 20 years ago, but I remember one on my church history exam at the seminary: "What form of government does the New Testament prescribe for the church?"

I remember the answer too: "None."

A similar question, which also could have been on that test, is, "What form of worship does the New Testament prescribe for the church?" The answer to that is also, "None."

In the Old Testament, God decided the worship schedule, directed what should be done, and decreed who would do it. Sacrifices and ceremonies were specified in detail. The New Testament has none of that. The New Testament describes the church at worship (the scene at Corinth, for example, sounds wild and woolly!), but it never prescribes their actions for us. Instead, the New Testament gives broad worship principles (glorifies God, edifies people, is rooted in Scripture, uses spiritual gifts), but it lets style and form be free.

We believe that, don't we?

Article X of the Formula of Concord says that ceremonies and church rites "are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word," and that "the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority to change, to diminish, and to increase" those ceremonies and church rites. In other words, a congregation is free to choose its worship style. The Augsburg Confession (Article VII) adds that although true unity in the church rests on agreement in doctrine, "it is not necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike."

And we believe that, don't we? I'm not so sure. When liturgical devotees say, "This is how Lutherans worship" (by which they mean, "This is how good Lutherans ought to worship"), when they insist that our hymnody conform to that of a certain era or genre, when they seek to elevate the practice of liturgical worship to a litmus test of our orthodoxy, one has to wonder if some Lutherans are making a "must" out of things the New Testament and our own confessional writings have called "free."

Liturgical worship is valuable. It has a noble history. It focuses on God's saving acts in Christ's works. It gives occasion for varied expressions of God's gifts.

And if it be a matter of personal taste, I'm happy with traditional liturgies and hymns. I don't need something new to satisfy me in church.

But at what point do I confuse what I enjoy with what God commands? Is a hymn better just because it's 600 years older? Because a certain liturgical form is right and useful in a seminary chapel or at an old downtown church, is it to be preferred (or even imposed) at every mission chapel or in all praise gatherings?

The Formula also warns against "useless, foolish displays," which neither glorify God nor benefit people. Contemporary Christian worship sometimes entertains instead of enlightens; it may stress how we feel, not what God did. So we should choose carefully.

But should we scrap the whole form because some of it is weak? Contemporary Christian worship may also give undue glory to the performer. True, but liturgical worship also can become a performance, or empty form; the right rite can still go wrong.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." We do believe that, don't we?

Mark Braun is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

The New
Testament
describes the
church at worship,
... but it never
prescribes their
actions for us.

Entertaining strangers

Treating people you don't know with love demonstrates your faith in God's universal grace.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

People used to talk with their mailman and checkout clerk. They helped little old ladies cross the street and changed a tire. How do you treat people you don't know? When was the last time you invited someone you didn't know to your house? It's become a rare practice, and I'm not sure why.

Maybe it's our crime-filled society, where many are suspicious of others. Maybe it's ethnic differences and tensions that are sometimes foremost in people's minds. If someone doesn't look like me, talk like me, act like me, or live where I live, I want nothing to do with him.

We know that thinking is rubbish. Remember what Jesus said to the lawyer who wanted to know who his neighbor was. Jesus told the parable of the Samaritan who helped a man victimized by robbers. The Samaritan bandaged this man's wounds, poured oil and wine on him, put him on his own donkey, and took him to an inn to care for him. Jesus added, "And he was a Samaritan." Imagine—a Samaritan helping a Jew. That was unheard of.

Entertaining strangers

We are taught from childhood not to talk to strangers. Does that rule carry over into adulthood?

Obviously not.

The second verse in Hebrews 13—and the second good old godly guideline in this chapter—says, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

What if Abraham had ignored the strangers who came to him? He would not have received the promise of a son, born to him and Sarah in their old age. What if Lot had ignored the strangers who came to him at Sodom? He and his family would have been buried in burning sulfur. In both cases, the strangers were angels sent by God.

Demonstrating God's grace

But why does God want us to entertain strangers? The strangers we meet will probably never be angels. Why have a loving heart that makes us considerate and caring of those we don't know? Because entertaining strangers is a way of expressing our faith in God's universal grace.

