

# LUTHERAN



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spring of Jesus  
resurrection**

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 REV FREDERIC H NITZ  
 604 MAPLE CREST LN  
 MATERTOWN MI 53094

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# Is it true that seeing is believing?

*Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) John 20:8,9*

Richard D. Balge

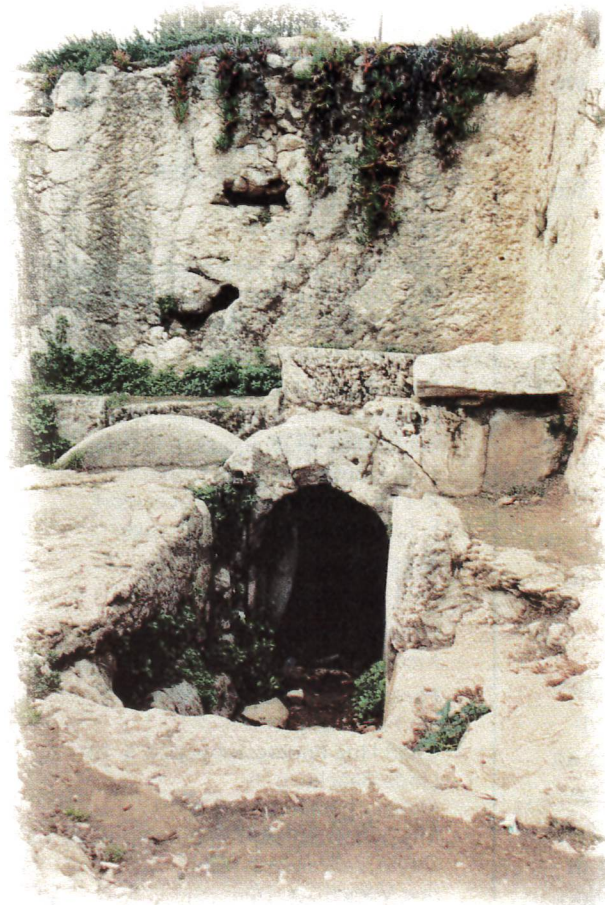
**W**hat we see around us is death. We see death notices, signs of aging in our loved ones and in ourselves. We read reports of violent death, perhaps even witness it. The only empty graves we see are at committal services. After some generations the cemeteries are filled. What are we to believe about our eternity?

What did the friends of Jesus who hurried out to the grave expect to see that morning of the first day of the week? They expected to see a Roman guard, the governor's seal on the grave, a great stone rolled over the entrance to the tomb. They expected to find a body in need of further preparation for burial.

## **We believe what we see in the Scriptures**

What Peter and John saw was the stone rolled away, the seal broken, and the guard gone. They saw the burial linens and the face cloth, all in order. But no body. The grave clothes weren't needed anymore.

How much misunderstanding and heartache and unbelief it would have saved all Jesus' followers if only they had remembered Jesus' words and the words of the Scriptures. When Jesus first spoke



of his death, they couldn't bear to think about it, so they hadn't heard what he said about rising again. They forgot the words of Psalm 16:10, "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." How much it helped them when Jesus began, on the road to Emmaus and during the 40 days that followed, to show them from Moses and all the prophets that all that happened was

according to God's plan, foretold in the Scriptures.

Think of that the next time you hear someone say it isn't the Bible we need to trust, but only Christ. There is no Christ except the Christ of the Bible. It is only on the basis of the Bible that we can believe and sing: "Jesus Christ is risen today."

## **We will see him whom we have believed**

Easter is not just for Jesus to enjoy and for us to wonder at. No, our whole eternity is wrapped up in what happened to him. After his perfect life as our representative, he was crucified for our sins to satisfy the justice of God.

He could finally say, "It is finished." On Sunday morning God raised him from the dead, thereby declaring, "Yes, it is finished!" God is satisfied, and we are forgiven. On the basis of the Bible, we forgiven sinners believe and confess: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting."

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



- It's Easter—our authors share the resurrection's reassurance. And though that's the same message we strive to share in our other 11 issues, we made this issue a bit more special—it's in full color. We hope you like it.
- As we celebrate Christ's triumph, Paul Kelm sounds a warning. He shares a memo, written from Satan's perspective, that outlines Satan's strategy for turning Christians away from their mission. Read "An interoffice memo from hell" on page 10.
- After St. John's Lutheran Church, Antigua, was hit by Hurricane Luis, the response from WELS members was overwhelming. This month, we bring you a follow-up story. To report news like this is an honor, for two reasons. One—the mission staff is working hard to spread the gospel. Seeing them in action was a blessing. Two—you, our readers, are doing amazing work too. When you see your fellow Christians in need, you don't hesitate to offer prayers, gifts, and time. See page 8.
- On page 12 you'll read the last of our three-part series on preaching. We thank everyone who contributed their thoughts and ideas to help us shape the series.

—LRB

**Cover photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel  
Photography**

## NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

Official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
April 1996 / Vol. 83, No. 4

### Editor

Rev. Gary P. Baumler, 414/256-3230

### Communications Assistants

Linda R. Baacke, 414/256-3232  
Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231

### Northwestern Lutheran WELS

2929 N Mayfair Road  
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398  
Phone 414/256-3888  
Fax 414/256-3899

### Communication Services Commission

R. J. Zink (chairman), R. D. Balge,  
J. M. Barber, W. F. Bernhardt, M. D.  
Duncan, T. L. Schultz.

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R. H. Hochmuth, R. E. Lauersdorf,  
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### Art Director

Paul Burmeister

### Graphic Designer

Melissa Homan

### Photographs and Illustrations

Jan Fleming, p. 3  
Chad Hug Photography, p. 6 & 16  
Linda Baacke, p. 8  
Melissa Homan, p. 10 & 30  
Mrs. Kevin Scheibel Photography, p. 12  
David Valleskey, p. 14  
Sue Voegeli, p. 18  
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Duane Tomhave, p. 36

### Subscriptions

Northwestern Publishing House  
1250 N 113 St  
Milwaukee WI 53226-3284  
1-800-662-6093 ext. 8  
Milwaukee area 414/475-6600 ext. 5

USA and Canada—one year \$9. All other countries—one year, air mail \$40; one year, surface mail \$24. Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates.

Available on audio cassette from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55107.

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN (ISSN 0029-3512) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113th Street, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Second class postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Northwestern Lutheran*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113th Street, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. ©1996 by *Northwestern Lutheran*. Printed in the USA.

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# Let the cheering begin

When it comes to our struggle with death, our God tells us—commands us—to begin the celebration before the contest is over.

Eric S. Hartzell

The evil King Ahab of Israel said one thing you and I can agree with. He said, “One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off.” In other words, don’t start cheering for victory before the fight is over. Ahab’s advice is so good we almost want to commit it to memory.

On the field of contests—all kinds of contests—the team that starts to celebrate victory before it wins often ends up the loser. This kind of cocky self-confidence in winning often causes defeat. Finally, “it ain’t over ’til it’s over.”

## Struggle with death

But Ahab’s saying and our observation about premature victory celebration are all wrong in one particular arena. When it comes to our struggle with death, our God tells us—commands us—to begin the celebration before the contest is over. “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But

thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:56,57).

---

*Look at the scoreboard  
and see the final score,  
the only score that ever  
counts in any contest,  
“Jesus everything—  
the devil nothing.”*

---

And the apostle Paul wants us to “high-five” him as together we hear, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” It hasn’t happened yet, but it will. Our enemy hasn’t yet sunk forever out of sight in the lake of fire. But particularly at Easter we start our victory cheering.

On the face of it, our contest with death is lopsided against us. We have to play the game, but there is no chance of our winning the contest. Death is too strong. Death always wins. It takes our loved



ones away one by one. It reduces the lovely to the ugly and repulsive. It makes the lovable unlovable with sickening odor that makes loved ones join with Martha and Mary: "He stinks."

The contest just doesn't seem to be going in our favor. Start cheering now? This "last" enemy is making too much headway, gaining too much ground. Fresh heaps of ground are piled up next to the folding chairs under flimsy canvas tents in cemeteries. Even if we don't stay to watch the box lowered, how can we feel like we are winning and are going to win?

We see death's progress and headway when we look at our faces in the mirrors in the morning, when we see the lines and the white hair and the bent backs. How can we not say he is winning? How can we possibly start cheering? In the face of this, who feels like clapping? Celebrate the victory?

### Celebrate the victory

Yes. A thousand times yes. A great resounding, thundering yes, the kind that desperate sports fans make when their team wins against all odds. Yes. At a crouch, with the arm bent at the elbow and the clenched fist pumping the air. Yes. "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

---

*On the face of it,  
our contest with death  
is lopsided against us.*

*We have to play the game,  
but there is no chance of  
our winning the contest.*

---

This Easter look across the field of battle. See the cross. See the empty tomb. See the scattered grave clothes. See the mauled serpent, the terrible and ancient dragon, lying crushed and broken on the field.

Look at the scoreboard and see the final score, the only score that ever counts in any contest, "Jesus everything—the devil nothing."

See our great Captain fitting out his team finally and forever with their suits of immortality, strapping them onto their tired bodies of dust. "For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable."

The smell of the fray is gone. The sights and the sounds fade. And then for the first time perfect voices raise the cry that for their whole mortal lifetimes they choked on and whispered and sighed. For the first time, like the sound of thunder, like the sound of rushing and mighty water, it rolls on forever. "Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ."

Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Fellow Christians, let the cheering begin.

Now.

NL

**JESUS** *everything*  
**SATAN** *nothing*  
**YARDS TO GO**

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

# “That’s what Christians do”

Linda R. Baacke

Since October 1995, over 2,000 people from around WELS have given cards and letters, money and gifts, prayers and time to help St. John, Antigua, regroup after a series of hurricanes. From November to March, crews from Builders for Christ helped rebuild and

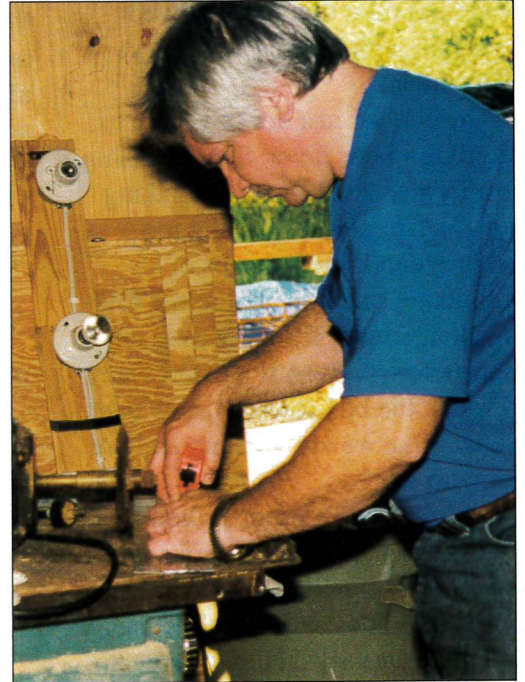
repair the mission church and homes. The mission staff in Antigua was amazed by all the people who helped them, but as one Builders for Christ crew member put it, “That’s what Christians do.” Here we offer you a glimpse of what a few Christians did.



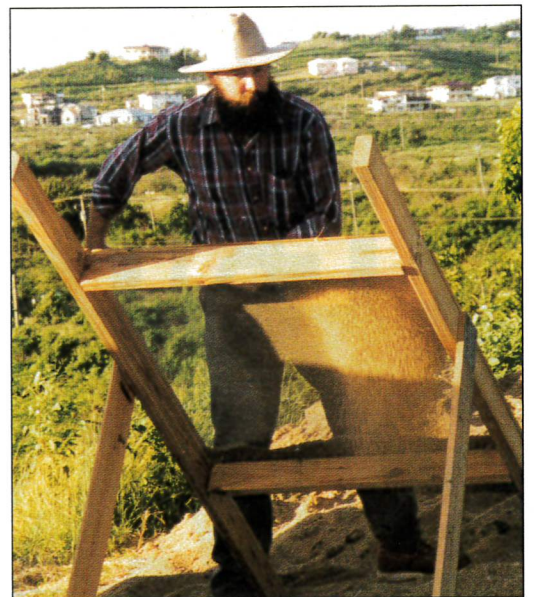
Lynne Henrich, Sabah Salem, and Ruth Browne, all St. John members, helped fix up the church. Members of the mission staff were thankful for all the help they received. “We’re humbled. I think of all those people who had bad things happen—I prayed for them, but didn’t send a card,” says Lynne Henrich. “All these people send a card and say, ‘we’re praying for you.’ Three months after the hurricane, we were getting something in the mail every day.”



