

# LUTHERAN



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# Fly like an eagle

*Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. Isaiah 40:31*

**Richard E. Lauersdorf**

**E**ver watch an eagle fly? What a sight as with its strong wings and tremendous power it soars into the sky or stands its ground against the stiffest wind. No wonder the eagle has long been a symbol of strength.

In the same way Scripture makes use of the eagle. In our congregations as we've looked at young Christians on their confirmation day, our hope, yes even our prayer, has been that they learn how to fly like an eagle.

## **Against the winds of the world**

Many of us remember our confirmation day. Perhaps we felt ready to take on anything. Ready to renounce the devil, the world, and our flesh. Ready to suffer all rather than fall away from God and his Word. That's the way it should be after being led by the Spirit more deeply into God's powerful Word.

But the winds blow. Perhaps it's the breeze called "smugness," the feeling that we've learned it all. Did we think our wings were fully grown, and new feathers would never have to be grown to replace ones that fall out?

More likely it's the constant battering by this world's hostile winds. How are young believers to keep flying in a society that tells them to live for the moment? How can they survive in an age so near-sighted it can't see heaven's treasures, and so self-absorbed it lives only for its own pleasures? Many a confirmand

has been blown off course or dashed to the ground by such evil gales.

Looking at the young eagles in the classes of '96, it is our hope, yes even our prayer, that they learn how to fly against the winds of this world.

## **With the wings of faith**

How? Isaiah tells us, "Hope in the Lord." Previously Isaiah described him as the everlasting God, whose care and concern, power and help are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Moreover, he's the "Creator of the ends of the earth," whose power never reaches a limit or needs recharging. Also he's a God whose "understanding no one can fathom." This side of heaven we'll never understand him and his love that sent his Son to shoulder the world's sin and secure a place in his family for all who believe. That's the Lord in whom we are to hope and from whom we draw strength.

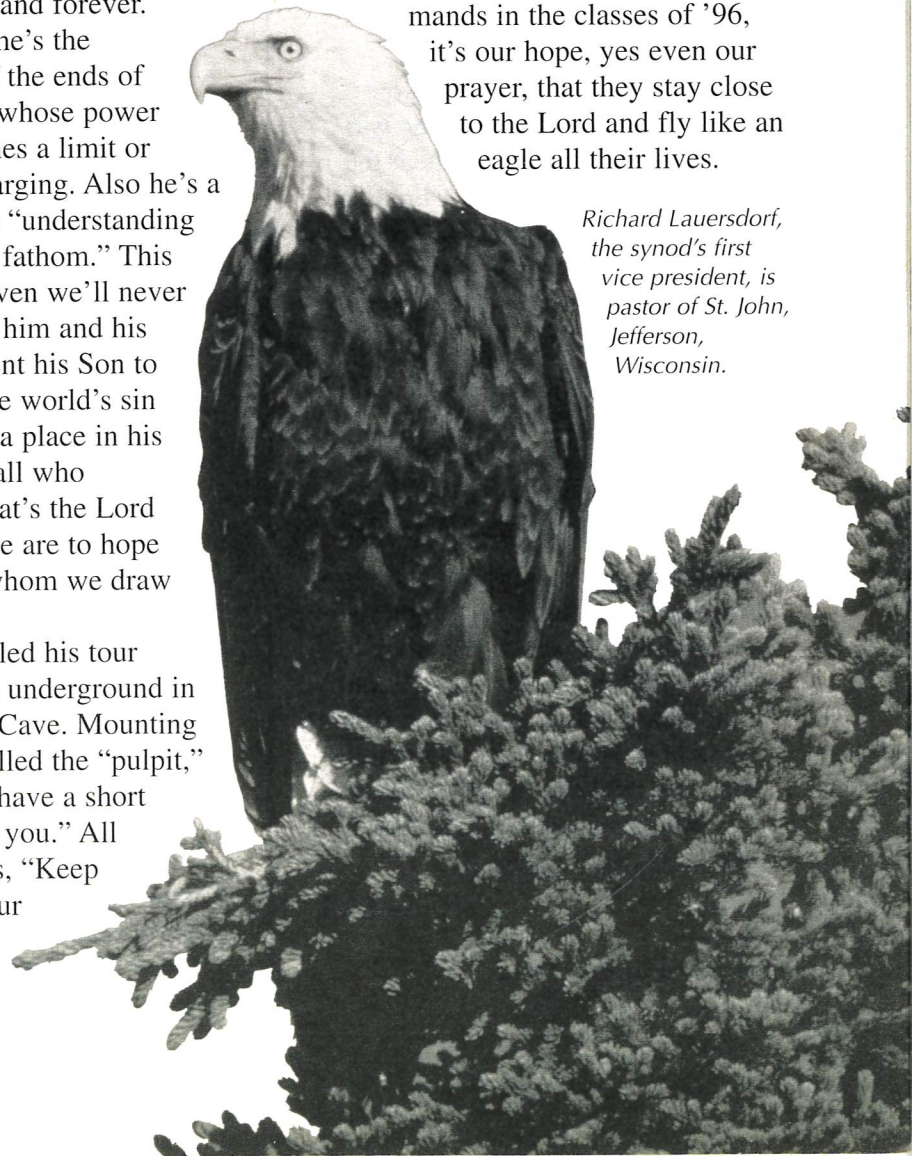
A guide led his tour group deep underground in Mammoth Cave. Mounting the rock called the "pulpit," he said, "I have a short sermon for you." All he said was, "Keep close to your guide."

Take your eyes off him and you risk getting lost in the darkness or stepping off unseen ledges.

"Keep close to your heavenly Guide," Isaiah would tell us. Keep searching the Scriptures, which were written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Keep coming to his holy Supper to have your faith renewed and recharged so you can fly higher again.

Looking at those young confirmands in the classes of '96, it's our hope, yes even our prayer, that they stay close to the Lord and fly like an eagle all their lives.

*Richard Lauersdorf, the synod's first vice president, is pastor of St. John, Jefferson, Wisconsin.*







- Do you have a moment to spare? Probably not. But take some time to meditate on God's wonderful promises. Read "Awwuuuhhmm" by Paul Wendland (p. 8) and Victor Prange's "The lost art of meditation" (p. 31) and be reminded of the importance of spending time alone with God.
- On the cover you see Alex Mohr, whose world changed in an instant. In "We have a different Alex" on page 6, you'll read how God supports Alex and his family through the toughest of times.
- In June, most people's thoughts turn to weddings. Read "The two shall be one" (p. 29) and hear the importance of marriage, Christian families, and the family of God. On page 32, John Brug addresses the issue of church weddings and their participants.
- For Father's Day, we bring stories of fathers who taught valuable lessons, in life and death—"On the edge of the kitchen door" (p. 12) and "Lessons from death\*" (p. 16).
- Werner Franzmann, former *Northwestern Lutheran* editor, died on April 6. He served NL from 1957 to 1968—in his "spare" time. Franzmann was a gifted man who brought great theological, intellectual, and spiritual insight to WELS. His obituary is on page 24. His legacy is everywhere.

—LRB

Cover photo by Bob Mohr

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# "We have a different Alex"

Although an accident changed Alex, one thing in his life will never change—God's love and mercy.

Julie K. Tessmer

One minute, Alex Mohr was a healthy, active six-year-old, playing at the neighbor's house down the street.

The next he was being rushed to the hospital with a traumatic brain injury and broken bones.

No human could have predicted a car would hit Alex as he was riding home on his bike in July 1993.

But God knew.

"It's in God's hands and has been since we were all born," said Karen Mohr, Alex's mother. "We are put on this earth for a reason—for his plan. And even though we may not agree with that plan, we need to pray and believe there is a reason for everything."

## Adjustments

And the Mohrs keep praying—not just that Alex will recover fully, but also for the little steps he takes along the way.

"I believe in miracles. We've had many," said Mohr. "Most people think of miracles as total healing, and I pray for that, too. But our miracles are that Alex even survived the accident, that he's been able to eat real food again instead of having to be fed with a tube, that he can hold his head up better now than before."

Doctors won't say much about Alex's future.

"The biggest heartache we have is we don't know where he'll be in the future," said Mohr. "Will he



Alex Mohr, two months before his accident.

ever walk or talk? We have no idea of what he'll be able to do."

After almost three years and 15 operations, Alex still isn't back to being a "normal" nine-year-old.

Alex, who used to run, jump, and skip, now has both legs in casts because of a recent surgery to release the adductor muscles in his legs. Cognitively he is at the level of a six- to nine-month-old. Although he no longer has to be fed with a tube, he must still be fed pureed food. He communicates by smiling, laughing, and crying.

"In essence we have lost Alex," said Mohr. "We have Alex, but a different Alex. I wouldn't change that for the world because even though he is dependent on us for every-

thing, I can hold him. He is still with us, and we can be with him."

God is still with Alex too, and has been all along.

Five days after the accident, doctors were unsure if Alex would survive. Yet when James Bolda, pastor at Sioux Falls, S.D., sang "Jesus loves me" to Alex, Alex opened up his eyes and kept them open.

"We know he remembers "Jesus loves me" because he smiles when we sing it," said Martin Luchterhand, pastor at Ascension, Mitchell, S.D. "He also seems to respond when we talk to him about how God loves him."

## Difficulties

But life still wasn't easy for the Mohr family after the accident. First Alex spent three weeks in intensive care in Sioux Falls, S.D., and seven months in a rehabilitation center in Kansas. Karen stayed with Alex during his rehabilitation in Kansas, leaving her husband, Bob, and daughter, Jessica, at home. The youngest son, Max, only 10 months old, stayed with Karen's sister.

Alex then stayed at home from February 1994 to September 1995. WELS Committee on Relief gave money to make the Mohr's home wheelchair accessible and to pay for some of the many medical bills. Other churches held fundraisers to help with expenses.

But since both Bob and Karen needed to work, providing Alex with



constant care became difficult. Also, attending a regular school was frustrating for Alex because he was at a different level than the other children—both physically and mentally.

“He had to hear about other kids doing things he no longer could do,” said Mohr. “We know he remembers how it used to be, and it’s difficult for him.”

### Blessings

Now Alex lives at Children’s Care Hospital and School, a special school in Sioux Falls geared for children in wheelchairs and those with disabilities. He attends classes with six others at his level.

His family visits him every week and brings him home every other weekend.

“It was a real cross to bear, but the

family united and carried it together,” said Reginald Pope, former pastor at Ascension. “There were so many blessings that God provided for them after the accident.”

Doctors had said Alex would be in a vegetative state. Two months after the accident they felt it was obvious he would never be able to do anything.

But now he can communicate. Before his recent surgery he stood in a standing frame. His latest brain scan shows more brain activity than ever before. He is able to understand what is going on around him and can remember events before the accident.

God also blessed the Mohr family with a strong faith.

“They know they’re God’s children, and the Lord won’t steer them

wrong,” said Luchterhand. “It’s a privilege to see that in a Christian’s life—and I see that in the Mohrs.”