Remember, we were all strangers and aliens toward God. But God loved the world so much that "he gave his one and only Son, that

whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Jesus continues, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" (John 3:16, 19-21). Loving strangers, and for that matter enemies, doesn't come naturally. And those who love all, even strangers, are influenced by a God who loves all as well.

Entertaining strangers shows that God is working in you and is a demonstration of your faith in God's universal grace. If you don't show love to unbelieving strangers, how will they know God loves them. Treating strangers with love may be an old-fashioned idea, but it's one way to attract attention. You can then witness to your faith, and that carries with it eternal consequences.

Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.



Feelings and truth

Victor H. Prange

That didn't feel right, and this felt right." So a 34-year-old Chicago suburbanite joined the Mormon church. What bothered him about other churches was their teaching that families aren't eternal, that earthly marriages don't continue in heaven. "You die and you're solo again. That didn't feel right."

Mormonism teaches that a marriage performed in one of their temples is eternal, that such a marriage, though made on earth, is celestial, heavenly. Such a doctrine obviously appeals to people who are happily married on earth. It feels good to believe that our marriages will continue into eternity.

But human feelings dare not determine eternal truth. Eternal truth is established by the one who is eternal. The question was put to Jesus: If a woman is married seven times here on earth, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? His answer: "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). These words of Jesus nullify Mormon teaching about eternal marriages no matter what people might feel.

The most dangerous of all human feelings is to suppose that salvation depends on a person's own good works. One of the findings reported in *A Generation of Seekers*, a book based on extensive interviews with the baby boomer generation, was that the typical American moral injunction is "Do the best you can." What you believe counts for little so long as

your spiritual life makes you feel good, and you do the best you can. That's the thinking of many.

One young person summed up what life is all about in this way: "Just be the best, and do the best, and treat others as if you were one of them, and just praise God daily and do the best you can, that's all." Another said: "Jesus was a wonderful teacher, he taught us so many good things. But no, I can't say I believe in him more than I believe in Buddha or Mohammed. They were all trying to help us to live a better life."

If a person feels that salvation is the result of living a good life, then the death of Jesus on the cross was a tragedy; his death has no meaning, it was senseless. Then Lent and Easter are stripped of all significance.

But if we accept God's eternal truth rather than depending on our own feelings and thinking, we will rejoice to hear John say of Jesus: "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We will find comfort in the words of Paul: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Thank God that not human feelings, but rather his divine Word establishes truth. Here is the firm foundation for Christian faith and life.

Victor Prange is pastor at Peace, Janesville, Wis.

Thank God that
not human feelings,
but rather his
divine Word
establishes truth.

Questions concerning communion

John F. Brug

Do we need forgiveness of sins in the Lord's Supper if we already have it in the gospel and in confession and absolution? Does the Lord's Supper give us special forgiveness?

A song says, "There are many ways to say 'I love you.' There are many ways to say 'I care.' "Husband and wife can express enduring love in many ways—by saying "I love you," with wedding vows, a ring, a hug, or helpful acts. We like to be reminded of lasting love.

Likewise, God expresses his forgiving love to us in many ways. Already at our baptism, he made us members of his family and promised us forgiveness through Christ. But he constantly reassures us of that same love in the words of the gospel, in confession and absolution, and in the Lord's Supper.

For a person with faith in Christ, grace is not a commodity God distributes a bit at a time. Receiving forgiveness of sins is not like taking a shower once a week and getting rid of a week's dirt. It is like standing in a gentle rain that is constantly washing us clean. For believers, God's forgiving grace is a continuing attitude he has toward us—a condition in which we stand.

Because we need assurance, God declares his forgiveness to us in many ways: through the confession of sins and absolution, the gospel message in the readings and sermon, and the Lord's Supper. The forgiveness is the same each time.

What is special about the Lord's Supper is the unique way we are assured of forgiveness—each one of us individually receives the very body and blood of Christ to obtain our forgiveness. What more powerful declaration of forgiveness could there possibly be?

God has many ways to say "I love you, I forgive you." For our assurance and peace of mind, he wants us to use them all.

What is special about the Lord's Supper is the unique way we are assured of forgiveness—each one of us individually receives the very body and blood of Christ to obtain our forgiveness.