Not including planning and travel hours, members of Builders for Christ volunteered over 5,200 hours. “You sometimes hear that people are cold and unfriendly. But when you see all these Christians from all over the U.S. helping out, you realize how much people do care and work for each other,” says Mark Henrich, St. John’s pastor. “Even though it was a blessing to the mission staff, everyone on the crew said it was more of a blessing to them,” says Dale Mueller, director of Builders for Christ. “The fellowship of the congregation, the strength and faith the mission displayed, was an example to the entire crew.”



Rich Heyn (pictured), Bridgman, Mich., came with his son, Justin. Justin says, “We’re here for these people who suffered through so much.” But the fellowship of Christians brought a strong reminder, one that David Kehl, St. John’s pastor, said, “We thank the Lord for bringing everyone together—not just for this project, but for eternity.”



Randy Baker sifts sand that will be used for cement. One of five builders who sang with St. John’s choir while in Antigua, Baker says, “The best thing about the trip was the Christian fellowship—not only with the builders, but also with the members of the congregation.”





(From top) Randy Baker, Dennis MacDonald, and Jon Sonntag, all from southern California, pour cement to rebuild a wall at Kehl's. "Helping rebuild was nothing compared to the work the mission staff is doing. Those who live and work down here, they're the real story," says MacDonald.



St. John member, Wilbert Richards, rips up floor tiles in one of the preschool classrooms. The classroom is now tiled and painted, but not yet reoccupied. By using volunteers from the church and from around WELS, Builders for Christ saved over \$100,000 on repairs.



Project manager, Ray Zastrow, and Don Laitinen, a member of Christ the Redeemer, Vt., in Kehl's damaged kitchen. Over 70 people expressed interest in helping with the project, but only 42 were able to help. The type of work and limited housing restricted the number of people who were able to serve.



No one is too young to help. St. John school children helped paint the boards used to repair the school's gallery roof.



Ralph Pleuss, Manitowoc, Wis., and Kenn Kurtz, Fredonia, Wis., put framing on the roof at the Schneck house. Members of the mission staff went 75 days without electricity and 94 days without phones at their homes. The only working phone was at church. "When you see what these people went through, you know why we're here," says Kurtz.

# An interoffice memo from hell

Paul E. Kelm

## M E M O

TO: ALL DEMONS  
FROM: SATAN

You all remember the good old days when we had Christians on the run. Well, we've adopted some revisionist policies in our history department. People like Nero, Domitian, and Diocletian will no longer be lionized in the halls of hell. They earned their place here, but they sent too many Christians to heaven.

Persecution policies have undergone substantial revision as well. Physical persecution only seems to intensify and spread the faith. The new policy is to soften Christians up rather than hunt them down, create distractions rather than focus on convictions. Our latest data indicates success.

Disinformation teams have managed to suppress facts and distort logic sufficiently to keep the sexual revolution going. Legal demons have tied Christian concerns up in court long enough to drain funds and energy. Our public relations spin doctors have redefined words like "values" and "family" and radicalized biblical Christians as extremists. The intellectuals and educators have been fed a continuing barrage of psychological theories and philosophical arguments, defining life with a bewildering combination of humanism, relativism, existentialism, and pragmatism.

The most recent success has been updated versions of age-old mysticism: New Age spirit guides, neo-pagan witches, and extraterrestrials. Fiends are passing themselves off as angels, and "the name" has been reduced to a harmless moral teacher. Television has given new meaning to that turncoat Paul's expression "ruler of the kingdom of the air," with sitcoms and documentaries, cartoons and dramas pushing our agenda.

Americans have been convinced they are so stressed that they don't have time to deal with all this. The distraction strategy is working.

One problem reported is the need to keep church activists busy. You should already have received your manual of activist issues with church issues. For with a new chapter on confusing political issues with church issues. For two decades or more we've been working to redefine guilt as a social issue, with the refrain about poor victims of society's neglect and abuse trapped in a cycle of despair and low self-esteem. We've had real success in redefining salvation as social improvement. Human beings are incurable utopians, and human nature will always provide enough social ills to keep the crusaders busy.

To keep the persecutionists among us happy, we've introduced a subtle shift. Preach tolerance! It's a theme religious types seem inclined toward anyway. The combination of multi-cultural pluralism and universal brotherhood makes religious distinctions passé. More effective than physical persecution is social pressure, verbal put-downs, and consensus opinion. People who insist that there is only one Savior and one source of truth must be made to feel that they are unloving and intolerant bigots.

Just a word of warning! For all our progress, there are still Christians who have a solid faith. We'll have to keep them busy with bureaucratic concerns and petty squabbles of the church, away from Scripture, each other, and their neighbors. When they get over their defensiveness and become aggressive in their mission, a lot of our deception goes for naught.

Diabolically,

Satan

NL

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

# Listen and you will hear

Sermons aren't "delivered." They are shared, believed, lived.

Gary P. Baumler

"Thank you, Lord, for what was thine. Forgive me, Lord, for what was mine," goes a pastor's prayer when he has finished preaching. Then he wonders how the people in the pews will gain from that day's message.

The people in the pews: No discussion about preaching is complete until we look at how they see—well, hear it. It's for them the preacher preaches. His sermon is largely why they come to the church service.

## The importance of the sermon

If the pastor takes his preaching seriously, he must know, so do his parishioners. Although lay people value the rest of the worship service and sometimes get more out of other parts of it, all see the importance of the sermon. Most see it as "the high point of the worship experience" and an opportunity to explore "more deeply" a specific part of Scripture.

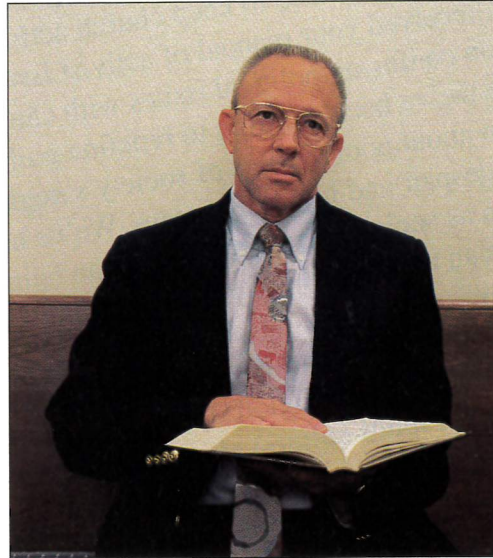
As one person said, "It is the main course of a multicourse 'meal' to nourish and renew me."

The sermon will never lose its place because "it helps me grow closer to Christ."

It presents God's Word as "the centerpiece that intensifies my worship."

It "sets the tone and message of the day for the week."

"Does it really do all that?" I wonder, even though the comments I collected from my friends sound



quite convincing. "No, that is, not always for everyone," comes the reply.

## The opposition of the devil

The devil works overtime to get in the way. He works on people's weaknesses, both the listeners' and the preachers'. That's why so many pray before, during, and after the preaching: "God, open my heart to hear and believe your Word."

It's no secret how the devil works. Think of the things that get in the way of your listening to sermons and see how many correspond with the list I gathered:

- You're not prepared for worship.
- You're tired.
- You'd rather be somewhere else.
- Children (yours or others') distract you.

- You hear people whispering.
- Your mind races ahead to the busy day awaiting you.
- Your mind whirls back to the problems, concerns, and issues of the past week.
- You pay more attention to those seated in your line of sight than to the pastor.
- The church has a poor sound system.
- You sit too far back.
- You simply don't concentrate.

Sometimes you blame the preacher:

- He has a "pulpit voice."
- He preaches at me not to me.
- He has distracting mannerisms.
- He seems to lack a sense of "excitement about his preaching."
- He repeats excessively and can't seem to end his sermon where he should.

One person observes, "Long, good sermons always seem to be too short; short, poor sermons always seem to be too long."

## The God-blessed countermeasures

God doesn't simply allow the devil his way, however. He moves his people in their faith to take countermeasures. In spite of the devil, they will grow in the grace of Christ by the preached Word.

To help themselves concentrate, some sit in the front of church, follow the text in the Bible, and

actively think about why they are in church. Pastors help with crisp, well-thought-out presentations; everyday applications; clear themes; a balanced presentation of law and gospel; gestures, voice inflection, conversational preaching; examples, illustrations, anecdotes; a clear outline.

*“Long, good sermons always seem to be too short; short, poor sermons always seem to be too long.”*

The people in the pew actually “get involved” with the sermon, responding with a nod, a frown, a smile, a shake of the head, even a chuckle. One opens her Bible to the text and makes notes in it. Some try to place themselves in the Bible setting, “to visualize or identify with the Bible person.” Others rephrase the thoughts of the sermon as they listen.

One man asks himself, “Does this agree with what I know? Is this something I didn’t know before?”

How does this affect me, my family, my church?”

Another says, “I try to relate the sermon to everyday life and how the message can be used at home.”

Explains one friend: “I try to stay involved by following along in the text, looking for law and gospel, and focusing on how this text relates to my life.”

### **The connection with the Christian’s life**

How the text of God’s Word relates to the Christian’s life is a key issue in how the people in the pew receive the sermon. Some of the sermons they remember the longest are “those written directly for me,” that “pertain to my life.” They relate best to those sermons that “put Christ-crucified back in perspective.”

It helps when we take the thoughts of the sermon along when leaving church. God’s Word will work, and it will work more as we keep it before us. Many find it helps to discuss the sermon with friends or family afterward. Some make the discussion a part of the ride home.

If we have done our listening, it’s hard not to take something valuable home from the sermon.

As one person put it, “Each time I plumb the depths of God’s Word, I take with me something that changes my life (even if only in a small way).”

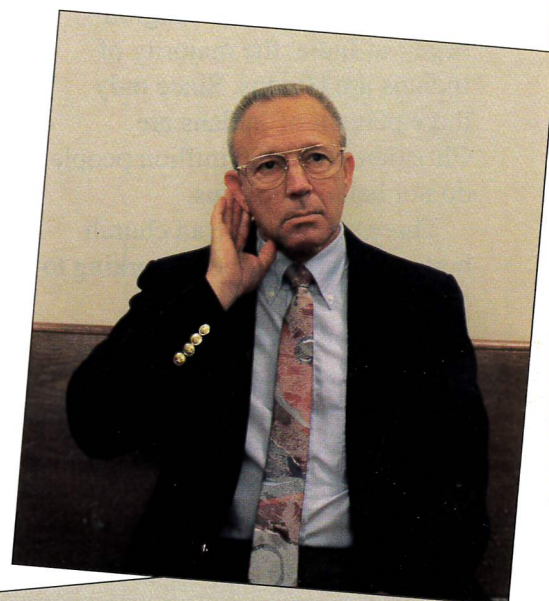
Another says simply, “If I fail to apply law and gospel to my life, I will not receive the strengthening I need for living as a child of God.”

How, then, will we not listen, apply, and receive God’s strengthening?

Good question.

*Thanks to all who shared their thoughts about sermons for this article.*

NL



# Big challenges, bright future

In India, a few workers are sharing the gospel among millions who have never heard that there is only one Savior.

Linda R. Baacke

Welcome to India. No missionaries allowed.

Although this nation doesn't allow expatriate (non-Indian) missionaries, it does have freedom of religion, so WELS is working to share the gospel.

## Training workers

Because the Hindu religion began in India, the majority of Indians are Hindus. Since only three percent of Indians are Christian, over 700 million people do not believe in Jesus.

Three small Lutheran church bodies are among those working to change that.

In Madras, a city of 5 million, national pastor T. Paul Mitra leads the Confessional Lutheran Church. They serve about 40 members in two congregations.

National pastor Kaki Devabhushanam, a third generation Christian, lives in Nayadupeta. He serves Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, a church body with seven congregations in seven villages that have no other Christian presence.

WELS pastor Bhushana Rao Dasari arrived in August 1995. A native of India, he serves the Bible Faith Lutheran Church of India—a group of 20 congregations in Guntur.

"We can't take over the work in India, but we want to help the churches do their work. The best way to do that is to help them train workers," says David Valleskey, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor. Valleskey is chairman of the mission expansion committee, the group that administers the field.

To help train workers, two WELS

pastors go to India twice a year and hold two-week teaching sessions. They visit the villages and sometimes help with worship, but because they are not there as missionaries, their focus is the classroom.

When the visiting pastors leave, pastors Mitra, Devabhushanam, and Dasari follow up with the students. Once they've been trained, the students return to their villages to share the Word of God.

## Housing worship

In the villages, many of the 29 congregations worship outdoors. Others build makeshift structures. When the rainy season and cyclones come, structures are blown away, and members have to start over.