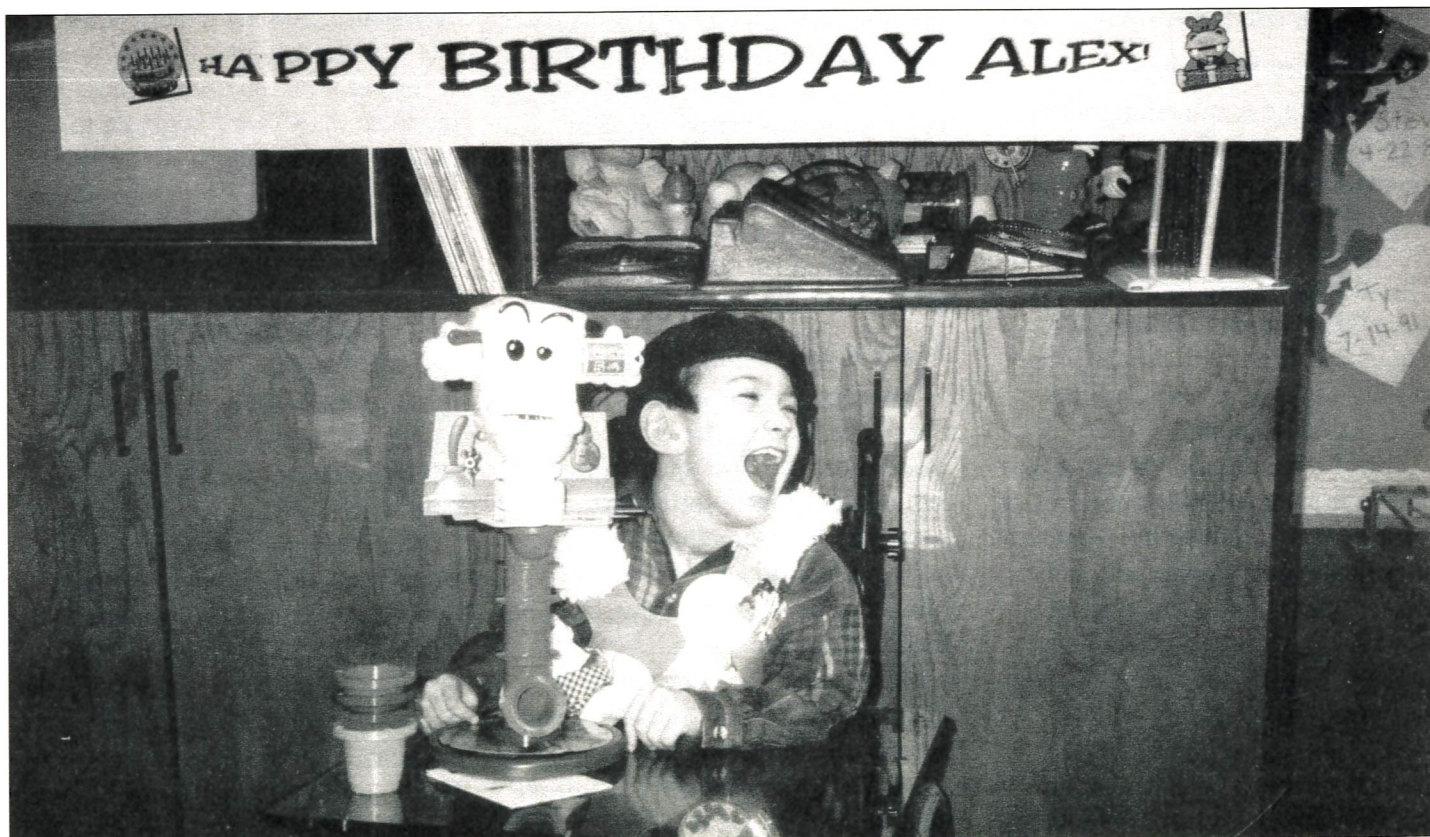
Although Alex has already gotten through many difficulties, unknown challenges are still in his future. But God knows what Alex can handle.

Said Mohr: “It will never be easy and will always be a struggle. But God gives us the support to keep us going. He also gave that support to Alex because he always comes through everything with a smile.”

And although the Mohrs aren’t sure if he will be able to walk and talk in this lifetime, in heaven Alex will be walking, talking, singing. . . .

NL

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



*Alex celebrated his ninth birthday in the classroom at Children’s Care Hospital and School. He uses hand and head switches to operate his toys and computer, and communicates by laughing, smiling, and crying in different ways.*



# Awwuuuhhm

When Christians meditate, they don't meditate to make the mind empty, but to fill it with God's Word.

Paul O. Wendland

“I read the news today, oboy!” The baby boomers are getting religion. Well, better make that “spirituality.” They’re searching for some magic potion that will put the zip of meaning back into life. Some truth that’s more significant than the right answer on Jeopardy. They want to find something of value in a world filled with too many of technology’s toys. Something that’ll steady the nerves for when things go bump in the night.

## Make it something new . . .

“And make it something new,” they ask. “After all, we’ve grown up challenging the old, cherished dogmas, and we can’t be bothered with picking our way around some Christian boneyard to discover if we missed out on anything. We want something with a little more style, a little more class, a little more sophistication.”

“Awwuuuhhmm.” What is that odd sound, anyway? It’s coming from over there, from the front section of Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Heart’s Club Choir. They’ve all assumed the lotus position: legs crossed, fingers delicately touching tip to tip, wrists resting on the knees, eyes closed, faces blank. Their bearded director says, “All together now, breathe deeply and seek release. Get busy and chant those mantras, mentally move heav-

en and earth. Fill your head with the most perfect . . . nothing.”

Again I say: oboy! But I suppose a head packed with nothing offers some kind of peace for people like us who find ourselves stuck on such a noisy planet. Sometimes it seems like we’re living out our lives looking out the window of a bullet train. Images, information whiz by us so fast, we miss most of it. And though, truth be told, we’re not missing much, it still makes us more than a little nervous. So I guess it’s not too hard to figure out why this ancient Eastern recipe for calm might be appealing to hearts that have never known true rest. Just closing your eyes to gaze at eternal night must seem, at times, to be a great relief. Meditation, they call it.

## Make it something better . . .

There is a better solution. Strangely enough, the Bible calls it meditation, too. But apart from the name, there’s little similarity between biblical meditation and the stuff the Maharishi has been peddling. “In his law [teaching] doth he meditate day and night,” says the psalmist about the godly man. In that place, the word “meditate” suggests a man making a low, humming sound as he repeats softly to himself the words of an ancient text.

“Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart,” writes

Luke about the woman an angel called “highly favored” and “blessed.” The word he uses for pondering means, literally, “putting things together.” Mary considered all the things that had happened to her. Then she reflected on the promises God had made from of old to his people, promises made new to her in the birth of her Son. She put them together, comparing one with the other. God’s Word interpreted her experience, and her experience drove her more deeply into God’s Word.

To put it plainly: when Christians meditate, they don’t meditate to make the mind empty, but to fill it with God’s Word. The Word is more real to us than the earth beneath our feet and will endure long after the heavens have come tumbling down. God speaks his word of law to us, which convicts us, and his word of gospel, which defines us, consoles us, lifts us up high, and puts us over all things to rule with Christ from God’s right hand.

Meditating on the Word is not a flight from reality, but a way of putting everything into perspective. At the center of the Word is the prism of forgiveness, converting the dull, white light of everyday human existence into the bright rainbow of God’s love. Filled with joy, I listen happily to my Father as he directs the love his love has created in me.

By comparison, what a wretched



business and colossal waste of time it is to hope I might find comfort from the yawning emptiness within, or to muck about in the swamp of my own spirituality. Here, in

God's Word, I can drink in the pure, sweet water that once kept Israel alive. Here I can be shaped and moved by what my Father says. And I don't have to ransack my Bible for passages ever more unique and obscure. The Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and especially the Creed will give me more to think on than I'll ever grasp this side of glory.

### Make it something personal . . .

Only, mind you, take each word personally. We've heard the gist of what Maharishi has to say about meditation. Listen to what another, far more reliable spiritual director once said, "Now these great works of God will neither terrify nor comfort anyone unless he believes that

God has not only the power and knowledge, but also the willingness and hearty desire to do such great things. In fact, it is not even enough to believe that he is willing to do them for others, but not for you." What is this? Modeling his meaning, Luther also said, "I take comfort in the works of Christ as if I had done them myself."

Meditation like this cannot exist without prayer. The mouth must speak what the heart is full of. God talks to us, we talk to him. And so the conversation continues in an unbroken dialogue.

We take to heart and praise God for what he has just said to us: "I thank you for your love, dear God, in giving me this command, or for consoling me with this promise."

We confess our sin: "Ah, Lord, you know me so well. You see how I have failed to trust your Word, or to follow your command with a steady love and a resolute will."

Conscious of our great weakness,

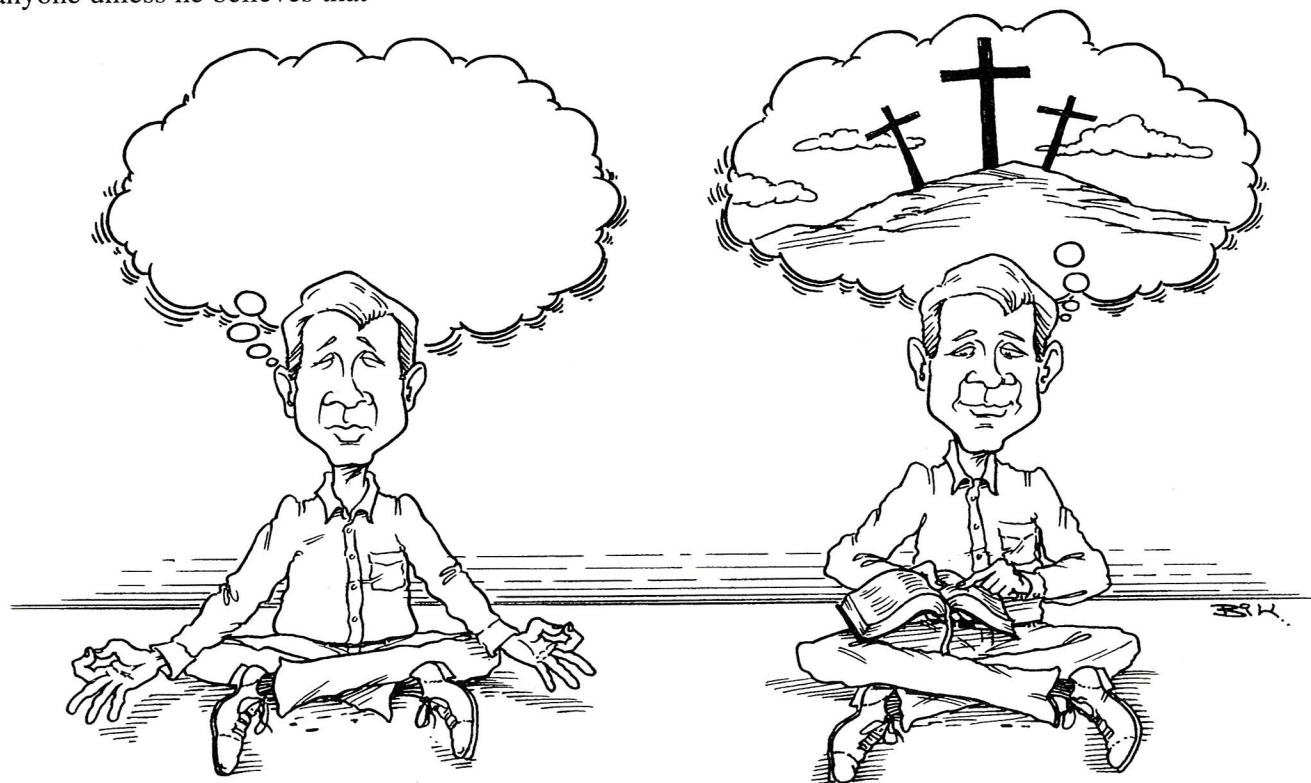
we ask for his grace: "Lord, help me, or I cannot be helped."