Was Judas present at the Last Supper? If he was, do we have the right to keep anyone away from communion?

We are not sure whether Judas received the Lord's Supper, since the evangelists do not always write in strict chronological order. When subjects overlap, they sometimes

Have a question? Send it to Your question, please, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX 414/256-3899. finish one subject before beginning the next.

Matthew, Mark, and John seem to place the traitor's departure during the Passover supper, prior to the Lord's Supper. Luke seems to have Judas present during the Lord's Supper. Since Luke frequently departs from chronological order, I favor the interpretation that Judas left before the Lord's Supper. (For more discussion, cf. Ylvisaker, *The Gospels.*)

Whether Judas received the Lord's Supper does not affect our practice. He was a hypocrite then, not a known impenitent sinner. If Judas received the Supper, he is an example of the person who eats and drinks judgment to himself when he receives the sacrament in an unworthy manner.

We have no responsibility to prevent attendance at the Lord's Supper of hypocrites who ignore Scripture's warnings. We have the duty, however, to try to protect people from unworthy reception, by refusing the Supper to the impenitent, to those who do not recognize the presence of Christ's body and blood, and to those who cannot examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:26-32). We also have the duty to preserve the oneness expressed by the Supper, by attending only with those who are united in doctrine with us (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

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



In response to the amens left off the hymns in our new hymnal

[Dec. '95]. Why must we go along with most contemporary hymnals omitting the amens? We say "amen" after the Lord's Prayer, which is not only spoken by someone else but also by me. Likewise hymns are prayers sung by someone else and by me, so everyone in church can listen and enjoy God's holy word. I pray that our church will continue to play and sing the "amen" after the hymns.

> Iona Hayter Sparta, Wisconsin

Your timing on membership nurturing is much too late [Dec. '95].

There should be premarital nurturing on child development and the responsibilities of parenting in a Christian way. It starts first with the love and respect they show each other before a child is conceived. We should strive to let God's love and his Word flow from us to others, especially our mate.

Mrs. Clifford Gillespie Huntington Beach, California

Brown Deer, Wisconsin

Another blessed Christmas made more joyous with our church's children's programs. Another sad feeling over the separation between the Lutheran day school and the Sunday school children in the program. Does our Savior love the Sunday school children less because they can't afford Lutheran school? Cannot these lambs be considered equal in the church's eyes? Eleanore Haefer Koscinski

Are you recycling copies of WELS Connection videos? Bring them alive again.

- Deliver them to the homes of shut-ins
- · Share them with friends who expressed interest in your church.
- Air them on the public access channels of your local cable TV stations.

Now that I have you thinking, I'm sure you can come up with additional ideas.

> Leroy Heinse Vancouver, Washington

In response to James Aderman's

letter [Jan. re: Ben Kohls and karate]. In the original letter we sent to "youth news," we made a special note that Ben's karate instructor (Sensei) is a Christian. His Sensei did not advocate meditation or "opening" up your mind. The only lord he served was the true Lord, and he made that very clear to his students. Finding a karate instructor who was also a Christian and an example to his students is a true gift.

As parents, we must examine all aspects of our children's involvement in school and outside activities. Dismissing something or accepting something without knowing everything about it is an injustice to our children.

> Mr. and Mrs. Scott Kohls Rochelle, Illinois

The original news item sent in by the Kohls was edited and the reference to the Christian Sensei was omitted. We regret any confusion that resulted. -ed.

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

rē·li'giŏn the Jewish Defining religion

Sanhedrin: ruling council

and religious supreme court permitted by the Roman government in Jesus' day (Mark 19:55ff). The Sanhedrin was composed of high priests, elders (tribal and family heads), and scribes or legal experts (Acts 4:5). The council included Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 5:17, 34), numbering about 70 members in all.