To combat that, one goal is to build a chapel for each congregation. For now, worship and Bible studies are held on rooftops, in living rooms, or on front porches. Others worship in a brush-walled, thatched roof, windowless community hall. Sometimes a canopy is rented for special outdoor services such as Christmas.

## Adjusting to culture

As much as worship locations vary, so does the culture. Compared to the very rich who have everything, the very poor live on the streets and scavenge for scraps of food. Most of Devabhushanam's members live in poor villages and are tenant farmers, or hire out to local landowners.

This is a challenge for mission



Pastor Dasari instructs the Bible students. Twenty-six people are training to work among their people. Pastor Mitra trains his two assistants. Pastor Devabhushanam teaches his two sons and one nephew, and also his daughter, who works as a "Bible woman" among women and children. Dasari instructs 18 men and two Bible women.

work. "There are differences of opinion, even among Indians, about the best way to reach out. Some say you can't do mission work in India without extensive charity work," says Valleskey.

Yet Devabhushanam takes a direct approach—sharing the message and teaching Luther's *Small Catechism*. "He goes into a village and tells the people that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world."

It's not hard to get an audience.

The Hindu religion has millions of gods; many are incarnations. For Hindus, hearing that Jesus is God who became man, it's just another god to add to the list. "The sticky point is explaining that Jesus is the *only* Son of God," says Valleskey.

Once the people believe that, there's no stopping them. Take, for example, a 100-year-old woman brought to faith. In her old age she walked a mile to church—until she was no longer able. "She died last November, believing in the gift of eternal life," says Valleskey.

"The joy the gospel produces when you're in worship, the smiling faces, it's wonderful."

**Facing the future**

The future looks bright for India. Although Mitra has been connected with WELS for 25 years, only in the past five years has the door opened for more extensive work.

"Pastor Dasari is a great blessing to the mission. He's a WELS pastor who's a citizen of India," says Valleskey. "He lived in the U.S. for 20 years but knows the language and culture of his fellow Indians." At Dasari's location in Guntur, a down payment was made on a facility for a joint seminary, headquarters, and small orphanage.



Many congregations worship outdoors. Floor mats provide seating—by tradition, women on one side, men on the other. Often worship and Bible classes are at night because members work the fields on Sundays during the growing seasons.

Adding to the bright future is expansion to Rajahmundry and the surrounding area. Already 160 leaders (not pastors) serve 9,000 to 10,000 people there. Eugene Kauffeld, a WELS pastor from Watertown, Wis., has been serving this group, the Lutheran Mission of Salvation, for the last few years. Later this year, WELS plans on taking over that work on an exploratory basis. "It's a huge, huge job. I don't know exactly how we are

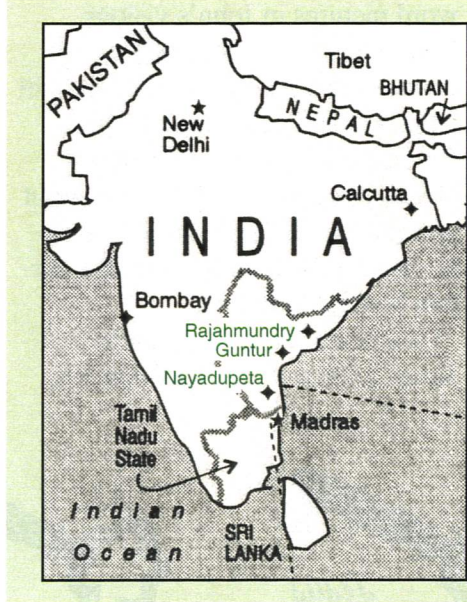
going to do it. But it's a wonderful opportunity," says Valleskey.

This opportunity, and all others in India, shows that in a land where missionaries aren't welcome, there is always a way to share the gospel.

NL

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

For information on the mission in India, read *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People*, pp. 275-278, NPH, 1992.



Worship styles in India vary from those who use the traditional liturgy in the Telugu language to others where drums, tambourines, finger cymbals, and castanets are added.

# The visions: enriching our understanding of the Revelation

One key that unlocks these visions to our understanding is trust that John's language will enrich our understanding of Jesus and his Word, not confuse us.

Wayne D. Mueller

My TV showed a meteorologist surrounded by computers. Printers were spewing out projections based on input from observation posts around the country. The weatherman was pointing to a computer-enhanced satellite picture that showed cloud movements over the region. I was impressed by all this scientific technology until he announced: "Sunrise tomorrow morning at 5:21 AM."

Sunrise? Since when does the sun rise? Isn't the sun stationary, and doesn't the earth rotate to give us dawn? Sunrise describes, not the physical reality, but the way it appears to the observer.

The weather report reminded me that our modern world uses word pictures just as John did when he wrote the Revelation. We wait for the fat lady to sing. Freeway traffic, like mismatched gears, grinds to a halt. CEOs who have never ridden a horse talk about being back in the saddle and having free rein to run their companies.

Picture language aims, not to confuse, but to enrich our communication. The Revelation's picture-

enhanced communication has the same purpose. John's book is a word description of seven visions Jesus revealed to him. One key that unlocks these visions to our understanding is trust that John's language will enrich our understanding of Jesus and his Word, not confuse us.

## Culture and writing

The foreign exchange student staying at my home last summer looked puzzled. My son had just told her that a newly released movie was a big hit. She knew what "movie" and "hit" meant, yet she could not understand how a motion picture could slap someone.

Students of the Revelation, too, need to learn the culture behind the word pictures in John's visions. Looking at maps and studying the people and customs of that time will help. Ancient Laodicea (3:14-22), for example, was home to many wealthy people. A government mint was located there, and the city was known for the manufacture of a certain healing ointment.

Knowing this adds color to Jesus' advice to this half-hearted

congregation. In chapter 3:18 he counseled them to purchase gold that would make them spiritually rich, expensive clothes that would cover the shame of their sin, and salve to open their eyes of faith.

The best help for understanding Bible culture comes from Scripture itself. John borrowed from Old Testament prophets and other Bible writers to put his visions into words. As you read through the visions, look up your study Bible's notes on parallel passages. Try this at chapter 6:12. Cross-references to the writings of Moses, Isaiah, and Haggai will show you that earthquakes often announced God's imminent appearance. The images of the sack-clothed sun and the blood-red moon were used by Isaiah and Joel.

## Literal truth

Picture language must not affect our belief in verbal inspiration. Even the figurative words of the Bible are literally true. John's vivid pictures are not God's invitation to let our imaginations run wild. Like the rest of the Bible, the Revelation is literally true. Dr. Siegbert Becker explains:

Seven keys that  
open the Revelation





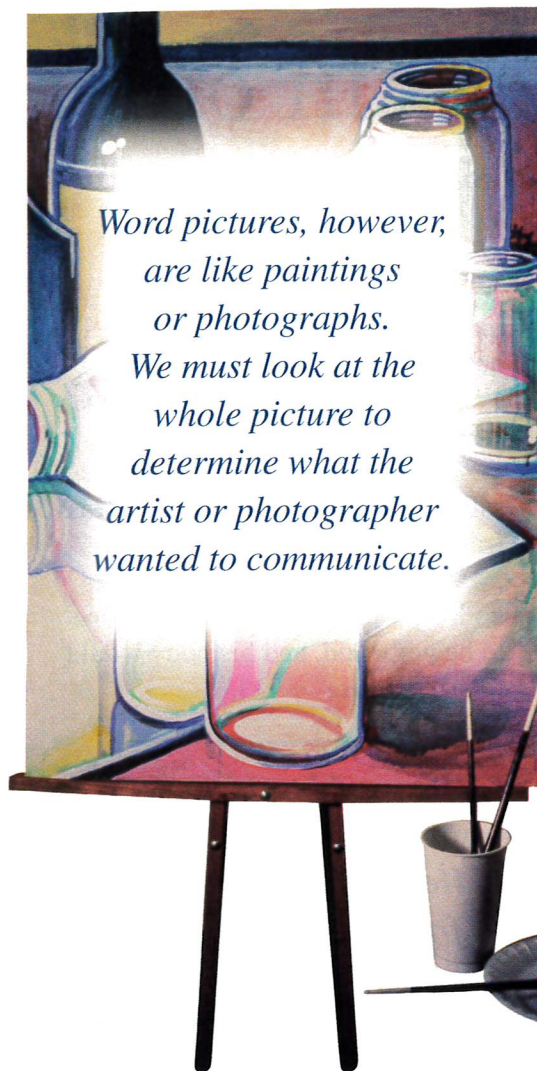
“The literal truth is that Revelation is a vision, and it is literally true that John saw the things described here, and that the things he saw were symbols which pictured the future history of the church. This is the literal meaning of the plain words of the text” (From *Revelation, The Distant Triumph Song*, NPH, 1985, p. 20).

The visions of the Revelation have suffered most from people who overinterpret them, forcing meaning from every word. Word pictures, however, are like paintings or photographs. We must look at the whole picture to determine what the artist or photographer wanted to communicate. In Jesus’ parables, too, details provide a setting for the main message but have no special meaning of their own.

Read chapter 9 of the Revelation with this in mind. This picture shows how severe the devil’s attacks are, and how terrible the consequences of false doctrine and sin will be. We don’t have to interpret every brush stroke of this picture to be some specific temptation or judgment.

**Apocalyptic writing**

The transliteration of the Greek word for Revelation is Apocalypse. The style of writing in the Revelation and by some of the Old Testament prophets is called apocalyptic. Apocalyptic Bible writings picture future events in especially rich imagery. The graphic words in these prophecies often refer to more



than one future event. Old Testament prophets sometimes spoke of Jesus’ first and second coming in the same breath. Jesus himself predicted the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world with some of the same descriptions.

If we remember the nature of apocalyptic writing, we will not demand in every case that a vision points to only one historical event. One example is the angel with the “eternal gospel to proclaim to those

who live on earth” (14:6,7). We often read this text in our churches on Reformation and identify Martin Luther as the angel, or messenger, of the gospel. This is a proper application, but Luther is only one of many historical figures who fulfill this prophecy. Television prophets who predict the future by tying current events to specific passages do violence to the nature of apocalyptic writing.

Noting the passage of time within and between John’s seven visions is also important. John often writes, “After this I looked. . . .” (4:1) or “Then I saw. . . .” (5:1). Remember that John is describing the order he observed the events in the vision. He is not necessarily saying that the events pictured within the vision will take place in that order. The same

is true of the passing of time from one vision to another. Most of the visions cover the same period of time.

Thus the seven visions do not provide seven snapshots of the church’s history in chronological order.

The Bible is literally true and is a clear book. Key to keeping that trust is to remember the purpose of symbolic language. As long as weathermen continue to talk about sunrises, St. John’s picture language will also communicate Jesus’ message clearly.



Wayne Mueller is administrator of WELS Parish Services.

*Next: the millennium*

# His house was in order

He had believed he was a sinner, washed in the blood of the Lamb of God.

Terry L. Yahr

“You know, he really looks natural.”

“He looks so peaceful.”

“Do you see that little smirk on his face? He looks like he just ‘set’ someone in Sheepshead.”

**The remarks were meant kindly, applying a sense of lightness to an otherwise burdensome event.**

Friends and family somehow believe the expression on the deceased’s face indicates the state of his soul at the moment of death. People say the Christian dies with joy in his heart, anticipating the bliss that awaits him, while the unbeliever dies in fear, fighting in horror till the end.

It’s easy to cite examples: the martyr Stephen seeing the gates of heaven opened, and the humanist Voltaire crying out that the demons were coming to get him.

Yet neither claim applies universally. As I heard sympathetic words from caring people, I was acutely aware that the man they loved was no longer there. His spirit had gone to be with God, and his body would return to dust.

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*He would taste no fruit from his tomato plants. . . .*

*He had finally tasted the fruit of the salvation his Savior had won for him.*

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**Well-wishers streamed into the funeral home** while members of the immediate family shared hugs and comforting words.

Though I had presided at funerals and visited grieving relatives at funeral homes, I never realized what an exhausting ordeal it was—until my own father died.

It was sudden, unexpected, like a clap of thunder. He had sold insurance in the afternoon, then had dinner with a friend. Shortly after he arrived home, his heart stopped. He would play no more card games. He would sell no more newspapers at Milwaukee’s County Stadium. He would taste no fruit from his tomato plants. He was beyond the joys and the sorrows of this life.