We open our Bibles expecting our Father to speak to us. Hearing him, we pour out our hearts before him. True meditation is as simple as that. And while we could call it a one-on-one encounter with God, it will never remain just that. God's love knows no boundaries, is blinded by no prejudice, is broad enough to embrace a world that rejected his Son. Once we find ourselves in his love, we get up from our moments of meditation and go out to give ourselves in love to our neighbor, never needing to ask who or where that neighbor might be.

How much better it is to let God fill my mind with his boundless grace, than to wall myself off inside my own narrow soul.

NL

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





# Where there are tongues, they will be stilled

Christians living prior to the completion of the written New Testament enjoyed only a piecemeal knowledge of God's will for this new era. But with Scripture complete, things are changed.

Mark E. Braun

During the first three decades in Christendom, the Holy Spirit gave some believers in some places the stirring gift of speaking in other tongues.

Would the Spirit always give this gift?

## Piecemeal time

In discussing tongues with the church at Corinth, Paul wrote: "Where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears" (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

Translated that way, one most likely takes "perfection" as the day Jesus returns. If that's what "perfection" refers to, the gift of other tongues (and direct prophecies, and knowing God's truth by direct revelation) could be granted throughout the New Testament age—as long as the church on earth endures.

Others maintain that the Spirit stopped giving this gift after John, the last apostle, died (about AD 100) or when Christianity became widespread in the Mediterranean world (about AD 350). When pressed,

however, these interpreters concede that it's difficult to pinpoint when tongues would be stilled.

Douglas Judisch, professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., has explained the passage in a way that determines the time. The contrast, he argues, is not between this present, imperfect world and the perfect glory of heaven, but between something incomplete and something that would be completed. More literally (but less elegantly) Judisch translated: "We know *piecemeal* and we prophecy *piecemeal*, but when *the complete thing* arrives, *the piecemeal thing* will be done away with."

At Paul's time—about AD 53—believers' knowledge of the Lord's will was incomplete. They had to rely on direct revelation through prophecy, confirmed by the gift of unlearned tongues. But by AD 100 the New Testament would be complete, the "piecemeal" time past. The gifts of tongues, prophecy, and knowledge by direct revelation would be unnecessary, and so the Spirit would no longer grant them.

## Piecemeal time illustrated

Judisch also fits Paul's two illustrations into his explanation.

A child can speak and think only as a child. He knows less than an adult and cannot always express himself clearly. Christians living prior to the completion of the written New Testament enjoyed only a piecemeal knowledge of God's will for this new era. But by century's end, with Scripture complete, things would be changed. A man puts away childish things, not because they're bad but because he's outgrown them. Once they possessed the completed Scriptures, believers had outgrown the need for tongues.

---

*Faith, hope, and love  
will outlast prophecy,  
tongues, and special  
knowledge.*

---

Second, Christians with only a piecemeal knowledge of God's will are like people gazing at themselves in a dull mirror, the image useful but blurred. When, however, the complete thing comes, they will see clearly, "face to face." Now we know in part; then (when the New Testament is complete and available), we'll know fully, just as we



are fully known.

Faith, hope, and love will outlast prophecy, tongues, and special knowledge. Until the end of the age, the Spirit of God will sow faith, hope, and love in believers' hearts and lives. Of those three, love is greatest. In heaven, faith will give way to sight, and hope will be fulfilled; but forever and ever we shall be free to love God and each other.

### Silent time

However one fixes (or refuses to fix) the time when tongues would be stilled, the history of the church reveals the gift all but ceased after the apostolic age. Even tongues-speakers' most passionate advocates must grant that during the eighteen hundred years between John's death and 1901, reports of other tongues are sporadic, surrounded by centuries of silence.

Montanus of Ardabau, eager to revive the spiritual fire of the mid-second century church, predicted a new "pentecostal baptism." He was reported to have been so "moved by the spirit" that he "fell into a state of possession" and "began to babble and utter strange sounds," as did some of his female assistants. Montanism's later condemnation for heresy discredits his claim to the gift.

Hildegard (1098-1179), also called the Sibyl of the Rhine, began seeing visions at age three and later professed to speak in tongues. Linguistic analysis has classified her unlearned speech as an "inventive alphabet."

Supporters of 16th century missionary Francis Xavier claimed he

spoke with supernatural ability to natives of India, China, and Japan, but Xavier himself contradicted those claims.

Disciples of Cornelius Jansen sought to reform the church of 18th century France, the more radical disciples spoke in tongues but were regarded as extremists.

"Mother" Ann Lee (1736-1784), founder of the Shakers, claimed to speak in 72 languages. Unfortunately, she was also hailed as the second coming of Christ in female form.

London Presbyterian minister Edward Irving heard of a Scottish girl who claimed to speak the language of natives of the Pewleew islands, and prayed to have the gift himself. But he caused divisions in his church and was deposed in 1833.

The consistent testimony of the church rejected the continued gift of tongues. Augustine, (354-430) writing *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, granted that "in the former days" the Holy Spirit was given, but "who expects in these days that those on whom hands are laid . . . should henceforth begin to speak with tongues?" In *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, Augustine added that tongues "were signs adapted to the time," needed as "a betokening of the Holy Ghost in all tongues, to show that the gospel of God was to run through



all tongues over the whole earth." But "that thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away." St. John Chrysostom (345-407) agreed: tongues "used to occur but now no longer take place"

(Homily on 1 Corinthians 12:1,2).

Commenting on Joel 2:28, Luther said, "When the gospel had been revealed, therefore, and made well-known by the apostles to all the territories of the earth . . . these signs ceased. . . . We must no longer look for signs to confirm the Word" (LW 18:107). John Calvin, in *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, considered it "something monstrous" to talk with God "in sounds which fall without meaning from the tongue."

Tongues, it seemed, had been stilled.

Then came the 20th century.

NL

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



# On the edge of the kitchen door

The lines on the door may have marked how tall I grew, but Dad helped me grow in other ways.

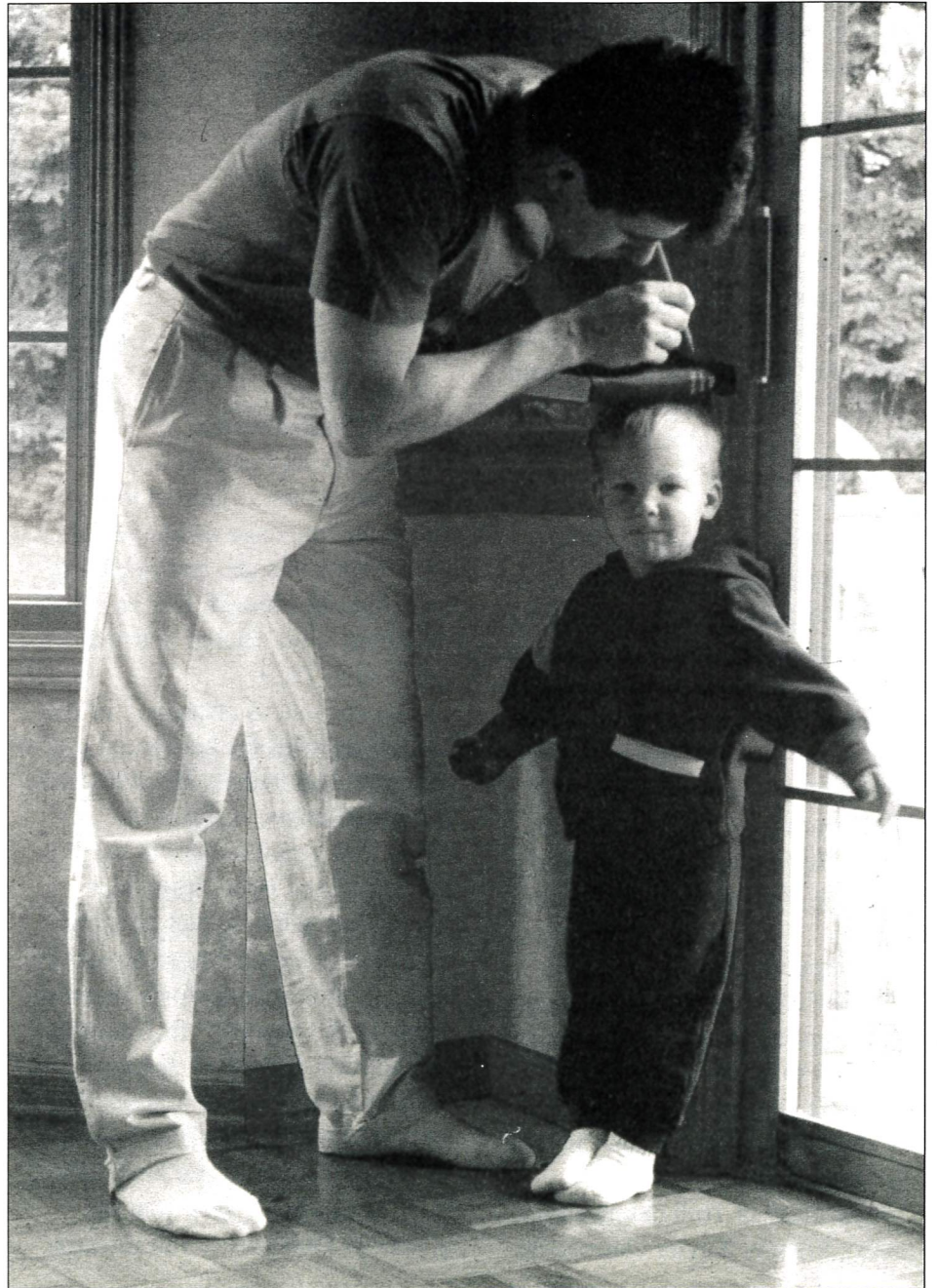
John A. Braun

Somewhere there's a door with lines drawn on the edge. Each line has a date and an initial penciled below it. The lines record either my height or my brother's height on a certain day. I remember how my father drew the lines. He leveled a book on our heads to get the proper line as we stood with our backs to the edge of the door. I'm sure he did it for my sister too, but she was 10 years younger and not ready for marking growth like we were.

## Marking growth

That simple record came to mind again as I refinished a door in my own kitchen. We remodeled the kitchen and stripped all the old paint from the inside kitchen door. As I took the sander to the door, I noticed a series of lines on the edge. Below each line was a date. The date noted when the line was drawn and who was measured. I put those lines there. Each one marked one stage of growth for my two daughters. They are now grown and ready to establish families of their own.