Through my Bible in 3 years

April 1996

- 1. <a>□ Numbers 33-35
- 2. Mark 1:1-15
- 3. Mk. 1:16-34
- 4. Mk. 1:35-2:12
- 5. □ Mk. 2:13-3:6
- 6. ☐ Mk. 3:7-19a
- 7. Mk. 3:19b-35
- 8. Mk. 4:1-20
- 9. Mk. 4:21-34
- 10. Mk. 4:35-5:20
- 11. Mk. 5:21-6:6a
- 12. Mk. 6:6b-30
- 13. Mk. 6:31-56
- 14. Mk. 7:1-23
- 15. Mk. 7:24-37
- 16. □ Mk. 8:1-26
- 17. Mk. 8:27-38
- 18. Mk. 9:1-29
- 19. Mk. 9:30-50
- 20.

 Deuteronomy 1
- 21. Dt. 2
- 22. Dt. 3
- 23. Dt. 4:1-40
- 24. Dt. 4:41-5:33
- 25. Dt. 6
- 26. Dt. 7
- 27. \(\tau \) Dt. 8
- 28. \(\text{Dt. 9:1-10:11} \)
- 29. Dt. 10:12-11:32
- 30. Dt. 12, 13



Surveying WELS



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

This survey has provided a way for us to talk with each other and an opportunity for our leaders to listen.

s I write this editorial, I'm almost ready to agree with those who said "Surveys are no good." Almost! The avalanche of statistics from the 1995 WELS Survey has threatened to bury us in Communication Services.

However, as we dig out of the storm of numbers and opinions, we see good things:

- At the top of the list, God has led us WELS Christians to hold to his Word and teachings as basic in our spiritual lives.
- We see the gospel at the center of our mission.
- We want to grow spiritually.
- We want to reach others with the gospel.

We also see matters that call for our attention:

- Finances head the list nationally and locally. This creature has two heads.
 One, we need more finances for the Lord's work, and need, through God's gospel, to build and exercise our faith to bring the money. Two, we need to avoid letting finances become our focus instead of God's Word and work.
- We're eager for more help to grow spiritually and to live our faith more fully.
- We still have to work at seeing ourselves as "the synod."
- We need to grow in understanding worldwide outreach as equally important as local outreach and vice versa.
- Women's issues, keeping our youth, and building trust with our synodical leadership are all hot buttons.

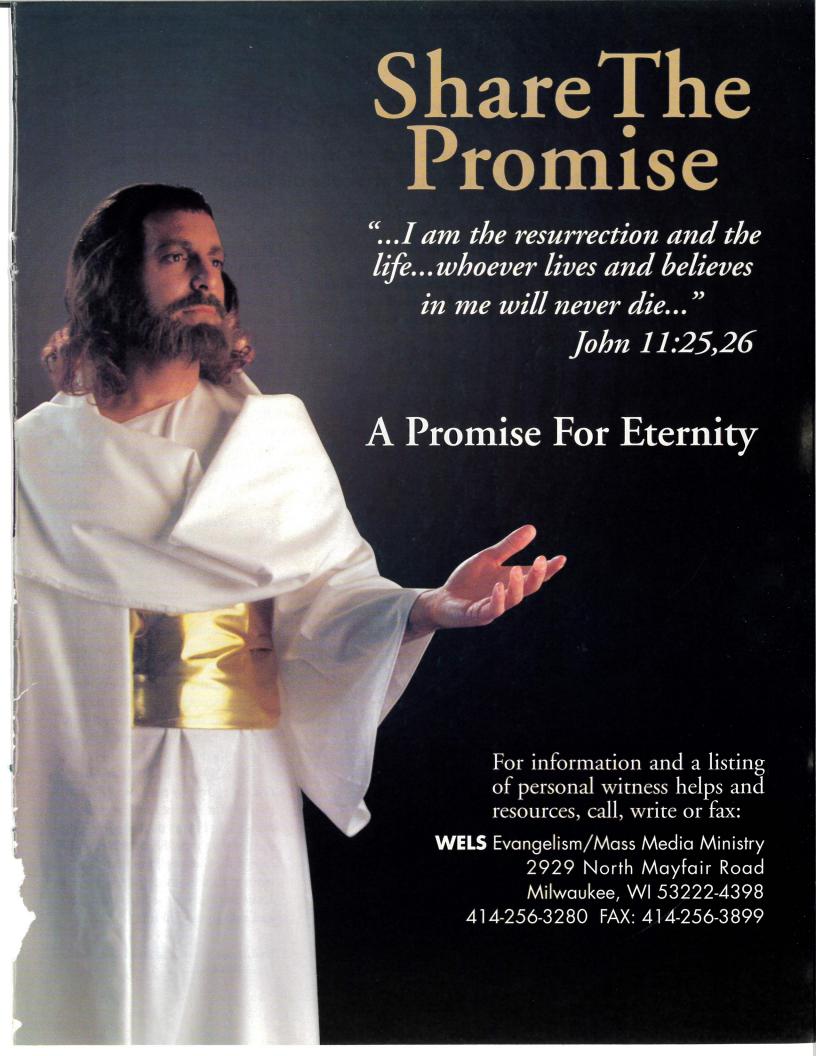
I cannot exhaust the information available from the survey. We will report the overall results to you, beginning with this issue of NL. Also, we have prepared an extensive report for all the synod's ministries and distributed it to the Conference of Presidents, the Coordinating Council, and the synodical administrators, so that, from the results, each may determine ways to serve better.