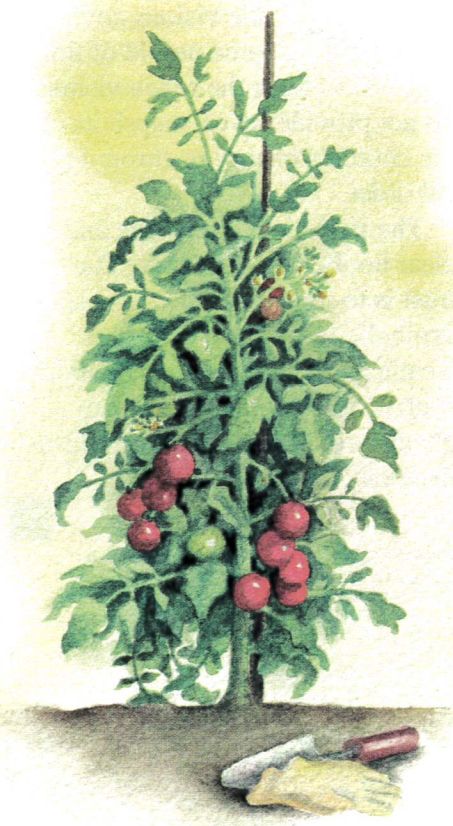
My sense of unreality about the situation lasted well beyond the funeral. As I crossed the cemetery road in the summer sunshine to show my children where grandpa’s mother and father were buried, it still felt like a dream.

**But the pastor had offered us a clear message of assurance**, based on dying King David’s last words, “Is not my house right with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?”

Yes, my father was dead. But his house was in order. He had believed he was a sinner, washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. He had shared his faith with his children and provided them with the example of his own Christian—though certainly not perfect—life. He had lived and died under God’s grace. He had finally tasted the fruit of the salvation his Savior had won for him. His greatest desire had been realized—he was with the Lord.

I don’t hope I might see my father again; I know I will. When the Lord returns, he will raise my father from the dead and grant him the most precious gift of all—a place in God’s everlasting kingdom of glory. God has promised it to us and sealed that promise with the resurrection of his own Son. Now I know just how reassuring that conviction can be.

*Terry Yahr is pastor at Good Shepherd, Beckley, West Virginia.*





## God's Word guides WELS

This report is the second in a series that will bring you the results of the 1995 WELS congregational survey.

### Should WELS place more emphasis, the same emphasis or less emphasis than they are now placing on the following items?

	More	Same	Less	DK/NR*
Adult spiritual growth	59%	34%	1%	7%
Youth programs	58%	31%	3%	9%
Bible classes	55%	40%	1%	4%
Evangelism	54%	37%	2%	8%
Family ministry	51%	34%	3%	13%
Mission work in the U.S.	50%	41%	2%	7%
Mission work by the congregation	49%	40%	3%	9%
Scholarships for teaching/pastor candidates	47%	38%	3%	13%
Recruiting teaching/pastor candidates	43%	45%	2%	10%
Communicating mission work	40%	50%	2%	8%
Financial support of mission work	38%	51%	4%	7%
Elementary schools	35%	51%	4%	10%
Continuing education for called workers	35%	52%	3%	11%
Mission work outside the U.S.	33%	51%	8%	9%
Stewardship program	29%	53%	6%	13%
Pastor/teacher college training	26%	62%	2%	10%
Special ministries	23%	57%	4%	15%
Preparatory schools	23%	59%	7%	11%
Seminary work	20%	57%	1%	22%

Of the six areas for which more than 50% of the members would like to see more emphasis, the first five are all part of parish services.

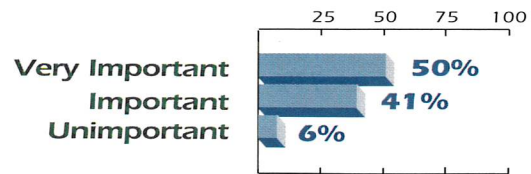
### Do you have a family member who is any of the following?

Pastor (23% of respondents are pastors)	30%
Lutheran school teacher (8% of respondents are teachers)	6%
Staff minister	0.5%

### Would you want a relative to be any of the following?

Pastor	63%
Lutheran school teacher	12%
Staff minister	1%
DK/NR*	24%

### How important is Christian giving as an indicator of faith and spirituality?

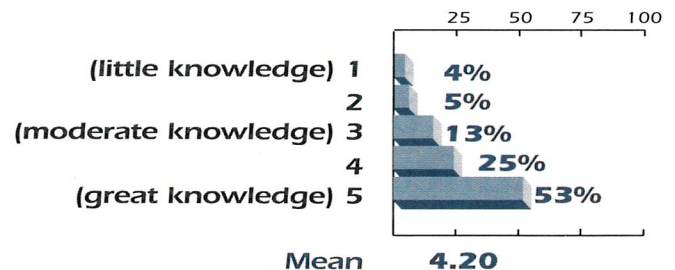


### How important are the following items in the role they play in forming your attitude towards giving?

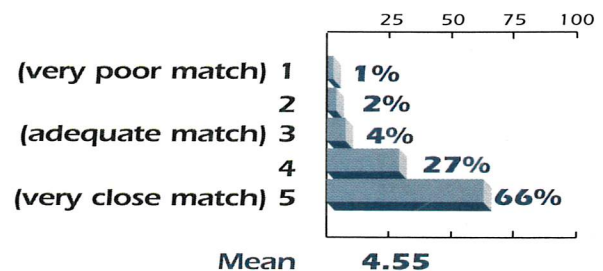
	Very Important	Important	Not Important	DK/NR*
God's Word	91%	6%	2%	1%
Church	61%	29%	8%	3%
Personal finances	32%	48%	17%	3%
Pastor	23%	40%	32%	6%
Parents	22%	30%	42%	7%
Opportunity to give	19%	50%	26%	5%
Relatives	9%	18%	69%	5%
Friends	9%	21%	66%	4%
Media	3%	13%	79%	5%

Let us encourage one another to give in faith for the Lord's work as we are able and hold up full-time service in the ministry as a desirable and blessed calling.

### On a five-point scale, with 5 being great knowledge, how would you rate your knowledge of where the funds raised in your church go and how they are used?



### On a five-point scale, with 5 being a very close match, how would you rate how well your own personal beliefs match the teachings of WELS?





### Do the following items have positive, negative, or no influence on your attitude toward the Lutheran church?

	Pos	No	Neg	DK/NR*
Teachings of the church	91%	3%	3%	3%
Applying Christianity	90%	4%	3%	3%
Your pastor	78%	9%	5%	8%
Church leadership	73%	16%	6%	5%
Support received from church	67%	23%	5%	5%
Mission outreach as a synod	67%	24%	3%	5%
Others in your church	62%	27%	6%	6%
Outreach of the local church	52%	33%	7%	7%
Religion in general	51%	34%	8%	7%
WELS administration	36%	44%	12%	7%

We thank God in his grace for our unity of faith and pray that it can be brought in ever closer harmony by his Word.

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.

\*DK/NR means don't know or no response.

### rē·li·giōn Defining religion

**offense:** A word or action that causes another person to stumble in the faith or to continue in sin or error.



WELS congregations continue to find places to display the new WELS logo. St. Paul, Monroe, Mich., recently installed a new sign incorporating it. Other congregations use it in their stationery, bulletins, business cards, and banners.

## Language study allows for better communication

Forty-nine foreign missionaries studied languages in 1995 so they could better spread the gospel in their mission fields as well as adjust to cross-cultural work.

Fourteen different languages were studied, including Taiwanese, Russian, Japanese, Bulgarian, Spanish, Thai, Portuguese, and several African languages. Most missionaries attended schools at their mission field or had tutors.

This language training was made possible in part by a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans.

### Obituary

#### George H. Heckmann 1921-1996

George H. Heckmann was born July 15, 1921 in St. James, Minn. He died Jan. 22, 1996 in Waukesha, Wis.

A 1941 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, he served in Cedar Mills, Minn., Barre Mills, Wis., Chilton, Wis., and Vernon Center, Minn. From 1962 to 1988 he taught at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

He is survived by wife Helene; children Ruth (Jerry) Yoeckel, Naomi (Arnie) Schnitker, Gerald (Marie), and Bruce (Chris); 10 grandchildren; mother Alma; sister Gladys; brothers Rodney (Darlene) and Lloyd (Charlotte); and many nieces and nephews.

## LPS honors faculty

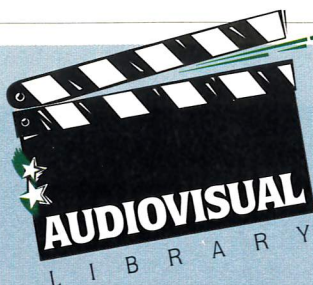
In 1995, three faculty members from Luther Preparatory School celebrated anniversaries of service to the school—Jerome Braun, 25; Alan Jeffers, 20; Kenneth Taylor, 10. Since this is the first year of LPS, the total years of service in a ministerial education prep school were counted.



Not only missionaries serve overseas. WELS lay members are volunteering in world mission fields. This year, Jennifer Enter serves in Bulgaria; Allan Hess and Pastor Robert and Donna Mueller share the good news in Russia; and Gerald and Doris Schulte volunteer in Zambia, Africa. These volunteers are sponsored by WELS Kingdom Workers. In all, Kingdom Workers has sponsored 38 volunteers serving in world missions.

## Congregation mission offerings increase

Congregations and members across the synod gave a total of \$15,868,179 in 1995. These congregation mission offerings (CMO), formerly known as synod mission offerings (SMO), increased \$212,353 in 1995. This is a 1.3 percent increase over 1994.



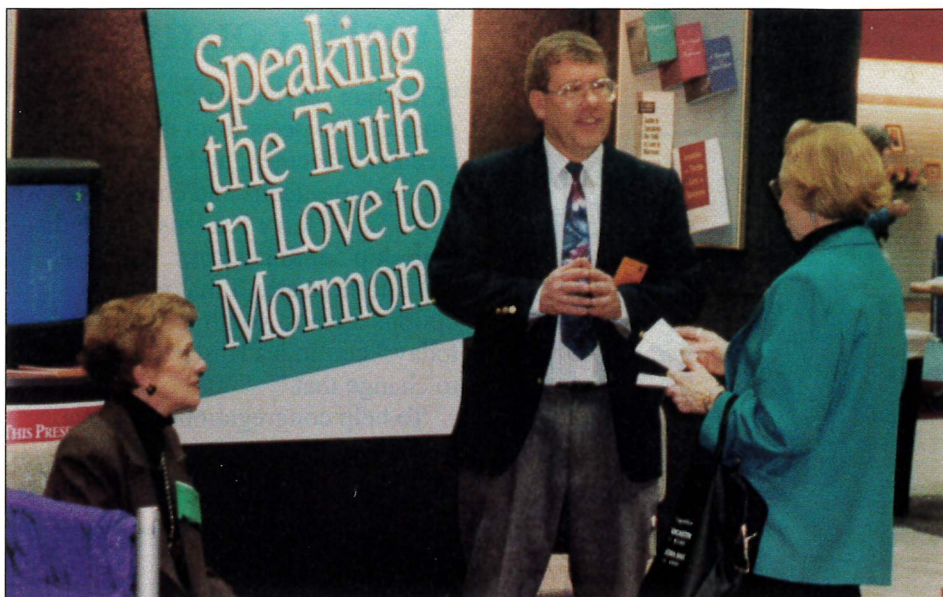
**Banners of Love** (Code 5178)—1995, 20 min. color JSCA. The 1995 convention welcomed five new mission fields into WELS world mission outreach: Bulgaria, Russia, the Dominican Republic, India, and Thailand. This video introduces each field.

**Our Heritage—God's Gift of Grace (LWMS)** (Code 5181)—1995, 25 min. color JSCA (\$7.50). Catch the highlights of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society 1995 convention in Washington, D.C.

**Indonesia: WELS in Southeast Asia** (Code 5177)—1995, 12 min. color JSCA. A Muslim-dominated government has made it difficult for us to maintain a mission outpost in Indonesia. This video describes our work there with one American missionary and several national assistants.

**Beautiful Song—Ancient Island** (Code 5179)—1995, 18 min. color JSCA. Developments in Taiwan necessitated this update of our mission work there, as our WELS missionaries work with several national pastors.

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



Pastor Mark Cares discusses his book *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons* at the 1996 National Religious Broadcasters Convention. Ministries providing outreach resources were clearly absent at the convention. That helped make Cares' presence, offering biblically-based outreach resources to Christians, unique.

## WELS reaches out with witness resource ministry

Over 1,200 radio and television producers and networks, book publishers, media, and marketing firms from every state and 10 foreign countries were represented at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention and Exposition, Feb. 3-6, in Indianapolis, Ind.

WELS was one of them.