I paused a moment to note the lines and how quickly the inches added up. I remember using a book to mark the spot too, just like Dad did. He used a hymnal most often. I probably did too, because the piano was just around the corner in the dining room.





## Helping growth

Dad has been gone for some time, but I find he is not gone at all in many ways. I still think about him and find myself doing things I learned from him. The lines on the door may have marked how tall I grew, but I grew in other ways. My father could only watch and measure my physical growth, but he actually helped me grow in the other ways.

I remember the struggle I had memorizing my multiplication tables. He wrote them all out and made me study them. He listened patiently as I stumbled through them. Then he made me write them out. He had never gone beyond eighth grade, but he knew it was important for me to know my multiplication tables.

He took an active role in making me learn my memory work for school too. At top priority were the Bible passages and the Catechism. He knew how important that was. I learned too. The lesson came clear when he faced his own death and fought to cling to Jesus as he lost most of his memory with something like Alzheimer's. Yet God kept him in his baptismal faith and has planted the same faith in my heart.

## Modeling growth

I now cling to Jesus because God used my father not just to say how important Jesus was, but to show me. Every Sunday we were in God's house. Dad always challenged us to listen. He asked questions on the way home or at the dinner table. He served his Savior by serving his congregation. He was a member of the school board first,

then a trustee, and finally an elder.

He was a quiet, humble man. I remember him using bad language only once—when a careless driver almost hit us. He and I were on our way somewhere. I was going to be his helper for the day. That meant watching him work, holding the flashlight so he could see, and handing him tools. I'm still amazed at what I can do with tools because I watched him.

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*I now cling to Jesus because God used my father not just to say how important Jesus was, but to show me.*

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I learned other lessons along the way. He took me to visit his sister when she lost her husband. To me, of course, it was aunt and uncle and one of my first encounters with death. He reached out in love to her. On the way home, we talked about death and the sorrow it brings. I asked how he would feel if Mom died. He said, "I'm just happy for the time we have together."

Besides learning about Jesus, my dad taught me how to love. He did it by loving Mom and me. He wasn't given to displays of affection, but he clearly showed me what it meant for a man to love his family and his Savior. Even discipline was a lesson in love—at the time, though, I didn't think it was very loving. Whenever I did something that would endanger either myself or someone else, he let me know about it.

No one can measure my spiritual or intellectual growth on the edge of a door. As I paused, looking at the marks I made noting the growth of my own daughters, I thanked God for my father. As I did, I hoped my words and example as a father were enough for God to use. As my father before me, I want saving faith in the hearts of my children.

I confess that I didn't take the paint off the edge of the door. I painted over the marks. But if you know where to look, you can see the indentations the pencil made in the wood. No one will know but me.

NL

*John Braun is vice president of editorial services for Northwestern Publishing House.*



# The faithful: being true to Jesus

Although many forsake their confirmation vows, Jesus never breaks his promise to give the crown of life to the faithful.

Wayne D. Mueller

Don was down. His wife of 17 years walked out and sued him for everything she could get. Within six months, his business turned sour, and Don had to sell out to avoid bankruptcy.

At age 42, many men are enjoying a mature marriage and growing children. They are approaching the peak of their professional lives. But, just at that point, Don lost everything that mattered to him. Or so he thought.

One day, while cleaning out his safety deposit box, Don ran across his confirmation certificate. On the front of the folder, in big black letters superimposed over Luther's seal, he read his Savior's words, "Be Thou Faithful." In a little room at the back of the bank vault, Don realized he still owned what was most important to him. He broke down and cried out loud.

Somewhere on every Lutheran confirmation certificate are Jesus' words from Revelation 2:10: "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." Although many forsake their confirmation vows, Jesus never

breaks his promise to give the crown of life to the faithful. Our Savior's promise to the faithful is a recurring theme of Revelation, and it is key to our understanding the whole book.

## Faithfulness urged

The Revelation encourages its readers to faithfulness. Our Lord's pleas for faithfulness begin in chapters 2 and 3, his letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Notice what pressures members of those churches faced: false teaching, hardship, persecution, affliction, poverty, sexual immorality, idolatry, spiritual apathy, and materialism. Because the faithful believer must surmount so many challenges to faith, Jesus refers to him in all seven letters as "him who overcomes."

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*There is no faithfulness  
without faith, and there is  
no faith without attention  
to God's Word.*

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Faithfulness means holding on to Jesus' promises through every trouble and temptation of life. "Hold on to what you have," Jesus told the faithful in Philadelphia, "so that no one will take your crown" (3:11). The church at Thyatira heard a similar plea: "Only hold on to what you have until I come" (2:25).

## Faithfulness created

Don't confuse Christian faithfulness, however, with what the world calls "the triumph of the human spirit." Rugged individualists define faithfulness as being true to yourself. Their mottoes are "Hang in there," "Try harder," and "Don't give up." But when we fail ourselves—as Don did, and we all eventually do—there is nothing for the self-sufficient to hang on to.

Christian faithfulness means being true to Jesus. Through his promises, Jesus invites us to trust him. That's why the Revelation so often directs the faithful to the words of God. Jesus opens his book by blessing those who read and hear what he says and closes with a curse for those who add to or subtract from his Word. Jesus urged

**Seven keys that  
open the Revelation**





every member of the seven churches, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." There is no faithfulness without faith, and there is no faith without attention to God's Word.

### Faithfulness restored

The general state of Christianity in America today illustrates how departure from Jesus' Word leads to unfaithfulness. False teaching, immorality, and materialism infect churches that lay aside the Bible in favor of social gospel and success theology. Lutheran confirmands who neglect Bible study lose their trust in Jesus. They are without an anchor when the waves of tragedy strike them. In the face of death, the world's advice to hang on and try harder is of no value.

Weak and sinful, all hedge on confirmation promises. Yet Jesus calls them to return to his unbreakable promises. The heart of the Revelation is Jesus' appeal to come back to him. Again and again he calls the members of his churches to repent. To those who lose their confirmation day zeal, Jesus pleads, "Repent and do the things you did at first" (2:5). To those who get caught up in sexual sins, the Lord calls

out, "Repent therefore!" (2:16). For those whose faith is fading, Jesus sounds the alarm, "Wake up! . . . Remember, therefore what you have received and heard; obey it and repent" (3:3).

A poignant picture of Jesus' love for the lapsing is painted on the canvas of chapter 3:19,20. There we see him knocking at the door. Do we realize he is inviting the worldly and materialistic to return to him? His call to the lukewarm Laodiceans is also his plea for us to stay true to him in a money crazy world: "So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock."

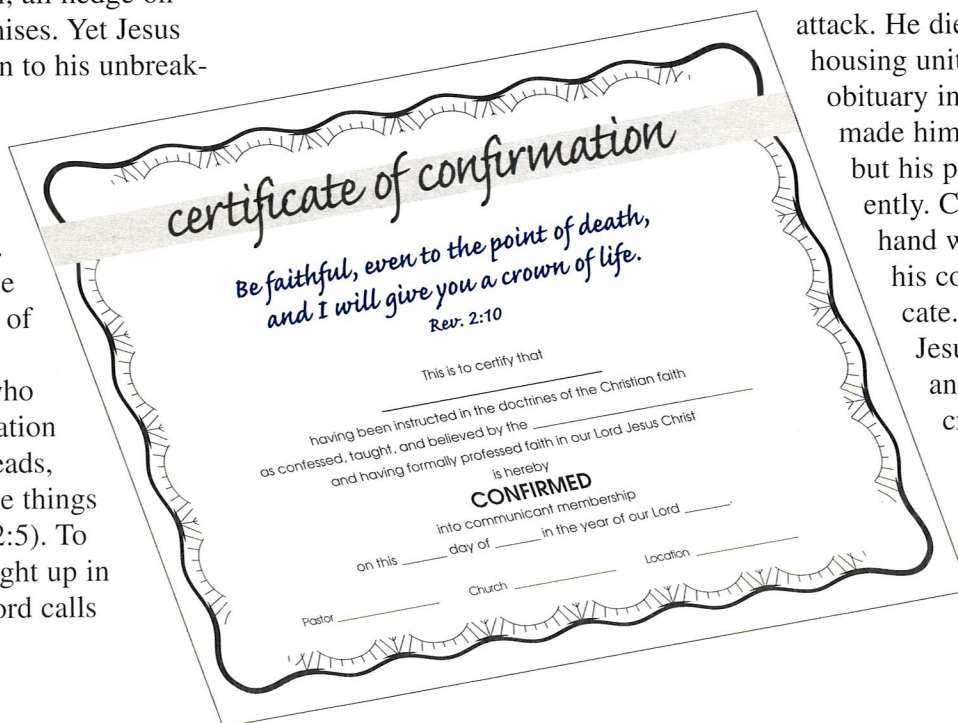
The last chapters of the Revelation depict terrible natural disasters (8:6-13) and personal plagues (9:3-21). God uses these to judge sin during the end times.

But even these judgments reveal our Lord's loving intent. Although most will ignore them, these events are God's final wake up call to sin-deadened hearts.

### Faithfulness rewarded

At our confirmation we vowed to take a long-range view of life. Christians face many enemies, "but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers" (17:14). The faithful keep their eyes on their final crown of life, heaven. There God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (21:4).

Ten months after he lost his family and his business, Don was stricken with a sudden heart attack. He died alone in a public housing unit. He was 43. His obituary in the newspaper made him sound like a loser, but his pastor knew differently. Clutched in Don's hand when he died was his confirmation certificate. Circled in red was Jesus' promise: ". . . and I will give you a crown of life."



NL

Wayne Mueller  
is administrator  
of WELS Parish  
Services.



*the millennium*



*the faithful*

Next: the urgency



# Lessons from death\*

What one man learned as he watched his father die.

Mark Krueger

On Jan. 1, 1995, at 6:30 AM the phone rang. My wife said, "He'll be right there." It was the hospital. My dad was going to die today.

Holidays were joyful in our family. At Thanksgiving, we gathered around card tables to enjoy the traditional turkey dinner and to make Christmas plans. We thought things would be the same as the last 10 years—Christmas Eve at my sister's and Christmas Day at my parents'. But, after dinner, we commented that Dad "didn't look too good."

**\* God makes his own schedule for us. We can plan, but he's in charge.**

The next day Dad and I went to the cemeteries to take pictures of gravestones (we shared a mutual interest in genealogy), and to place homemade evergreen boxes on our relatives' graves. This was the last time I would spend alone with him—except in his hospital room.

**\* Spend as much time with your parents as you can.**

At the Sunday Christmas song service, I saw my mom but not my dad. Something was wrong. Dad didn't feel well. "He'll go to the doctor after the holidays; you know how he

loves Christmas," explained Mom. He made it until Tuesday, when he drove to the medical clinic. The doctor saw him at 9:30 AM. By 10:30 he

Pastor Robert Fleischmann, director of WELS Lutherans for Life, offers some suggestions:

To determine where your health professionals stand on issues of life and death ask:

- How do you feel about the patient having the right to kill himself if his disease or illness is serious enough?
- How do you feel about physicians helping patients in such circumstances kill themselves?
- How do you feel about withholding or withdrawing a feeding tube if a patient has no hope of improving but the tube is only for sustaining his life?