But, statistics aside, this survey has had another significant benefit. Some of you said it this way: "Thank you for the opportunity to respond" and "Please do this more often." This survey has provided a way for us to talk with each other and an opportunity for our leaders to listen. President Gurgel, for instance, hopes to address issues in his NL column based on open-ended responses from the survey.

Still, the survey didn't provide all the information we would like to know, nor were all the survey questions as well-sculpted as we might like. This survey was broad-based and general. In the future we may be better served to target certain issues and create a more specific focus.

Finally, many of you wrote words of encouragement and expressed thanks to those entrusted to coordinate and help guide our ministry as a synod. The thanks belong first to God in Christ for giving us his promise to share, and then to you who are out there day-to-day sharing it and providing the means to get it shared all around the world.

Hary I. Caumler



Risk prevention

The only way to really reduce risks is to live in the Lord Jesus, to live in him who is Lord over all things.

Frederick J. Toppe

Everything gets measured nowadays—your chances of dying in a tornado (one in 60,000), the number of homes with elevated levels of radon (one in 15), our life expectancy (75.8 years).

Sometimes we find that the dangers are much greater than we ever thought. One in seven of us will develop skin cancer (your chances of getting skin cancer go up as much as 50 percent after just one serious sunburn). The real danger from infectious disease is not on hospital visits, but in the money we handle: one of every 10 coins and half the paper money we use carry infectious organisms.

We are surrounded by risks and constantly take measures to reduce the risks to ourselves.

Sometimes we are surprised by the findings. The most dangerous work is not construction work or farming, but unemployment. So heightened is the risk of suicide, alcohol abuse, and other stress-related diseases that being unemployed rates as the equivalent of smoking 10 packs of cigarettes a day. Cancer is caused one-third by smoking and smoking-related behavior, one-third by diet, and the remainder mostly by life-style choices, such as occupational and recreational activities. Carcinogens

in the environment account for only two percent of all cancers.

This information comes from the December 1995 *Smithsonian* magazine article dealing with risks—



what are the chances of something happening. Risk analysis has become one of the hot new sciences. We are surrounded by risks and constantly take measures to reduce the risks to ourselves. We put on safety belts, we use medicines with child-proof caps, we

cover over the asbestos in our schools, we clean up toxic waste, we eat in ways that reduce damage to our health, we exercise, we buy smoke detectors.

But the article did not go into all the risks or ways of dealing with them. There was no mention of the risk of being tempted in a given day (100%), or the risk of having our sinful heart confuse our thinking (100%), or the risk of dying (100%), or the risk of facing God's judgment (100%).

These are risks much greater than we face from disease and accident, yet many people are more concerned with the lesser risks than the greater ones. They make sure their children are in car seats, but not that their children are baptized and brought faithfully to Jesus. They make sure that they exercise every day, but they don't spend time with God's Word every day. They repent and stop smoking, but they do not repent and stop their immoral living or their indifference to the fellowship of the church.

The only way to really reduce risks is to live in the Lord Jesus, to live in him who is Lord over all things. He brings us through all the dangers we face, he works out all things for our good, he saves us from evils seen and unseen. Only in Jesus are we safe, safe in this life and safe in eternal life.

Fred Toppe is pastor at Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.