The centerpiece of WELS exhibit was the book *Speaking the Truth in Love To Mormons* by Mark Cares, pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho. Cares represented WELS Outreach Ministries, a ministry focusing on outreach to Mormons.

Fifteen years of research, study, and witness to Mormons provided Cares with "unusually insightful, compassionate, and practical approaches to evangelizing Mormons" (*Christian Research Journal*). Also featured were ministry witness tracts written specifically for Mormons in their language and "how-to" guides for witnessing to Mormons and Mormon missionaries.

Throughout the convention, Cares had a steady stream of interviews with radio and television broadcasters. Estimates indicate Cares' message and the exposure for WELS Outreach Ministries reached over 25 million. The World Harvest Radio network carried a "live" on-air interview and claimed 15 million listeners over three continents.

All this is part of a plan to bring WELS biblically-based outreach resources to a broad-base Christian audience. Future plans include ongoing presentations by Cares, another display at the '97 convention in Anaheim, Calif., and a showing at the Christian Booksellers National Convention.

The National Religious Broadcasters was founded in 1944 to combat forces threatening the use of media by Christian ministries. Partial funding was provided by a grant from AAL through the Board for Home Missions.

John Barber



## youth news

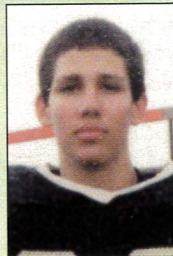


Tim Gross



Jake Newhouse

Three members of St. Paul, Hurley, Wis., participated in the Division V play-off football game at Camp Randall, Madison, Wis., last fall. **Tim Gross**, senior, played saxophone in the band, while **Jake Newhouse**, junior, and **P.J. Gross**, sophomore, saw playing time. All attend Hurley High School.



P. J. Gross

**Elizabeth Tiefert**, a senior at Marinette high school, received the DAR Good Citizen award. Candidates must be seniors who show outstanding qualities of leadership, dependability, service, and patriotism. Besides being active at school, Tiefert, a member of Christ, Menominee, Wis., participates in the church youth group and accompanied the Sunday school children's Christmas Eve service.

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

## Youth counselors workshop planned

"Christian service isn't an option. It's what God expects from those he's created, redeemed, and sanctified—that includes teens and children alike," says Jerry Kastens, youth discipleship administrator.

"But there aren't that many options open to youth in our church today," continues Kastens. "We need to change that."

To help congregations improve their service to youth—and service by youth—the youth discipleship

commission is holding a youth counselors workshop Sept. 20-22 in Camp Lake, Wis. The workshop will reinforce the five basic components of a Christ-centered youth ministry and also help congregations implement a youth service program. Anyone involved in youth ministry is invited.

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



On Jan. 7, Joanne Halter, a social worker and director with Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, was commissioned to serve WELS Central Africa Medical Mission in Zambia. She is working with missionaries, national pastors, and the clinic staff of Mwembezhi Lutheran Rural Health Center to develop a program to care for those infected with HIV. She's also developing a program

based on and motivated by God's Word to change sexual practices. Finally, she plans to assess the orphan tragedy, as it affects congregations and national pastors expected to raise the children of dying relatives.

The need for single nurses and married nurse couples continues. For more information, contact Kathie Wendland, 414/682-5694.

## Men's convocation coming

The Western Wisconsin district will be holding a district-wide convocation for Christian men on Sunday evening, June 2, before the start of its district convention.

"This is a subject whose time has come," said Pastor Herbert Prah, president of the Western Wisconsin district. "It's important for Christian men to know what it means to be a Christian man in the 1990s."

Under the theme "Be men of courage," the convocation will instruct participants in the gospel-centered view of biblical manhood, inspire them through Bible studies and worship, and provide materials to take to their congregations.

For more information contact Pastor Thomas Fricke, St. John, 624 East St, Baraboo WI 53913; 608/355-3870.

## Richard and the “going to church experiment”

Richard, 40, has mental retardation and lives in a group home. For several months he's been attending church with his friends—courtesy of Jorita Cook, group home supervisor and member of Grace, Muskegon, Mich.

In addition to driving residents to church, Jorita and her husband, Gary, use Jesus Cares materials to teach Bible class to Richard and his friends. Other members also bring their friends with mental retardation to the class.

A governing board for some of the programs that benefit Richard and his friends interviewed these new churchgoers. The board was especially interested in the “going to church experiment.” Richard spoke

eloquently, asking the board to videotape a church service at Grace, showing his pastor, the congregation, Richard, and his friends all worship-



Jorita Cook and Richard

ping together. He wanted the tape shown to boards and group homes throughout Michigan. This way others could see that people like Richard can go to church.

Approval for the taping was given both by the board and Grace's church council. A regular Sunday morning service was taped in September, and the tape circulated throughout Michigan. In less than a month, the church answered three requests for a listing of WELS churches in the area. They saw that such a program can work, that Jesus cares for all people, and that his love is shared with everyone in our WELS congregations.

Richard Starr

## District news

### Nebraska

Nearly 100 men attended the **Colorado conference's first men's retreat**, “Built on the Rock,” last year. Plans are for a second retreat on Nov. 1-2 at Winter Park, Colo. . . . Because of the large vicar class, grants made it possible for two missions to have vicars this year: Dan Heidrich serves at **Shepherd of the Hill, Greeley, Colo.**, and John Zabell at **Lord of Life, Thornton, Colo.** . . . **St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary. Three special services spread over the year culminated Jan. 21, 1996 with the dedication of a Roger's organ.

Keith Petersen

### North Atlantic

On Dec. 3-5, 1995, **Hope, Markham, Ontario**, held a retreat north of Toronto. Forty-five members listened to presentations on lifestyle evangelism and on how WELS Lutheranism contrasts with other faiths and religions.

Kevin Schultz

### South Atlantic

Coming south for spring break or summer vacation? Ask your pastor for a copy of **Coming South**, our district directory, with maps and times of worship for all WELS and ELS congregations east of the Mississippi River and south of the Mason-Dixon line. Whether you're headed for the beaches, mountains, cities, amusement parks, or Olympics, we'd love to have you worship with us. . . . The bitter winter cold and rain of Groundhog's Day weekend didn't dampen the festive atmosphere as **Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla.**, celebrated their groundbreaking on Feb. 4. Construction of the 4,000 sq. ft. multipurpose building should be completed mid-summer.

Philip Wilde

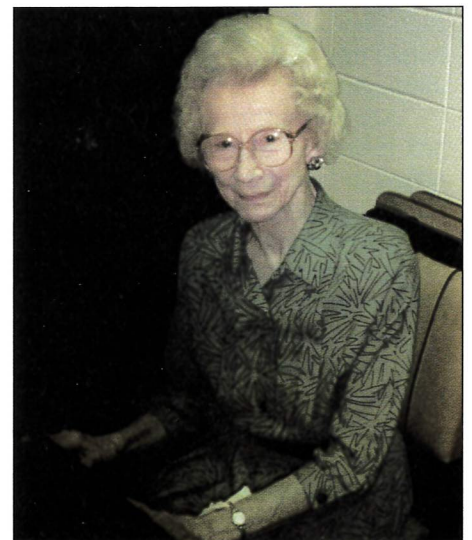
### Pacific Northwest

**Good Hope, Ellensburg, Wash.**, held their mortgage burning ceremony on Oct. 29, 1995. . . . Land has been purchased, and progress toward the construction of the new campus continues for **Evergreen Lutheran**

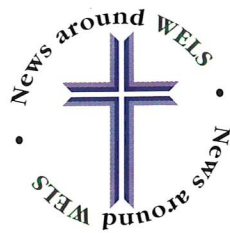
**High School, Kent, Wash.** Enrollment continues to climb.

David Birsching

### Western Wisconsin



Ada Sievert, 93, has been accompanying services for over 70 years. A member of St. Mark, Watertown, Wis., she still plays piano for weekly services at nursing homes and for St. Mark's annual German Christmas and Good Friday services. A 1923 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she taught at St. Mark school for over 50 years.



## Exemplary WELS high schools receive grants

Three Lutheran high schools—Northland, Wausau, Wis.; Michigan Lutheran, St. Joseph; and Fox Valley, Appleton, Wis.—received \$2,500 grants to fund instructional programs and additional learning materials.

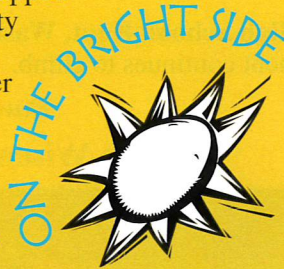
The Commission on Parish Schools selected these three from over 20 WELS high schools based on their excellence in ministry to young people and their families. The awards were made possible by a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans.

When my wife and I were decorating our Easter tree we gift wrapped some empty boxes to place under it. Well, not quite empty—each contained this message:

“Are you surprised to find this box is empty? Mary was also surprised to find the empty tomb on Easter morning. But this box is not really empty—it is filled with hope; as the empty grave of Jesus gives us the sure hope of forgiveness and eternal life, so this empty box carries my hope for your happiness.”

I plan to give one to some of my unchurched friends and to each of my Sunday school students. Now, when someone greets me on Easter morning with the traditional “He is risen!” I’ll respond “Yes, and he left this gift for you.” An empty box, symbolic of the empty grave.

*Jan C. Nicol  
Freeport, Illinois*



## WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD Financial report

### CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Twelve months ended December 31, 1995

District	Communicants 12/31/94	1995	Year to date projected	December offerings	Twelve month offerings	Percent of sub.	Ave. per comm.
Arizona-California	16,420	950,146	950,146	174,021	933,793	98.3%	56.87
Dakota-Montana	9,340	432,230	432,230	87,982	421,636	97.5	45.14
Michigan	37,272	2,090,667	2,090,667	357,967	2,042,245	97.7	54.79
Minnesota	44,834	2,454,042	2,454,042	485,947	2,319,970	94.5	51.75
Nebraska	10,010	537,906	537,906	98,334	544,897	101.3	54.44
North Atlantic	3,605	326,428	326,428	34,126	318,659	97.6	88.39
Northern Wisconsin	61,350	2,524,580	2,524,580	542,205	2,370,797	93.9	38.64
Pacific Northwest	4,745	252,972	252,972	50,694	248,804	98.4	52.43
South Atlantic	6,172	386,716	386,716	52,626	381,545	98.7	61.82
South Central	4,053	314,366	314,366	53,945	329,830	104.9	81.38
Southeastern Wisconsin	58,165	3,235,311	3,235,311	738,449	3,044,572	94.1	52.34
Western Wisconsin	60,255	2,929,615	2,929,615	558,230	2,911,431	99.4	48.32
Total - This Year	316,221	16,434,979	16,434,979	3,234,526	15,868,179	96.6	50.18
Total - Last Year	316,748	16,240,856	16,240,856	3,214,456	15,655,826	96.4	49.43

### CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND OF STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Six months ended December 31, 1995

	1995 actual	1994 actual	1995 budget
<b>Revenues:</b>			
Synod Mission Offerings	\$ 7,205,965	\$ 7,582,808	\$ 7,583,000
Gifts and memorials	696,559	180,813	586,000
Bequest/planned giving income	449,009	336,520	357,000
Tuition and fees	4,293,645	4,122,664	4,298,000
Other	22,170	30,358	43,000
Transfers-endwmt/trust earnings	109,603	106,322	110,000
Transfers-gift trust	3,967,062	3,775,370	4,057,000
Transfers-continuing programs	1,678,534	1,078,699	1,540,000
Transfers-other	100	-	-
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>18,422,647</b>	<b>17,213,554</b>	<b>18,574,000</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>			
Administration Division	1,316,915	1,281,412	1,478,000
Home Missions Division	2,855,907	2,808,581	3,267,000
World Missions Division	3,752,087	3,494,675	3,726,000
Ministerial Education Division	9,989,011	8,224,060	9,468,000
Parish Services Division	643,372	573,090	671,000
Fiscal Services Division	689,318	744,742	775,000
<b>Total expenditures</b>	<b>19,246,610</b>	<b>17,126,560</b>	<b>19,385,000</b>
<b>Net change for the period</b>	<b>(823,963)</b>	<b>86,994</b>	
<b>Net assets - beginning of year</b>	<b>627,702</b>	<b>155,746</b>	
<b>Net assets - end of period</b>	<b>(196,261)</b>	<b>242,740</b>	

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Dec 31, 1995	Dec 31, 1994
<b>Assets:</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 74,019	\$ 345,732
Due from other funds	-	59,734
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	91,750	86,250
Cash advances-schools	445,200	-
Other accounts receivable	219,769	68,824
Mortgage note receivable	19,567	21,239
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	65,613	11,599
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>823,918</b>	<b>501,378</b>
<b>Liabilities and fund balance:</b>		
Due to other fund	759,975	-
Due to schools	-	83,782
Accounts payable	260,204	174,856
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1,020,179</b>	<b>258,638</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>(196,261)</b>	<b>242,740</b>
<b>Total liab. and net assets</b>	<b>823,918</b>	<b>501,378</b>



## Lutheran population growing

In 1995, the number of Lutherans worldwide totaled more than 60 million. In 1993 and 1994 the totals were 58.5 million and 59.7 million respectively.