Listen to the answers. If the physician positively accepts ideas of suicide or shows a willingness to stop feeding to end life, get a new physician.

*For information on life issues or to purchase a Christian medical-directive statement, contact WELS Lutherans for Life, 2949 N Mayfair Rd Ste 309, Milwaukee WI 53222-4304; 1-800-729-9535.*

was in a hospital bed. He couldn't get enough oxygen into his lungs.

I visited Dad. He was on constant oxygen. We talked about how quickly the doctor admitted him and how the doctor couldn't diagnose what was wrong. We had a mostly coherent conversation. His goal was to be home for Christmas. Later, I understood what he meant.

**\* God provides strength to his children in times of need.**

Dad's condition weakened day by day. The doctor needed to operate—or Dad would die. Dad said he was ready to die, and his faith would see him through.

The surgeon came that evening to assess Dad's condition. He doubted Dad could survive any major operation. I spent that night there, trying to help the nurses. He was on morphine, and an oxygen mask was strapped to his face. He hated that mask and tried to pull it off at any opportunity. When he did, he couldn't get enough oxygen and was delirious.

This was the toughest night of my life. I was there to help, but I couldn't control him. The nurses gave him larger doses of morphine, but he wouldn't calm down. Dad kicked and socked me in the face, and then tried to shoot me with his



hand. This was not my dad, but a stranger with his name.

Finally, I held that mask of life-giving oxygen off his face so he did not feel it on his skin. When I left late that night he was resting comfortably.

**\* When you're facing a tough situation, the Lord is with you.**

A call came early the next morning. Dad had a respiratory arrest and was placed on a respirator. He was finally resting due to the heavy medications and breathing machine. Tubes and machinery were everywhere. We still had no idea what was wrong. The surgeon suggested a procedure that would finally tell us. As we waited, we talked about what we should do over Christmas. It would be different this year—what if Dad died on the table?

When the surgeon came out, he asked: "Was your dad exposed to asbestos?" An inspector for Milwaukee, Dad was in charge of the demolition of houses for city expansion projects. For over 30 years, he had often been exposed to asbestos.

The doctor was sure the lab would confirm his findings—cancer caused by asbestos exposure. No hope. Dad's lungs were scarred, and this cancer would not respond to treatment. However, he had a strong heart and circulatory system because he pedaled 20 miles a day on a stationary bike. If the respirator kept doing its job, his heart would keep going.

The doctors asked if we should "pull the plug." With advice from

pastors, we decided not to do anything to physically end his life. We would let God show us his plan in his way.

**\* Look to your pastor for comfort, encouragement, and advice.**

The next 10 days we went to the hospital to hear the same report—strong heart, kidneys getting weaker, could be today or next week. Dad wasn't comatose, but was heavily sedated. He couldn't speak or open his eyes. For all earthly purposes, he was already dead. How I hated the sound of that respirator—that steady hissing noise and beat.

On Christmas Eve we celebrated the birth of a new life. But our family also thought about another life, not beginning in a manger, but ending in a hospital bed. The deterioration of his body continued for the next five days. I remember sitting in the hospital room humming "even so Lord quickly come."

The Lord came for Alvin Fred Krueger on New Year's Day, 1995. I arrived within 30 minutes after the nurse called. The doctor said his systems were shutting down and he would die within 12 hours. By noon he was pale yellow and his skin looked waxy. The wages of sin—death—were in front of my eyes. The nurses turned off the alarms on the machinery that monitored his vital signs, and pulled the curtain around the door. His heartbeat and blood pressure started to go down, and I could not stop

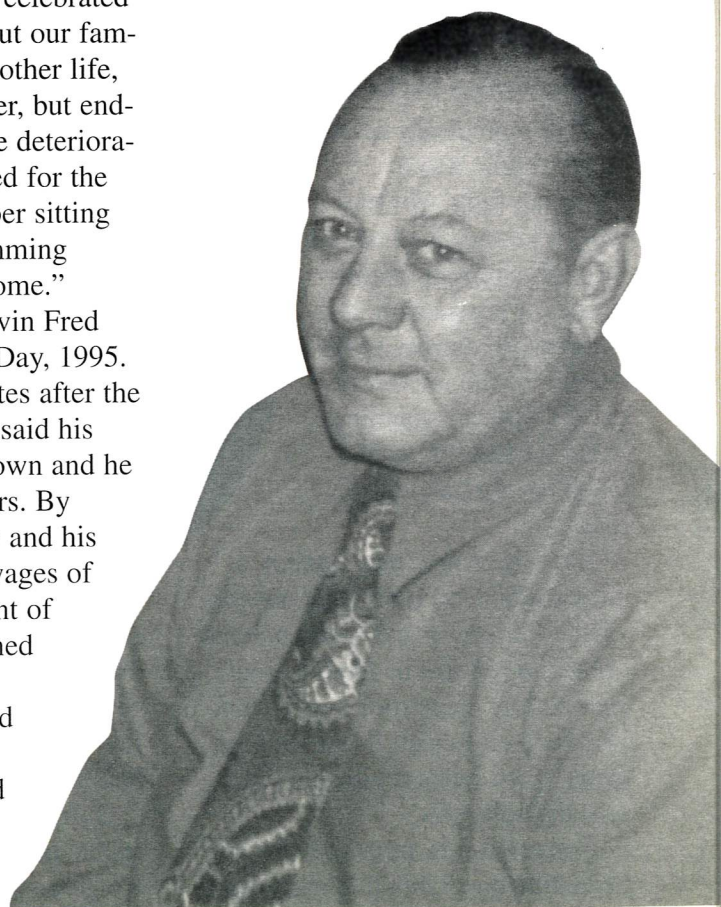
the inevitable.

I was holding his hand as the machines stopped registering any signs of life. In his last moments, he slightly opened his eyes. I tried to close them before I left. All the machinery was turned off. For the first time the room was quiet, and, for the first time, I cried. But I knew Dad was at the beginning of a truly happy "new year."

**\* Even as horrible as death is, it can't be victorious over Christ's sacrifice for us.**

*Mark Krueger is a member at Calvary, Milwaukee.*

NL

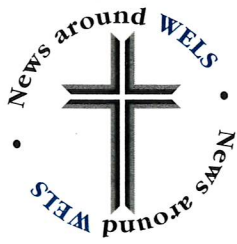


*Alvin Krueger in December 1971.*









# WELS churches serve communities with schools and evangelism

This report is last in a series that will bring you the results of the 1995 WELS congregational survey. Results from the pastors' survey will be in next month's issue.

## Is there a WELS elementary school available to children in your congregation?

Yes	40%
No	22%
DK/NR*	21%
No school-aged children	17%

### If yes, do you send them?

Yes	69%
No	23%
DK/NR*	8%

### Why do you send them?

Quality of education	24%
Like the teaching	19%
Environment	7%
Importance of discipline	3%
Quality of instructors	1%
DK/NR*	34%

### Why don't you send them?

Children too old	25%
Distance/too far away	21%
Cost	9%
Problems with teachers	2%
Quality of education	2%
DK/NR*	9%

## Is there a WELS high school available to children in your congregation?

Yes	48%
No	29%
DK/NR*	24%

### If yes, do you send them?

Yes	38%
No	48%
DK/NR*	14%

### Why do you send them?

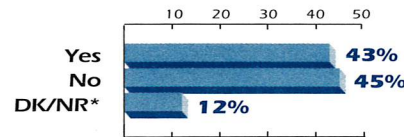
Quality of education	18%
Like the teaching	18%
Environment	8%
Importance of discipline	2%
Quality of instructors	.7%
DK/NR*	36%

### Why don't you send them?

Children too young	40%
Distance/too far away	21%
Children too old	13%
Cost	4%
Quality of education	.6%
DK/NR*	6%

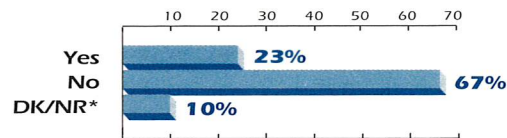
Where Lutheran elementary and secondary education is available, in general, it is seen as quality.

## Does your congregation regularly train people to share the faith?

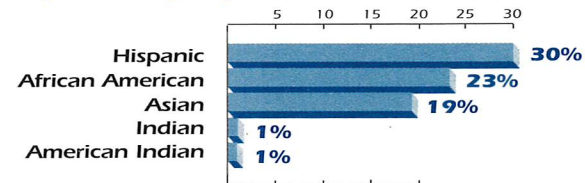


There is always room for more attention to personal evangelism.

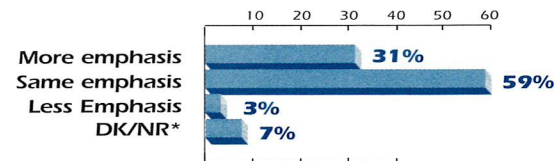
## Compared to 20 years ago, has your congregation's community significantly changed ethnically?



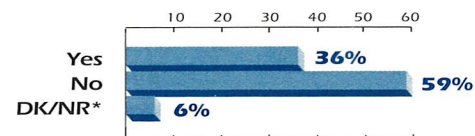
## If yes, what groups have increased significantly?



## How much emphasis should your congregation place in addressing the spiritual needs of other cultures?



## In the past have you invited someone from another race to listen to the Word of Jesus?



WELS congregations are experiencing ethnic changes in their communities at a significant rate. At the same time, two-thirds of them have not seen the trend in theirs. This area of ministry bears attention for the future.

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





## Congregations welcome Olympics visitors

Are you one of the many people coming to Atlanta for the Olympic Games? If you are, do you know what you can expect from your brothers and sisters in Christ once you get here?

We're getting ready for you to come. The seven WELS and ELS congregations in metro Atlanta have begun making preparations to extend some good old-fashioned southern hospitality to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We might not be able to provide everyone with lodging. However, we have some good alternatives. For example, at Resurrection, Kennesaw, Ga., we offer a place to park your

motor home, set up your trailer, or pitch a tent in a semi-rural setting that is ideal for camping.

The Atlanta congregations have also made information available. If you have access to the World Wide Web, we have a home page complete with maps, directions, and other links at <http://members.gnn.com/JAPoppe/ATLWELS.htm>.

A free directory is also available by writing John Meyer, 160 Chantilly Ln, Lawrenceville GA 30243.

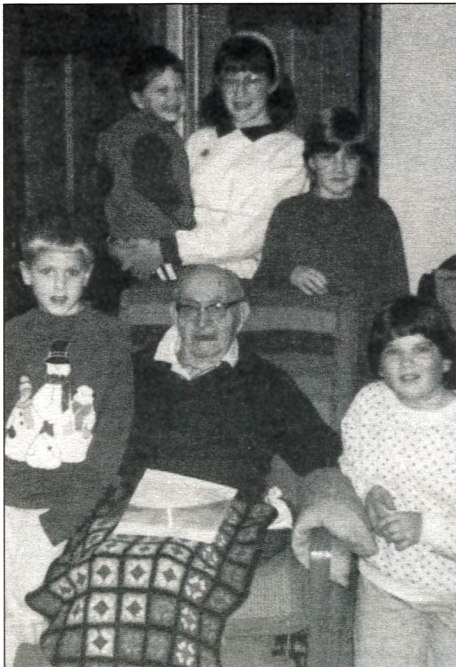
All of our congregations offer you a spiritual home away from home. Join in our fellowship—worship with us, pray with us, and feed on God's Word with us. We want you to be part

of our church family while you're here. You'll feel right at home.

The spirit of the early apostolic church was one of togetherness, sharing, love, and hospitality. We hope we can offer that same spirit of hospitality. We're happy to have you come and visit anytime.

So if you are coming to the Olympic games this summer, or if you happen to be coming through the area for some other reason, the welcome mat is always out, and the greeting is always there: "We bid you welcome in Jesus' name."

*Dan Schroeder*



Home-schooled children Karl, James, Naomi, Anna, and Laura Seidl are little missionaries. "They are consistent in their need and desire to share the gospel message," says Doris Schumann. "At Christmas and again at Easter they shared the good news with their elderly and shut-in friends." Pictured with Schumann's father, O.W. Jungkuntz, the children celebrated Jungkuntz's 103rd birthday by singing Lenten and Easter hymns. The Seidls are members at St. John, Jefferson, Wis.

## New missions publication coming



Missions. You give your money for them. You pray for them. But, you feel distant from them.

That's about to change.

*Mission Connection*, the new publication of home and world missions, will bring mission fields closer to you.

*Mission Connection* will connect you with world missions—their customs, lifestyles, and especially their mission work. You'll hear about new and existing home missions—their challenges and their joys. You'll also hear what other congregations are doing to share the gospel, and how you can get involved.

"We've taken all missions public relations materials and combined them into one publication," says Duane Tomhave, world missions administrator. "Instead of reaching a hundred or a thousand people with

separate newsletters, we can now reach hundreds of thousands with a unified effort."

Distributed free to all WELS congregations, the quarterly publication will also include information on Lutheran Women's Missionary Society and WELS Kingdom Workers.

David Timm, national executive director of WELS Kingdom Workers, says, "We believe *Mission Connection* will be a giant step forward for the WELS mission program—and for lay people interested in it. At last we will have a mission news publication that will reach every WELS congregation."

Look for the premiere issue in your church this summer. WELS missions—and your role in them—will be closer to you than ever before.



## District news

### Southeastern Wisconsin

**Zion Lutheran School, South Milwaukee**, moved to a bigger building in February. Calvary Academy, a school for in-crisis WELS children, purchased the old school. . . . **St. Paul, East Troy**, celebrated its 25th anniversary and dedicated its new activity center on May 19. By serving as its own general contractor, building designer, subcontractors, and manual laborers, the congregation saved over \$200,000.

### Western Wisconsin

**St. John, Waterloo, Wis.**, (on Parsonage Ln.) celebrated its 140th anniversary on April 14. Other anniversary Sundays, tying into missions and Christian education, are being planned.

### Arizona-California

In 1996, **San Juan, El Paso, Tex.**, is celebrating 30 years of outreach to Hispanics. . . . **Ascension, Escondido, Calif.**, opened a preschool with seven students on Jan. 8.

*Kenneth Pasch  
Hermann John*

### Pacific Northwest

On Nov. 5, 1995, **King of Kings, Kennewick, Wash.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary as a congregation and the 20th anniversary of its church building dedication.

*David Birsching*

### South Atlantic

A team of 10 students from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, spent their spring break in Florida with **Christ the King, Port Charlotte; Abiding Love, Cape Coral; Bethany, N. Ft. Myers; and Crown of Life, Ft. Meyers**. The students made follow-up calls and first-time canvass calls. This helped the congregations put into practice what they learned at the school of outreach in



The varsity competition cheerleaders from Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, were named Division I state champions at the Wisconsin State Cheerleading Competition. The squad earned several first-place titles throughout the season and completed its award-winning year with a trip to the National High School Cheerleading Championship in Orlando, Fla., in February.

February. . . . **Risen Savior, Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.**, moved into a new worship center, 3000 square feet in an office park, on Feb. 3. The next day they hosted the first attempt at a joint mission festival with **Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla.**, and **Living Word, Mobile, Ala.** Attendance was 70. . . . On Feb. 11, **Zion, Gainesville, Fla.**, celebrated a "ministry festival," expressing its appreciation for the gospel ministry . . . . **Lynn Wiedmann**, pastor at Zion, Gainesville, celebrated his 20th

anniversary in the ministry. . . . On Mar. 24, **Rock of Ages, Madison, Tenn.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary.

*Philip Wilde*

### Nebraska

On Mar. 24, **Gethsemane, Lee's Summit, Mo.**, dedicated its new chapel. . . . **St. Paul, Norfolk**, broke ground on Mar. 24 for a new addition to the church.

*Keith Petersen*

### North Atlantic

**Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Mass.**, opened up a child development center on Feb. 26. Seven children, ages three to five, are enrolled. Michele Leitzke and Lynette Rundgren are co-directors of the center. . . . On Feb. 10, **A.C.T.S., the youth group of Abiding Word, Orleans, Ontario**, served a "Couples' Valentine's Dinner" to adult members of their congregation. Seventeen couples attended the dinner that featured individual tables for couples, waiters, valet parking, music, and dancing.

*Kevin Schultz*

## IN THE NEWS

**Sandra Roebke**, teacher of grades 3-5 at St. John, Lomira, Wis., was included in the 1996 Who's Who among America's teachers. A former student nominated her. This is the second time Roebke has been selected for this honor.





## Congregation reaches 750 homes with the gospel in two hours

There was the occasional door-slammed-in-the-face, and only three prospective members were found, but the program was a success. The Lord's people did his work, and the gospel was shared.

In March, St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif., hosted Gospel Outreach '96. Their "West Coast Evangelism" program, developed by Pastor David Palmquist and Vicar James Strand, was designed to help Christians go door to door, presenting the gospel message to people in a clear and simple way.

For two months, the program was organized and promoted. Then 58 Christians from six WELS congregations in the Los Angeles area met to learn how to better share Jesus. After a one-hour training session, the evangelists drove to the target neighborhoods and shared their message. They offered free Bibles and asked people

for just 40 seconds to share the Bible's message with them. They then used passages printed on a flyer to explain the teachings of sin and grace.

With this method, the gospel was shared with 750 homes during those two hours.

*Stephan Archer*



Members from six congregations in the Los Angeles area gave away Bibles and shared the gospel with 750 homes in two hours. Member Stephan Archer expressed the "hope that our efforts will be duplicated not only here, but throughout the synod, because there are also people in your neighborhood who need to be told that our Savior is their Savior too."

## Conference offers a vision of worship

The National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts offers a vision—a vision of worship possibilities in WELS congregations.

"We want you to walk away saying 'There is so much potential for me to tap into resources that will enhance worship,'" said Bryan Gerlach, administrator for worship. "Then we want you to take those ideas home to your congregations, whether large and small, and use them."

The conference, held July 21-24 at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis., gives you a variety of opportunities to understand and explore this vision. Besides worship, fellowship, and recreation, you can attend workshops and presentations on:

- **Theology**—Explore how preaching, liturgy, and worship are related. Study the influence of the doctrine of justification on Lutheran worship. Sharpen your understanding of the sacramental dimension in worship.

- **Computer**—Discover electronic music and MIDI.

- **Music**—Sharpen your skills in singing, organ, handbells, or other instruments. Learn practical techniques, as a director or participant, that improve your church musical groups.

- **Art**—Discover how the visual arts—decorations and general worship space—impact worship.

- **Teaching**—Learn practical techniques to improve children's singing.

- **Youth**—Attend a humorous review of Lutheran worship.

- **General**—Understand how small congregations worship. Learn more about *Christian Worship: Manual*. Hear ideas about how worship and outreach are connected.

"Whether you're a member of a large or small congregation, a musician, or someone not musically gifted but still interested in enhancing your worship, you will not be bored," said Gerlach.

For more information, contact the Commission on Worship, 414/256-3278.





## rē · li' giōn

## Defining religion

**Sabbath:** Rest. God commanded his people in the Old Testament to observe the Sabbath or seventh day of the week by doing no work (Exodus 20:8-10) and remembering creation (Exodus 20:11) and the deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). This ceremonial law foreshadowed the spiritual rest the Savior would bring and no longer applies in the New Testament (Colossians 2:16,17).

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**One reader writes:**

I share my *Northwestern Lutheran* with my mom—she's hasn't been going to church. My son and I were baptized last year, and NL helps me learn more about God.

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## youth news

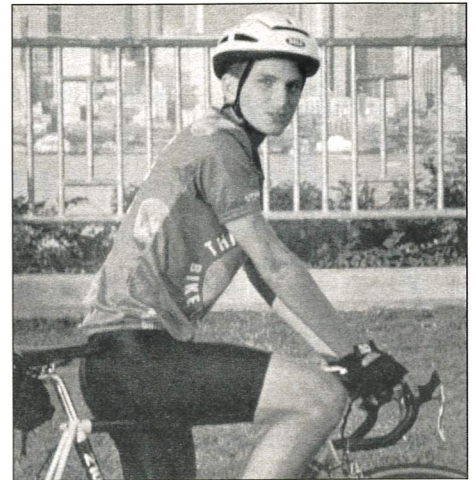
Please send photos or news on teen activities to: **youth news**, *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Eight **Luther Preparatory School** wrestlers went to the Wisconsin state wrestling tournament in February. Seven team members won medals. **Greg Pope** took second place in the state at 171 pounds. Out of the 25 teams that had qualified wrestlers for the tournament, the Phoenix, from Watertown, Wis., finished in eighth place.



**Rachel Aderman**, (seated) a sophomore at Bethany College, Mankato, Minn., teamed up with Jennifer Skala to win the championship in duo interpretation at the Minn. State Collegiate Speech tournament in March. They also competed in the Phi Rho Pi national tournament in April. Aderman is a member of Fairview, Milwaukee.

## An opportunity of Olympic proportions



While most of the world is gearing up for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, **Mark Grassell** is dreaming of Australia in the year 2000.

This Evergreen Lutheran High School student went to see a cycling race in Seattle last summer. Things haven't been the same since.

"He saw the Computrainer on the side of the road and just tried it out," says Mark's mom, Karen. (The computerized stationary bicycle measures average speed, pulse rate, calories burned, and leg power.) "He ended up with the highest national score in his age bracket."

Because of his surprising success, Mark, a member of Grace, Seattle, went to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs for additional testing. Although he won't compete in Atlanta, he is hoping to be part of the U.S. Olympic team in 2000.

Grassell's coach, John Roper, one of the top coaches in the nation, says Grassell has potential, but cautions, "It's kind of like Forrest Gump. All of a sudden there's this guy who comes along, blitzes through everybody and you're thinking, 'Get this guy a uniform.'"





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## Psalms available

The psalms from *Christian Worship* are now available in two booklets, *Psalms for Worship* and *Psalms for Worship: Organist's Edition*.

"We've had requests from congregations who don't use *Christian Worship*, but really love the psalms and want to use them," says Mark Brunner, marketing director for Northwestern Publishing House. "This also could be used for home and family devotions if the hymnal isn't available."