The 7.6 million-member Church of Sweden remained the world's largest Lutheran church, followed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

America with 5.2 million and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland with close to 4.6 million.

The most significant change was an increase in the Lutheran church in Madagascar. The Malagasy Lutheran Church recorded an increase of 300,000 members compared with the previous year's figure.

## Religious Freedom Restoration Act ruled constitutional

City government said the old Spanish style Catholic church that held only 350 worshippers was too beautiful to replace, even though 1,300 families of St. Peter, Boerne, Tex., gathered for mass in a nearby meeting hall.

In a religious liberty case with national church-state implications, a federal appeals court sided with the church officials who want to knock down the 83-year-old building. In a January ruling the court upheld the constitutionality of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). A lower Texas court had ruled the act unconstitutional.

The act requires that local, state, and federal governments give religious practice special consideration when laws of "general applicability" place a burden on religion. When that happens, government has to prove it has a "compelling interest" in applying the law, and that it is taking the "least restrictive" path to do so.

"The act gives incredibly strong protection," said Melissa Rogers, associate general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington. "It has become a real bulwark against government intrusion in religious practice."

## In brief

- According to Ecumenical News International (ENI) (Dec. 5, 1995), **churches in Cuba are now facing a situation similar to that encountered by the early Christians**, when new faithful were added to the church every day. Following a long period of constant decline in membership, the sudden and sharp increase has created challenges for the churches there to serve the people.
- The Concordia Historical Institute has designed a **medallion commemorating the 450th anniversary of Martin Luther's death**.



- "It was designed to help people celebrate their Lutheran heritage," said Daniel Preuss, director of the institute. For more information on the medallion, contact Concordia Historical Institute, 314/721-5934.
- **Italy has given official recognition to its small Lutheran church**, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy (CELI). The church will now be able to teach religion in schools and have the automatic right of access to public hospitals, prisons, and military forces. According to the treaty, the CELI has the right to exercise freely the evangelical faith as laid down in the Augsburg Confession of 1530. (Reported in ENI, Dec. 5, 1995)
  - Controversies on ethical issues are dividing churches. ENI (Dec. 5, 1995) reports that **conflicts about the ethics of life, procreation, and sexuality have replaced traditional doctrinal divisions between churches**. As churches are getting increasingly social oriented and less confident of scriptural authority, we can expect such a change in focus.

## Trying to fill *Easter baskets*?



Give them spiritual nourishment from *Northwestern Lutheran*. Each issue brings

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days 8 AM to 4 PM. Charge it—Discover Card, MasterCard, or Visa—or bill it.



## Vatican goes interactive

If you can't go to the Vatican, the Vatican will come to you. In January, the Vatican unveiled the first in a series of videocassettes and CD-ROMs for personal computers, featuring its most cherished museum collections. All the materials are available in five languages, including English.

Viewers can zoom in on the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel and call up an accompanying text that describes the work. Or they can "rearrange" the chapel—taking pieces from one fresco and putting them elsewhere—all to the sounds of a Vatican choir.

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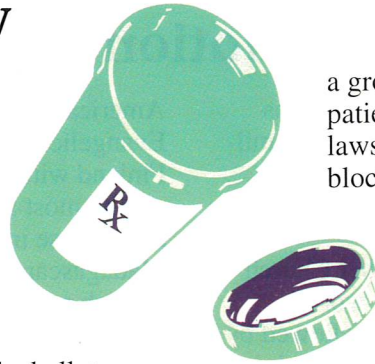
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Write or call to let us know how—and, if you want, why—you shared your copy. We'll send you another. Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3232; FAX 414/256-3899.

## Religious groups challenge Oregon suicide law

Roman Catholic and Protestant religious organizations asked a federal appeals court to uphold an injunction blocking Oregon's assisted suicide law from taking effect.

In November 1994, Oregon voters approved a ballot initiative that permits terminally ill adults to obtain a doctor's prescription for a lethal dose of drugs to end their lives. After the initiative passed,



a group of doctors, patients, and others filed a lawsuit in federal court to block the implementation of the law.

"The Oregon initiative is a direct affront to the sanctity of life, with deadly and irreversible consequences for the most vulnerable in our society and their families," the religious groups said in a friend-of-court brief.

## Study finds media bias in abortion coverage

A study commissioned by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops shows that supporters of legal abortion get preferential treatment in the media. The media showed its bias in the use of labels and its treatment of abortion-related violence.

For example, Republican supporters of abortion rights were often described as "moderate" although Republican opponents of legal abortion were often labeled "far right," "hard right," or "extreme right," said Helen Alvare, spokeswoman for the bishops' Secretariat for Pro-life Activities. Yet, reporters never used terms such as "hard left" or "far left" in describing abortion advocates.

The bishops also released a poll of 1,000 registered voters showing that 11 percent of those polled favored a ban on all abortions, and 13 percent would keep abortion legal for any reason during pregnancy.

The poll, conducted by the Tarrance Group, reported that among those who support legal abortion with restrictions, 15 percent would permit it only to save the life of the mother. Another 26 percent would allow abortion in cases of rape or incest or if the mother's life was at stake. Twenty-three percent would consider abortion legal for any reason, but only in the first three months; seven percent would make it illegal after six months.

### rē · li · giōn

#### Defining religion

**synergism:** the false teaching which claims that human beings by nature have the power to work with God in their own conversion or to decide for Christ. The Bible teaches that we are spiritually dead by nature (Ephesians 2:1,5) and therefore have no power to cooperate with God in our conversion or salvation.

# Bulletin BOARD

& NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3231; FAX 414/256-3899. Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY

### Pastors:

**Capek, Allen D.**, from Immanuel, Campbellsport, Wis., to Morning Star, Carstairs, AB Canada

**Kempf, Jay P.**, from St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.

**Kruse, Ronald L.**, from Shining Mountains, Bozeman, Mont., to St. John, Allegan, Mich.

**Leyrer, Peter J.**, from Hope, Andover, Minn., to Tiawan

### Teachers:

**Manthe, Matthew D.**, from St. Peter, Helenville, Wis., to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.

**Maurice, Brian A.**, from Martin Luther, Czech Republic (ELS), to Trinity, Watertown, Wis.

**Meers, Harold I.**, from St. John/St. James, Reedsville, Wis., to St. John, Lake City, Minn.

**Olson, Christopher J.**, from St. John, Dowagiac, Mich., to Christ, N. St. Paul, Minn.

**Wooster, James K.**, from West LHS, Hopkins, Minn., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

### The synod administration building will close:

April 5—Good Friday

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

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Board of Control, with the approval of the Board for Ministerial Education, requests the voting constituency of the synod to nominate theologically trained candidates for the position of professor of education (including use of computers and media) and Old Testament.

These nominations will be added to the list of candidates previously nominated. Calling is subject to funding by the Coordinating Council. Write to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for list of candidates. Send names with pertinent information by Apr. 19 to Pastor Paul Manthey, secretary, 8419 W Melvina St, Milwaukee WI 53222.

## COMING EVENTS

**Spring concert**—Vesper singers. 7 PM, Apr. 28 at Trinity, Watertown, Wis. Contact Frank Zabell, 414/261-2131.

**Festival concerts**—Includes singers from MLC, WLC, WLS, and 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 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.

**WELS handbell festival**—Apr. 20-21. St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn. Concert, 2 PM, Apr. 21. Cheryl Diener, 223 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203.

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

**SHARE spring seminar**—WELS singles' group. May 4 at St. Jacobi, Milwaukee. Reception at the Oak Chalet. Contact Sue Schroeder, 414/255-5821; Dan Stege, 414/744-1544; or Nancy Rutter, 414/453-4041.

**Northwestern College alumni society meeting**—3 PM, May 21. Banquet, 5 PM. LPS concert, 7:30 PM. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

### Luther Preparatory School 1996 choir tour—

Apr. 3—St. Matthew, Winona, Minn., 7 PM.

Apr. 4—Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan., 7 PM.

Apr. 5—Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., 7 PM.

Apr. 6—Calvary, Dallas, Tex., 7 PM.

Apr. 7—Atonement, Plano, Tex., 10:30 AM; Prince of Peace, Flower Mound, Tex., 7 PM.

Apr. 8—Holy Word, Austin, Tex., 7 PM.

Apr. 9—Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex., 7:30 PM.

Apr. 10—Abiding Word, Houston, 7:30 PM.

Apr. 11—Lord of Life, Friendswood, Tex., 7 PM.

Apr. 12—Immanuel, Ft. Worth, Tex., 7 PM.

Apr. 13—Peace, Marshfield, Mo., 7:30 PM.

Apr. 14—Martin Luther, St. Louis, Mo., 10:30 AM; Zion, Crete, Ill., 7 PM.

Apr. 15—Homecoming concert, LPS chapel, Watertown, Wis., 7 PM.

**LWMS convention**—June 28-30. Brown County Expo Center, Green Bay, Wis. For information, contact Gloria Knoll, 414/739-5108 or Winnie Laabs, 414/779-4886. For registration, contact LWMS central office, 414/321-6212.

## CHANGE OF NAME

**Sheridan, Wyo.**—Valley. Formerly WELS in Sheridan. Contact Pastor Alan Gumm for time and place of worship; 307/686-4080.

## NAMES WANTED

**Sheridan, Wyo.**—Alan Gumm; 307/686-4080.

**Franklin, N.C.**—Fredric Kosanke, 135 Fox Run, Hendersonville NC 28792; 704/693-1403 or Daniel Schroeder (ELS), 2875 Stilesboro Rd, Box 1642, Kennesaw GA 30144; 770/424-5700.

**Milwaukee, Wis.**—Salem (107th St.). Information on past confirmands and called workers for 150th anniversary celebration; 414/353-8141.

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**Business manager/public relations director**—Business operations, public relations, and donor development for Camp Phillip, a year-round ministry for WELS youth, adults, families, churches, and schools. Contact Tom Klusmeyer before Apr. 8, Camp Phillip, Rt 3, Box 190-4, Wautoma WI 54982-9330; 414/787-3202.

## NEEDED

**Artists, painters, sculptors, teachers**—Participate in a display and open forum at the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, July 21-24. Send name, address, phone number, slides/photos of worship-related artwork, and SASE by May 1 to WELS Art Guild, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226. Contact Beth Dowhen, 414/543-2913.

**Preacher**—Stay in Russellville, Ark., parsonage in exchange for preaching July 28 and Aug. 4. Near the Ozarks. Contact Pastor Philip Pitt, 501/967-7288.

**Preacher**—Stay in Johnson City, Tenn., parsonage in exchange for preaching and leading Bible class June 23, 30, and July 7. Located in the Appalachians near Civil War battlefield. Contact Pastor Thomas Kock, 423/283-0037.

## ITEMS AVAILABLE

**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 (catalog item 38-005) contact Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022.

**Choir robes**—Maroon, over 20 available. Free for cost of shipping. Contact Pastor Paul Stern, 616/651-5308.

**Church furnishings**—Pulpit and baptismal font, both white with gold trim; six solid oak pews, 13' 9" long; BDC Rex-Rotary mimeograph. All in good condition. Contact Pastor Leonard Pankow, N9314 Hwy 41, Daggett MI 49821; 906/753-4297.

**NL special edition**—extra copies of issue highlighting ministerial education system. Contact *Northwestern Lutheran*, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3210; FAX 414/256-3899.

**Organ**—Hammond model 2182, two manual. Free for cost of shipping. Divinity, St. Paul, Minn., 612/776-1786.

**Organ**—Yamaha Electone model B-6B. Two manuals with one octave pedals. Bench included. 42x36x22. Available for cost of shipping. Contact Pastor Kevin Schultz, 391 Phoenix Crescent, Orleans, Ontario, Canada, K1E 1V6; 613/824-2524.

**Pipe organ**—Three-rank Wicks pipe organ, two manuals, complete. Light oak finish. Price negotiable. Available summer 1996. Contact St. James, Box 402, 415 E North St, Cambridge WI 53523-0402; 608/423-3550.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Waterloo, Wis.**—St. John (140). Apr. 14. Rt 2, Box 118, Waterloo WI 53594.