Quantity discounts are available. To order *Psalms for Worship* (stock no. 03N3014), contact Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

## Obituaries

### Werner H. Franzmann 1905-1996

Werner H. Franzmann was born Aug. 11, 1905 in Lake City, Minn. He died April 6, 1996 in Montello, Wis.

A 1929 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he tutored at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis. He served at Salem, Coloma, and Darlington, Ann Arbor, Mich. He was professor and dean of students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw.

Franzmann also served as the first full-time editor at Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee. He was editor of *Northwestern Lutheran* and initiated the production of *Meditations*. He wrote a commentary on the Old Testament and a two-volume commentary on the New Testament. Five of many hymns he wrote are included in *Christian Worship*.

He is survived by his children Elsa (Hance) Russell, Robert (Joan), David (Anita), Thomas (Jane), and Curtis; brothers Gerhard (Bernetta), and William; sister Helen Katt; brother-in-law Norbert (Lorraine) Mayer; 11 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

### Jerome L. Kruse 1933-1996

Jerome L. Kruse was born Sept. 10, 1933 in Fond du Lac, Wis., and died April 7, 1996 in New Ulm, Minn.

He served at St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich., and was a professor and coach at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw. He also served as professor and athletic director at Northwestern Prep and Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., and Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

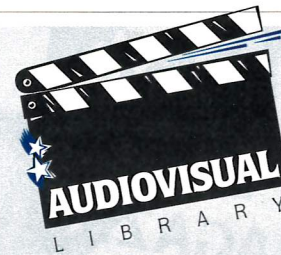
He is survived by wife Judith; sons Paul (Wanda) and Stephen (Deborah); and sister Shirley.

### Leonard J. Umnus 1903-1996

Leonard J. Umnus was born on April 18, 1903 in Menominee, Mich. He died April 13, 1996 in Watertown, Wis.

For 38 years, he served as athletic director and coach at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

He is survived by wife Emma; son David; daughter Mary (David) Sievert; grandchildren Susan, Daniel, John, Philip, Elizabeth, and Mark.



### What Really Happened To Dinosaurs? (Code 8268)—

1995, 54 min. color IJSCA (\$7.50) Kenneth Ham entertains grade school children with fascinating ideas about dinosaurs, how God created them and preserved them in the ark until they became extinct. Although the speaker held the attention of his young audience for an hour, it's better to show smaller segments to children.

**Get a Life** (Code 8306)—1996, 25 min. color JS (\$7.50) This fast-paced video offers guidelines for teenagers who are making big decisions about their future. The presenter should stop the video to allow for audience participation.

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





## Colorado churches face measure to strip tax exemption

Churches and other nonprofit organizations have long enjoyed exemption from property taxes, but Colorado voters could end that.

John Patrick Michael Murphy, a personal injury attorney, has collected nearly 90,000 signatures in support of a constitutional amendment that would force religious, philanthropic, and community organizations to pay taxes on land, buildings, and personal property.

However, religious and nonprofit groups that meet a public "duty" test would not lose tax-exempt status. The initiative is poorly constructed and inconsistent, says Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. For example, it would allow exemptions for church-based shelters that provide housing for abused spouses, but not for churches that provide free counseling to battered women.

"I don't think that we can allow the government, including the voters of the state of Colorado, to determine the mission of the church," says Lynn.

### rē · li' giōn

#### Defining religion

**baptize:** To wash or apply water. Jesus commanded us to baptize in the name of the Triune God (Matthew 28:19). Because God's Word is joined to the water in Christian baptism the Holy Spirit works through this sacrament to create faith (Titus 3:5-7). In baptism we have forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38,39), life (John 3:3-6), and salvation (1 Peter 3:21).

## Lost Luther manuscript returns to Germany

A rare, 80-page manuscript by Martin Luther was returned to the Museum of Cultural History, Magdeburg, Germany, by Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Mo., on Feb. 20.

The priceless document was placed in a German salt mine during World War II for protection from Allied bombing. In the confusion at the end of the war, the document was removed and later discovered in a nearby factory. It was given to Theodore Bornhoeft, a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod chaplain. In 1950 he mailed it to the Institute to be preserved until Magdeburg was no longer under Soviet domination.

"Wider Hans Wurst" (Against Hanswurst), written in 1541, is a

polemical writing on the papacy and the church. Daniel Preus, director of the Institute, acknowledged the manuscript does not contain "the strongest gospel emphasis" and its attacks on Luther's opponents "seem somewhat unrestrained" by contemporary standards. He added, "Luther's love for souls, his desire to comfort the flock, his constant, his tenacious wish to assure the sheep of Christ of God's unconditional promise of grace is as evident in this writing as in any other."

The transfer ceremony took place during the week that began observances in the U.S. and Germany of the 450th anniversary of Luther's death. (Concordia Historical Institute, Mar. 6, 1996)

## Orthodox population rises as communism falls

The world's Orthodox population is growing as a result of Christian revival in former communist countries and because of an increase in conversions among diaspora communities. Estimates of the total membership of Orthodox churches range from 200 million to 250 million.

A Bucharest Patriarchate spokesman, Michael Dida, said although his church obtained clear figures from a 1992 census, most

Orthodox communities had no system for registering members and had not compiled exact lists.

Dida said, "If people feel natural and comfortable with Orthodoxy, they are always welcome to join us. But unlike Lutherans, Anglicans, and other denominations, few Orthodox have gone out and actively attempted to extend the church abroad." (Ecumenical News International, Jan. 16)

## Pro-evolution teachers have job security in Tennessee

The Tennessee Senate defeated a bill in March that would have allowed school boards to fire teachers who told students that evolution is a fact.

The proposed bill would have allowed, but not required, the boards to fire teachers who were considered offenders. It was defeated 20-13.

Some politicians voiced concern about voters' interpretation of their stance on the issue. "I can't vote for this bill, but I don't want anybody to think I don't know God," said Lt. Gov. John Wilder, who presided over the discussion.





## Good news for "good news" music sales

Gospel music sales are growing faster than sales of other major forms of popular music, according to a study by the Gospel Music Association.



Between 1991 and 1995, gospel music averaged 22 percent growth per year. The Recording Institute Association of America showed other genres of music, such as rock, pop, urban, country, and rap, had annual growth rates of 5 percent or below.

Bruce Koblisch, Gospel Music Association president, attributes Christian music's sales growth to increased marketing techniques and the inspirational lyrics of the music. "The diversity of our styles of music has made it more accessible to more people," said Koblisch.

Sales of gospel music, which comprises about 3.3 percent of the entire music market, totaled \$390 million in 1994.

## In brief

- Age groups and denominations differ on assisted suicide. A national poll shows that **56 percent of voters age 18 to 34 are in favor of assisted suicide.** Yet, 55 percent of people 65 and older are against it. A majority of mainline Protestants support assisted suicide, while Baptists and Catholics generally are against it. Of regular church attenders, 65 percent oppose legalization while 70 percent of those who rarely attend or never attend are in favor of it. (*First Things*, Feb.)

## Born again Christians ignorant of faith

The majority of born again Christians (87%) indicate their religious beliefs are very important in their lives today. However, claiming religion's influence is significant doesn't necessarily translate into a personal faith consistent with biblical teaching. A new national survey of American adults by the Barna Research Group found eight in 10 (84%) born again Christians hold the non-biblical view on at least one of eight statements of biblical teaching, as follows:

- Eight in 10 (80%) born again Christians agree with the statement, "the Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves."
- Half (49%) agree that "the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but a symbol of evil."
- By definition, all born again Christians believe they, personally, will go to heaven because they "have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior." However, four in 10 (39%) of them also maintain that "if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven."
- Three in 10 (30%) claim that "Jesus Christ was a great teacher,

but he did not come back to physical life after he was crucified."

- Twenty-nine percent contend that "when he lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins, like other people."
  - The same percentage (29%) assert that "there are some crimes, sins, or other things which people might do which cannot be forgiven by God."
  - One quarter (26%) disagree that "[they], personally, have a responsibility to tell other people [their] religious beliefs."
  - Fifteen percent disagree that "the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings."
- Barna defines "born again Christians" as individuals who say they have "made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in [their] life today" and who chose one of seven alternatives posed regarding life after death. That alternative reads "when you die you will go to heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as [your] Savior."

Respondents were not asked to categorize themselves as "born again." (Barna Research Group, Mar. 18)

- **To try to stop the spread of legal gambling in the U.S., the liberal National Council of Churches and the conservative Christian Coalition will form an anti-gambling coalition.** Some form of gambling is legal in all but two states—Utah and Hawaii. In 1992, some \$329 billion was legally wagered in the nation, according to proponents and opponents of legalized gambling. Between 1989 and 1994, 19 states legalized video slot or poker machines at race-tracks and bars.

- **Americans express one-sided certainty in the existence of sin.** More than seven in 10 Americans disagree strongly with the statement "people may make mistakes, but there is no such thing as sin." This figure represents a 14-point jump from 1992 when only 57 percent of Americans expressed disagreement to the same assertion. (Barna Research Group, Mar. 18)



# 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:

**Bartz, James S.**, from Zion, Kiel, Wis., to North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Panning, Armin J.**, to WLS, Mequon, Wis.

**Rodewald, Duane A.**, from St. Paul, Tomah, Wis., to MLS, Saginaw, Mich.

**Rosenberg, Mark H.**, to Redeemer, Scottville, Mich.

**Schultz, Roger W.**, to New Hope, Racine/Abiding Word, Somers, Wis.

**Strong, Dennis K.**, from Zion, Allenton, Wis., to Salem, Loretto, Minn.

**Waage, David W.**, from St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis., to WELS gift planning counselor, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Ziemer, Paul C.**, from Our Savior, Phillips, Wis., to Christ the Redeemer, exp., Greensboro, N.C.

### Teachers:

**Bauer, Karl G.**, from Trinity, Jenera, Ohio, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.

**Bintz, Bruce M.**, from Salem, Milwaukee, Wis., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Buchberger, Beth A.**, from Good Shepherd, Benton Harbor, Mich., to Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.

**Butzow, Michael L.**, from Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.

**Degner, Linda S.**, from St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.

**Fredrich, Jennifer A.**, from Zion, Egg Harbor, Wis., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.

**Jacobs, Tania R.**, from St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb., to St. Andrew, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Janetzke, Karen M.**, to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.

**Kanter, John H.**, from St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis., to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

**Leyrer, Beth E.**, to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.

**Mateske, Gail A.**, from St. John, Waterloo, Wis., to St. John, Waterloo-7SE, Wis.

**Myers, Michelle A.**, from Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis., to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.

**Neubauer, Carol A.**, from St. Paul, Mt. Calvary, Wis., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.

**Pappenfuss, Paul E.**, from Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis., to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.

**Paschke, Timothy D.**, to North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Rebers, Robert R.**, from Immanuel, Sault Ste Marie, Mich., to Grace, Falls Church, Va.

**Rittierodt, Susan**, to First, Lake Geneva, Wis.

**Roth, Donna M.**, to Grace, Yakima, Wash.

**Schaefer, Wendy**, to Zion, Denver, Colo.

**Schmill, Renee M.**, from Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis., to Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis.