**Cambridge, Wis.**—St. James (100). Apr. 21, Founders' day service, 10:30 AM. Box 402, 415 E North St, Cambridge WI 53523-0402; 608/423-3550.

**South St. Paul, Minn.**—Grace (75). Apr. 28—services, 10 AM and 2 PM; meals follow. Apr. 27—fellowship party, 6 PM; 612/451-1035.

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

**Wonewoc, Wis.**—St. Paul (125). Apr. 28—confirmation reunion. Confirmands contact Rachelle Richert, PO Box 52, Wonewoc WI 53968.

**St. Paul, Minn.**—Mt. Olive (75). May 4—anniversary banquet. May 5—reunion and anniversary service, 10 AM. 1460 Almond Ave, St. Paul MN 55108.

**St. Paul, Minn.**—St. John (125). May 19. Service, 10 AM; meal follows. Call for reservations. 765 Margaret St, St. Paul MN 55106; 612/771-6406.

**Niles, Ill.**—St. Matthew (100). May 26. Service, 10 AM; banquet, 11:30 AM. 9081 Maryland Ave, Niles IL 60714; 847/827-4360.

# Uncompromising, not self-righteous

Kenneth A. Cherney

“My previous discussions did not take proper account of that whole aspect of Christianity which is uncompromising, ornery, militant, rigorous, imperious, and invincibly self-righteous,” wrote Alan Watts.

Like many intellectuals in the 1960s, Alan Watts was fascinated by the East, and he tried to fuse Zen Buddhism with Christianity. It didn't work, of course, and here Watts tells us whose fault that was. It wasn't the Buddhists or their ideas. It was those “ornery, self-righteous” Christians. They're so sure they're right and everybody else is wrong that reasonable discussion with them is impossible.

This may sound vaguely familiar. Thirty years after Alan Watts, the accusation he made is still the world's main problem with Christianity. You've heard it many times: Christians think they're right, and everybody else is wrong; they think they have the truth, and nobody else does. In a world that accepts nothing as true except the axiom that there is no truth, there's no higher crime possible than this one.

If that's so, then we Christians stand guilty as charged. We believe there is such a thing as truth. It is knowable and certain. It can be expressed, though not exhausted, by human language. In other words, there are times when two and two

simply make four—no matter who says they make five or how many people agree. And that principle holds whether you're talking about arithmetic or morals or who God is.

Christians believe in objective truth. We also believe we have it—that's what makes us so unpopular. But it can only make us “ornery” and “self-righteous” if we forget where that truth came from, and how we came to possess it.

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*If ever we Christians get the idea that we have the truth because we're smarter or more spiritual or more virtuous than other people, Scripture cuts us immediately down to size.*

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In the Bible, God has many not-too-complimentary things to say about our ability to arrive at spiritual truth by ourselves. He uses words like “foolish, blind, ignorant, and corrupt” to describe us—all of us—as we are by nature. If ever we Christians get the idea that we have the truth because we're smarter or more spiritual or more virtuous than others, Scripture cuts us immediately down to size.

The fact is that our unconverted religious meanderings had us so hopelessly lost that God had to

reveal his truth to us, in a special act of his love. And he didn't do that to reward us for being so studious and inquisitive and interested in religion.

He did it because he felt sorry for us.

A Christian who has studied God's Word for years still can only stare, blinking and uncomprehending, at the most important truth it holds for us: our forgiveness and acceptance in Jesus Christ. It's the central truth of our faith—and it's a fact we couldn't have guessed in a million years. That's because it's foolishness, highly offensive nonsense, to human reason. Even a devout Christian like C.S. Lewis confessed to having moments “when the whole thing looks wildly improbable.” But that doesn't make it any less true. Thank God.

The Christian message is true, but you'll find that a person who understands it doesn't go around patting himself on the back. He's much more likely to drop to his knees.

In what he believes, you might find him “uncompromising.” But not “self-righteous.” Not ever.

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

# Easter— the spring of Jesus' resurrection

Karl R. Gurgel

I've had it with winter! Here in the Midwest, for a solid week in early February, the temperature never rose above zero. Winter's icy touch even extended into the deep south, freezing the oranges still on the trees. Several times Washington, D.C. was paralyzed by more than just politics. Snow clogged the streets making the passage of anything impossible.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who has had it with winter. Oh, how we all long for the tender, warming touch of spring. And since spring and Easter come so close together, in the minds of many they are indissolubly linked.

But do we have such meager expectations regarding Easter? Is winter's chill all we are seeking to erase from our memories? Only if the chill of death has never frozen us in our tracks. Only if, with the passing of time—from one spring to another—the requiem of death and decay has not played out before us.

Job saw the signs of death all too clearly. He had lost nearly everything:

fortune, friends, family. Even his person was infected by it. From the crown of his head to the tips of his toes he was one mass, one mess, of ugly, itchy boils.

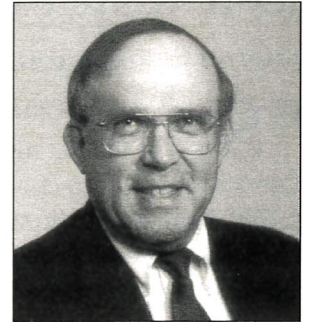
Scratching would give him only temporary relief. A mere change in seasons would bring him no particular relief at all. His condition, he knew, would eventually get worse. His skin would be totally destroyed. To put it bluntly, Job would die, and his flesh would finish its decay.

And yet, Job had hope; he had comfort and confidence when he said "And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God" (19:26). His flesh, like the new growth of spring, would be restored. For what? That in his flesh and with his eyes he might see God. All this because, as he said, "my Redeemer lives."

The Redeemer lives for you and me, too. The icy clutches of winter may serve to remind us all of death's stiffening reality. Only death is much worse. It's iciness chills every climate. Death results from sin, our sin, any sin. Only the resurrection of Jesus, following his death for sin, our sin, any sin, like the warmth of spring, can breathe new life, eternal life, into us.

I've had it with winter; I'm so glad spring is here. I've had it, too, with the cold winter of death; I'm so glad the warm spring of Jesus' resurrection is here.

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:56,57).



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

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*Only the  
resurrection of  
Jesus, following  
his death for sin,  
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of spring, can  
breathe new life,  
eternal life, into us.*

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# Sympathy— feeling with others, not for them

When we sympathize with others, we are led into action, following Jesus' command to love one another as he loved us.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

“**S**ympathy is cold to the relation of distant misery,” wrote Edward Gibbon. In contrast to this “cold” tendency in human behavior, Hebrews 13:3 gives us a third “good old godly guideline” to live by: **“Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”**

## Leads to sympathetic action

In my school days, a family from church lost everything in a house fire. My church donated food, clothing, cash, and shelter.

Today we often think of sympathy as a feeling of sadness *for* others because of their situation. But in the biblical sense, sympathy is a feeling *with* others. We put ourselves in their situation. We feel what they are feeling, suffer what they are suffering. And that leads to action.

Paul expressed true spiritual sympathy when he wrote, “To the weak I became weak. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul sympathized with others by putting himself in their situations. It led him to preach the gospel.

Jesus wept with Lazarus' sisters. Then he did something—he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus exercised his action-oriented sympathy with the sick, frail, possessed, and blind. He “went through all the towns and villages, teaching, . . . preaching the good news . . . and healing every disease and sickness” (Matthew 9:35).

## Demonstrates true faith

Why does God want us to sympathize with others to the point that we feel their burdens and do something about it? Paul tells us, “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). The law of Christ is the law of love. Jesus gave his disciples and us the commandment to love one another as he loved us.

Jesus not only taught this law; he exemplified it. In the ultimate act of sympathy, Jesus saw our condition of sin and put himself in our place. He suffered what we suffered, felt what we felt. To this day we have Jesus to sympathize with our weaknesses because he gave his life for our lives. He paid for our sin and

suffered our hell on the cross. The law of love was at work in Jesus' life, and we fulfill it when we believe in him and follow his example.

## Recognized on Judgment Day

Remember what Jesus will say on Judgment Day: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” That's our King's free salvation, the inheritance of heaven by grace alone through faith in Jesus. Now comes the recognition of faith by actions of true sympathy, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, . . . I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Then Jesus concludes, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did for me.” (Matthew 25:36-40). What a motivation for sympathizing with others and then doing something about it. For every time we do, we do it for Christ.

*Fred Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.*



# Death and taxes

Joel C. Gerlach

“Nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes,” Ben Franklin quipped in a letter to Jean-Baptiste LeRoy. April is the month that confirms the one and refutes the other. Taxes are inescapable, but death isn’t. St. Paul asserts that “Christ Jesus . . . destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

Immortality was part of God’s plan from the beginning. He created Adam for life, not for death. The astounding ages of the pre-Flood patriarchs remind us of that—Methuselah, 969; Adam, 930; Noah, 950. They’d still be alive today if sin had not thwarted God’s original plan.

A world-renowned scholar, Dr. Linus Pauling, once provided unwitting support for the immortality God intended for us all. Pauling was a Nobel prize-winning chemist at Cal Tech in Pasadena. In 1962 he also won the Nobel Peace Prize. Shortly thereafter he received an invitation to address a faculty forum at UCLA. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Pauling said in part, “People should live forever. Theoretically man is quite immortal.” That’s true, he said, because “his bodily tissues replace themselves. He is a self-repairing machine, and yet he gets old and dies, and the reasons for this are still a mystery.”

The reasons may be a mystery to an agnostic chemist, but not to a Christian.

God forewarned Adam that disobedience would bring death. And it did. Adam disobeyed, died, and passed the death germ on to all of us. Cancer doesn’t really kill, nor bad heat, nor strokes, nor accidents, nor old age. Sin is the villain. “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Easter, glorious Easter, reassures us that human destiny does not end on that tragic note. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20 NKJV). Nowhere does that grace speak more powerfully and positively than it does at the empty Easter grave.

Ben Franklin was right about taxes, but Jesus has the final say about death. Here it is: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25).

Linus Pauling says a man ought to be immortal. Jesus says he is. Nothing can be said to be more certain than that.

Postscript: Dr. Linus Pauling finally learned the truth about life and death on Aug. 19, 1994, when he met his Maker.

*Joel Gerlach is pastor at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.*

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death isn't.*

# The Bible: how it's ordered and what it says about saving faith

John F. Brug

*Saving faith is trust that Christ paid for all of our sins. The Catholic church teaches that we have to pay for our sins, at least in part, either by good works or suffering in purgatory. Do Catholics have saving faith?*

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church makes it clear that Roman Catholicism still teaches we must provide part of the payment for sins and that some of this payment is rendered in purgatory (p. 269). Such teaching is destructive of saving faith. Any mixing of our works with God's grace destroys grace, which is a totally free gift (Galatians 5:3-4, Romans 11:6).

*Through the teachings of the Bible, saving faith can be created and preserved in spite of false teachings.*

But the gospel is still taught alongside the church's false teachings. People still hear Scripture and read their Bibles. These Scriptures testify to Christ. They proclaim salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. Through these teachings of the Bible, saving faith can be created and preserved in spite of false teachings of Rome.

For this reason, we believe Catholics may have saving faith in spite of the false teachings of their church. Nevertheless, we should warn them against those teachings that threaten their faith.

*I read that the Bible is not in chronological order. Why not? In what order did the books of the Bible take place?*

There is no set order for the books of the Bible, since they originated as independent compositions. The order in the Hebrew Bible is different from the English order and varies from one Hebrew manuscript to another.

In the English Bible, the books are arranged by type: history, poetry, prophecy, etc. Within these classifications, they were arranged in chronological order as much as possible.

We cannot arrange the books in strict chronological order because some books overlap, and we do not know the dates of some books with certainty.

The Old Testament historical books from Genesis to Esther are in chronological order, except Ruth takes place during the middle of Judges, and Esther in the middle of Ezra. Chronicles covers the whole time span of the Old Testament.

The poetical books are as close to chronological order as possible, since Job takes place in the time of the patriarchs, Psalms is largely by David, and the other three books are attributed to Solomon.

The prophets are contemporary with Kings, except for the last three, which belong with Ezra. The major prophets from Isaiah through Daniel are in chronological order. The arrangers of the 12 minor prophets (from Hosea to Malachi) attempted to put them in chronological order,

as is apparent from the three post-exilic prophets at the end of the list. But they did not have adequate information to do so. The dates of Joel and Obadiah are uncertain.

In the New Testament, the four gospels appear in what the ancients believed to be their order of writing. Possibly, they reversed the order of Mark and Luke. Acts naturally follows.

Only the epistles depart notably from the likely chronological order. Paul's letters appear with the long books first, followed by shorter letters to churches, followed by letters to individuals. The dates of some letters are uncertain, but the likely order is Galatians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy—beginning about AD 49 and finishing about AD 67.

The general epistles have Hebrews, the longest book, placed first, followed by the shorter letters in approximate chronological order (Jude is earlier than John's letters and possibly earlier than Peter's). Revelation naturally comes last.

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

**Send your questions to Your question, please, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX 414/256-3899.**





**Perhaps Laurie Biedenbender might want to add a note to her suggestions to parents in "From generation to generation"** [Dec. '95]. Her sixth suggestion reads, "Read your Bible where your children can see you." In my own experience I've found it difficult to concentrate with the children around me. I much prefer to do my Bible reading early in the morning before my children arise. Then as the day goes along I can comment on what I've read. Making references to my Bible reading lets my children "see" that I, too, treasure God's Word.

*Ruth Kovachyny  
Ternopil, Ukraine*

**I enjoyed the article about Pastor E. Arnold Sitz** [Jan.]. I was a member of Grace, Tucson, Ariz. From 1925 to 1932 Pastor Sitz taught high school classes for several students. We met in church members' homes and studied Bible history, Latin, algebra, English, history, and science. Pastor Sitz spoke of Arizona having its own Lutheran Academy someday. Prof. Schroeder's article reminded me of his dedication to Christian education.

*Ragna Eckert  
Hastings, Nebraska*

**A special thank you to those who realized the need for an outreach program for military personnel,** and those who continue to make it happen. For the past two years, I have served in Hawaii as a U.S. Marine. During those two years, nine months were spent in places without a WELS congregation.

Your church is not made up of a place or building. Your church is your congregation, where God's true Word is taught and presented.

My plea goes out to you who might become complacent in your congregation or take it for granted. Take every opportunity given to serve, and truly cherish your congregation. Your fellow believers in Christ Jesus make us strong congregations, and an even stronger synod.

*H.W. Blobaum  
Honolulu, Hawaii*

**Re: Ray Wiechmann, home missions developer** [Feb.]. We needed a church. One Saturday morning, we drove past Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., and my wife, Alice, read the sign: Bay Pines Lutheran Church and School. We arrived at the parsonage. I began, "We're members of . . ." He said, "I know why you're here. You're not the first." After a brief introduction, before any commitments were made, he asked my girls, "Would you like to see your new school?"

This encounter with Pastor Ray Wiechmann was the beginning of our WELS membership and lasting friendships with scores of dedicated pastors, teachers, and members. We thank Morton Schroeder for the beautiful article. Contrary to your request that we share this magazine, we will keep that issue.

*John G. Ruppel  
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

**The excellent article on Lutheran preaching [Feb.] might have made one point more clearly.**

Incidents such as 12-year-old Jesus in the temple are recorded to tell us about his perfect obedience as part of his saving work. But it is also scriptural to use this as a good example of being eager to hear God's Word and obeying one's parents. Peter urges us to follow Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21), and Paul tells us to be imitators of God and live a life of love using Christ as

our pattern (Ephesians 5:1). Urging Christians to follow an example from Jesus' life as a way to thank God for his forgiving grace is one thing. Urging people to be good because this will be good for them and for others around them is horrendous moralizing. A preacher or teacher is Lutheran if he does the former, but not if he does the latter.

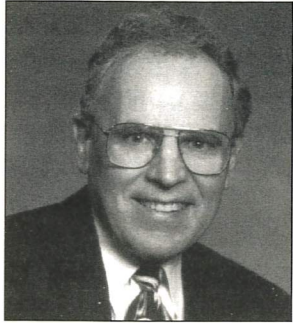
*David Kuske  
Mequon, Wisconsin*

## Through my Bible in 3 years

May 1996

1.  Deuteronomy 14, 15
2.  Dt. 16, 17
3.  Dt. 18, 19
4.  Dt. 20, 21
5.  Dt. 22, 23
6.  Dt. 24, 25
7.  Dt. 26
8.  Dt. 27:1-28:14
9.  Dt. 28:15-68
10.  Dt. 29, 30
11.  Dt. 31
12.  Dt. 32:1-47
13.  Dt. 32:48-34:12
14.  Mark 10:1-16
15.  Mk. 10:17-31
16.  Mk. 10:32-52
17.  Mk. 11:1-19
18.  Mk. 11:20-33
19.  Mk. 12:1-27
20.  Mk. 12:28-44
21.  Mk. 13:1-23
22.  Mk. 13:24-37
23.  Mk. 14:1-25
24.  Mk. 14:26-52
25.  Mk. 14:53-72
26.  Mk. 15:1-21
27.  Mk. 15:22-41
28.  Mk. 15:42-16:8
29.  Mk. 16:9-20
30.  Judges 1:1-2:5
31.  Jdg. 2:6-3:6

## Easter Scrooge



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

*Into that gloom  
shines the light of  
the resurrection of  
Jesus Christ. . . .  
And it's revealed  
in two words:  
"He lives!"*

He's a Baby-something—Buster, Boomer, it doesn't much matter. He's caught up in the spirit of the times. He has many questions and many doubts and a "Bah Humbug!" for anyone with old, easy answers. I think of him as the Easter Scrooge.

Unlike the Christmas Scrooge, however, the Easter Scrooge doesn't just sit at an old desk counting money. Materialism is still apparent; it always will be. But the Easter Scrooge has also become intensely devout. You will as likely find him contemplating his navel as the glitter of gold coin.

You know the type because, increasingly, we have become him. We are a people searching for "peace of mind," "a higher consciousness," "personal transformation," "a sense of self." We ask, "Why are we here? What is the purpose of our existence?" And we believe, as one national news writer reported: "The answers change in each generation. . . ." So we try to create a new age, even as we scoff at the eternal answers for every age.

But the new age is just the old delusion, and the changing answers are shifting sands. When we don't find peace of mind, we conclude we are victims of those who plot to destroy our peace of mind. When we waver in our self image, we melt like Christmas Scrooge seeing the ghost of Christopher Marley. Personal transformation is held out to mean becoming anything but what we were raised to be, and never understanding why. And our higher consciousness tells us just how badly messed up we are.

Into that gloom shines the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Scrooges miss it because they are too busy looking for new answers and trying to discover

the light within themselves. But the real light has its source outside us. And it's revealed in two words: "He lives!"

Those two words embrace everything that is Christian, answer all the questions, and offer real peace. Life, on the other hand, loses all meaning and purpose if the words aren't true. As one writer said years ago, "Nothing matters if Christ had not outwitted death—nothing!" Now everything matters and has meaning because Jesus lives.

Those two words had the power to transform a small group of disappointed, defeated disciples, who hid in an upper room, into a band of witnesses no persecution could silence. Those two words have become the rallying cry of every Christian sermon since Peter spoke

at Pentecost. Scrooges sneer at those words—always have (cf. Acts 17:32). Believers stand in awe, and then hurry to tell others the good news.

So, think about it for your own life:

- Are you having a bad day? Jesus lives.
- Do you feel guilty for something you've done? Jesus lives.
- Are you suffering from some injustice? Jesus lives.
- Are you looking for purpose in your life? Jesus lives.
- Have you had a recent brush with death? Jesus lives.
- Are you unhappy? Jesus lives.

How can we be Scrooges? Jesus lives!



*Gary P. Baumler*

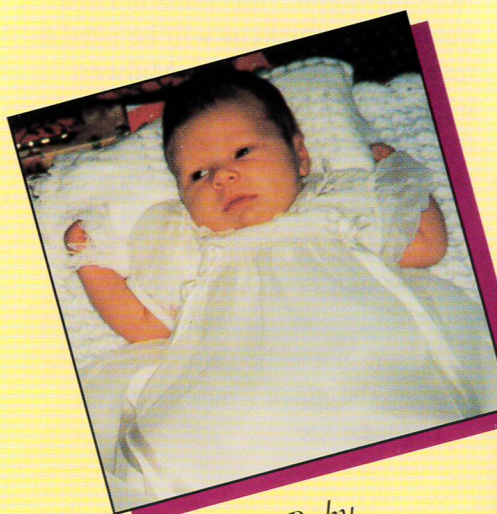
# Our Tribute Gifts



remember those special occasions  
that are close to our hearts

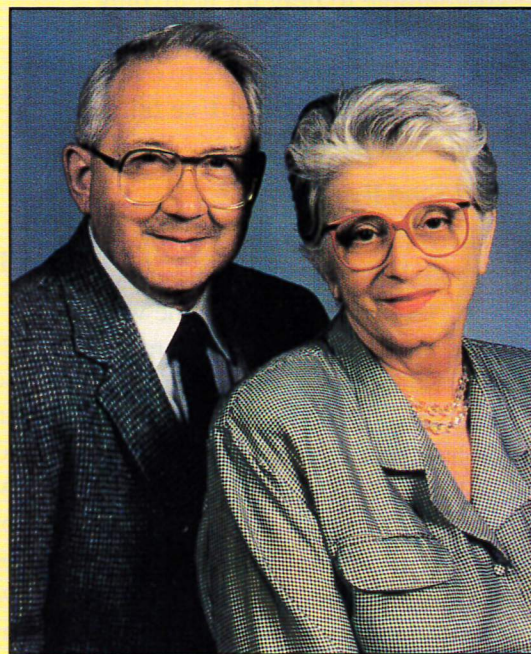
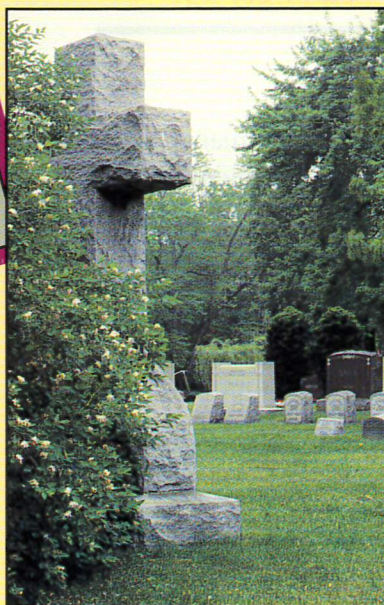
- *In memory of a loved one*
- *Birth/Adoption*
- *Birth/Adoption*
- *New grandchild*
- *Wedding anniversary*
- *Father's Day*
- *Ministerial anniversary*
- *Successful surgery*
- *Mother's Day*
- *Christmas*
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extend your gifts beyond yourself to benefit others.

# Jesus got up

Unlike the gods of Kyoto, Jesus didn't need ropes, scaffolds, and the sweat of mortals to get up. Under his own power he walked out of the grave.

Wayne A. Laitinen

The 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan, not only took the lives of 5,000 people, it toppled a few gods as well.

In the city of Kyoto three gods fell in the Temple of Roryuji. One god lost an arm. In Sanjusangendo Hall six idols of the goddess of mercy fell over.

It must be frustrating to come to your temple to pray for help, only to find your god sprawled face down on the floor unable to even utter the words, "Help! I've fallen, and I can't get up."

## Our God lives

How different is the crucified Son of God. He did not fall because of an earthquake. Ultimately, he was not even toppled by the schemes of men. Rather, his great love for us made him set his face like flint toward the city of his death.

When he died, the earth convulsed as if it realized the injustice of it all. The holy Creator gave his life to save a world too blinded by arrogance to plead, "God help us. We've fallen, and we can't get up."

Praise God, it worked. Jesus' death actually broke the cycle of sin, death, and hell. We are forgiven. Because of Jesus' fall, God declared us holy.

On the Last Day our bodies will arise from the grave to live in the fullness of joy in his presence forever.

How can we be sure? On the third day, Jesus got up.

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*The holy Creator gave his life to save a world too blinded by arrogance to plead, "God help us. We've fallen, and we can't get up."*

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## Their gods die

Unlike the high-maintenance gods of Kyoto, he didn't need ropes, scaffolds, and the sweat of mortals. In fact, he did what modern medical technology calls impossible. He, who was pronounced dead on Friday by a bloody spear, rose in the flesh on Sunday. Under his own power he walked out of the grave and showed himself to more than 500 witnesses over a period of almost six weeks. And he promised us, "Because I live, you also will live."

What other god is like our God? For our salvation he tore down the temple of his body and in three days raised up another not made by human hands. Name one other god who has done this.

Somewhere in Kyoto, a construction worker must wonder as he sets the broken arm of his god. On a Brazilian street corner a man sacrifices his umpteenth chicken. How many more chickens will he need to make his god happy? A Midwest businessman surveys his kingdom from a coveted perch on the corporate ladder and wonders why the black hole in his soul has not been filled.

Who will be their angel? Who will exult, "Do not be afraid. . . . He has risen just as he said. . . . Come and see the place where he lay"?

Let it be me.

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