**Schramm, Bonnie L.**, to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.

**Seidl, Ellen C.**, to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.

**Snamiska, Paul W.**, from Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis., to WELS Lutherans for Life, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Spiess, Lenette A.**, to Christ, Eagle River, Wis.

**Stuebs, Carol E.**, to Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.

**Timm, Lyle W.**, from Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.

**Treuden, Dorothy**, to St. John, Lannon, Wis.

**Walz, Jason D.**, from St. Martin, Watertown, S.D., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Martin Luther College Board of Control asks voting members of the synod to submit nominees for two positions: 1—Athletic director, head basketball coach, and developmental math instructor. 2—Professor in science, especially the field of biology.

Submit nominees plus pertinent information by June 20 to Philip Leyrer, secretary, 3209 Nightingale Ln, Middleton WI 53562.

### AVAILABLE

**Church items**—Paraments for altar and pulpit; baptismal font. Available to mission congregation. St. Peter, 3461 Merle Ave, Modesto CA 95355; 209/551-0563.

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

**Chimes**—Maas-Rowe Cathedral chimes. \$2,000. Pastor Charles Illes Sr., 414/648-5205.

### ANNIVERSARIES

**Spokane, Wash.**—St. Matthew school (25). June 9. Graduation service, 9 AM; meal and country fair/carnival following. 509/325-8195 or 509/327-5601.

**Mauston, Wis.**—St. Paul (100). June 23—confirmation reunion. Services, 7:45 AM and 10:30 AM; lunch and program, noon. 517 Grayside Ave, Mauston WI 53948; 608/847-4108.

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

**Elkhorn, Wis.**—First (125). June 2—Christian education, 10 AM service; 414/723-4191.

**Colome, S.D.**—St. Paul (75). June 9. Services, 10:30 AM and 1:30 PM; lunch in between services. PO Box 113, Colome SD 57528; 605/842-1523.

**Buffalo, Wis.**—Buffalo Lutheran School Association (25). June 9. Service, 10:30 AM; lunch, noon; program following. Christ, 401 S Main St, Cochrane WI. David Schams, S2151 County Rd N, Alma WI 54610; 608/248-2534.

**River Falls, Wis.**—Faith (25). June 23. Service, 10:30 AM; meal, 12:15 PM; program, 2 PM. 545 N Apollo Rd, River Falls WI 54022; 715/425-0023.

### NEEDED

**Hymnals**—*The Lutheran Hymnal*. Need 100 red copies. Redeemer (LCMS), 1000 Pioneer Rd, Delta CO 81416; 970/874-3052; FAX 970/874-3596.

**Vacationing pastors**—Preach June 30 and July 7, at Zion, Springfield, and Peace, Marshfield, Mo., in exchange for lodging and easy access to southwest Missouri. Pastor Edwin Lehmann, 417/887-0886.

## COMING EVENTS

### 1996 district conventions—

A-C, June 17-19, 714/534-5617

D-M, June 11-13, 605/845-3704

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WW, June 2-4, 715/834-2595

### Luther Vanguard of Wisconsin 1996 performance schedule—

June 8—Appleton, Wis., 2 PM; Menasha, Wis., 7 PM

June 9—Jackson, Wis., noon

June 15—Waupun, Wis., 1:30 PM

June 16—Chilton, Wis., 11 AM

June 22—Sun Prairie, Wis., 2 PM

June 23—Oregon, Wis., 12:30 PM

June 29—Rogers-Hassan, Minn., noon

June 30—Alexandria, Minn., 1:30 PM

July 6—Whitewater, Wis., 10 AM

July 7—East Troy, Wis., 1 PM

July 11—Traverse City, Mich., 7 PM

July 13—Traverse City, Mich., 10:45 AM

Contact Bill Behm, W1103 Cty Trk AH, Lomira WI 53048; 414/269-4729.

**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 office, 414/321-6212.

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

**OWLS European tour**—A tour of the Luther lands. Sept. 16-30. Contact H. Kaesmeyer, 3317 Kipling Dr, Saginaw MI 48602; 517/793-1020 or the tour company at 1-800-658-2551.

**LWMS retreat**—Sept. 20-22. Winter Park, Colo. \$65. Registration deadline: Aug. 1. Marilyn Hoy, 2305 N Charma Ave, Loveland CO 80538; 970/669-0258.

### NAMES WANTED

**NW District Institutional Ministry**—Serves the following cities: Waupun, Fond du Lac, Plymouth, Oshkosh, Winnebago, Appleton, Oneida, Green Bay, and Oxford. Refer inmate or patient names to David Tetzlaiff, 22 N Park Ave, Fond du Lac WI 54935; 414/925-5525.

**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.

### SERVICE TIMES

**Branson, Mo.**—Coming south for vacation? Join us in worship at Zion, Springfield. Change in the Sunday worship time from 9:30 to 9 AM. Peace, Marshfield worship time is 11:30 AM. Pastor Edwin Lehmann, 417/887-0886.



# Country club Christianity

Rolfe F. Westendorf

Churches are something like country clubs. Members enjoy doing certain things, and the church tries to accommodate them. It offers a choir for those who like to sing, handbells for those who like to ring, potlucks for those who like to eat, Bible classes for those who like to learn, church services for those who like to worship, and golf outings for those who like to play golf.

But churches do not provide luxury accommodations like country clubs, unless you count air conditioning, padded pews, stained glass, and million-dollar pipe organs. Some churches even have a fireside lounge, where members can study the Bible from the comfort of overstuffed furniture.

Yes, the church does many of the same things a country club does. It's not necessarily wrong to do so, but it can open the door to temptations wide enough for the devil to drive a golf cart through.

The flesh is not interested in spiritual instruction, but it will put up with Bible teaching in exchange for a convenient church. A plain sermon can be endured—if it doesn't go beyond its allotted 15 minutes. The warnings of God's law are quickly forgotten in the company of old friends. Even the expense of offerings can be endured as long as no one pushes too hard about "sacrificial giving."

The danger is the Christian congregation might become a place to entertain and be entertained, instead of a place to hear God's Word and honor him in worship and service.

What are the warning signs? Members of a country club church get upset when their comfort level is disturbed by unfamiliar hymns, liturgy, or people. They pay more attention to the temperature than to the sincerity of their confession and praise. They don't take kindly to outsiders. And if interracial tensions are a burden, they'll find another country club where they won't be bothered with such "inconveniences."

This can happen even when the discontented are not, strictly speaking, hypocrites. They believe in Jesus, their Savior. They just don't see why they should put up with "irritations" when they come to worship.

The early Christians did not expect a country club. They could expect persecution instead of padded pews. But they found a comfort not found in their pagan world, the comfort of peace with God; a joy they had not known at athletic contests, the joy of anticipating eternal life; a fellowship they had not experienced with their drinking buddies, the fellowship of those who know they are loved by God.

Those churches were not Christian country clubs. Our churches don't have to be either, when we find our comfort in the good news of forgiven sins, and "entertain" ourselves with activities that bring God's blessings to each other.

It's not wrong to enjoy our favorite hymns, as long as the joy comes from the message, not just from the melody. Golf outings and a fireside lounge may be ways of reaching people who otherwise would not be caught dead in church. Air conditioning does not necessarily produce lukewarm Christians.

Your church can have comforts, as long as you know it is not the church's mission to make members physically comfortable.

*Rolfe Westendorf is pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*



# The two shall be one

Karl R. Gurgel

June brides used to be more common than they are today. Still, June and brides go well together. With this in mind, it's a good time for us to review the blessings of a Christian marriage.

Paul wrote, quoting Genesis 2:24, "the two will become one flesh." In heart, mind, and body, two individuals become one. God designed this marvelous reality to bring two people into one complete package of compatibility, comfort, and confidence.

The idea of two becoming one signals something more, however, something unseen by the human eye, unknown to the natural mind, and unfelt by the human heart. God inspired Paul to say the two becoming one in marriage was a shadow of the greater original, the oneness of Christ and his church.

But how is it these two, Christ and his church, should be linked as one? Christ's bride, his church, you and me, were more unlovable than any human bride or groom could ever be. Filthy dirty with sin's stain, we should have been completely unattractive to the heavenly bridegroom.

Still, he chose us. More than that, he chose to wash us clean from our impurity. He chose, with the sacrifice of his blood, to make us radiant—without stain, wrinkle, or blemish. He has pardoned us, making the red guilt of our sin snow white in his sight. He regards us as pure and innocent.

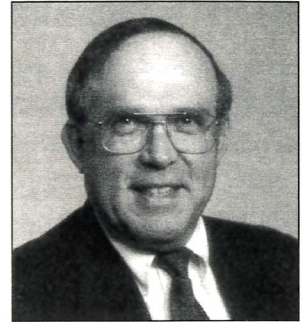
Consequently, his bride, all who in faith cling to the innocence of Jesus, is one with Christ and part of the family of God.

One blessing God may give those he has joined in marriage is a family: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. What a special bond! Even if likes and dislikes, goals and ambitions are not all the same, hardly a stronger tie binds people together than family.

If God intended the blessing of family ties in joining two as one in marriage, what about God's family of believers, the church? We cannot possibly know who they all are. Faith in Jesus makes a person a member of God's family. Faith is a matter of the heart, unseen by human eyes. However, God has promised to create faith by his Spirit wherever his Word is being used. So where people gather around the Word with us and our earthly families, where God is busy creating his family, isn't that our family, too?

It is—a family that God through the hearing of his Word has joined as one. He's taken us, our immediate family, maybe a relative or two, neighbors, friends, and many we don't know, and—together with our called workers—made us into a family of believers.

You treasure your earthly family and well you should. For God made the two of you one, giving you a family. Ought we not treasure the church family he has given us? He has taken any two of us and, by faith, joined us as one, making us a family. Paul said it, God still does it, "the two shall be one."



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

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*God has taken any two of us and, by faith, joined us as one, making us a family.*

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# Being content with what you have

You don't need a lot of money and things to fulfill God's purpose. You can face every situation knowing God is there to give you strength.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

During the early 1900s, most Americans lived modest lives economically. Many occupied small farms that barely supported their families. Others had low-paying factory jobs.

But post-war industrialization and the outbreak of materialism greeted the second half of the 1900s. In 1929 the average disposable income for one family was \$4,550. In 1994 it was \$13,716. From 1970 to 1993 the percentage of the population earning over \$75,000 doubled.

## More money breeds more discontentment

Many are or want to be rich. The consensus is that unless you get rich you aren't successful, you can't be happy, and you won't amount to much. Some will do anything—work three jobs, practice fraud, play the lottery, dive into the market, sue someone, or consult a psychic—to get rich.

You are bombarded with messages to buy something. Hour-long TV programs are devoted to advertising. Big-league baseball parks and sporting arenas have changeable advertising signs. City buses have become moving billboards. You can't get away from it.

The purpose is to make you discontented with what you have so you buy more. Advertising leads to greed, and greed is sin. So what happened to the old-fashioned idea of being content with who you are, what you do, where you live, and what you have?

The writer to the Hebrews reminds you of another good old godly guideline, **“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have”** (Hebrews 13:5). This doesn't prevent you from striving to get ahead or having more things. Indeed, the more you have, the more you can give to others and the Lord. But the passage does warn against the love of money and things that lead to discontentment.

## More of God makes more content

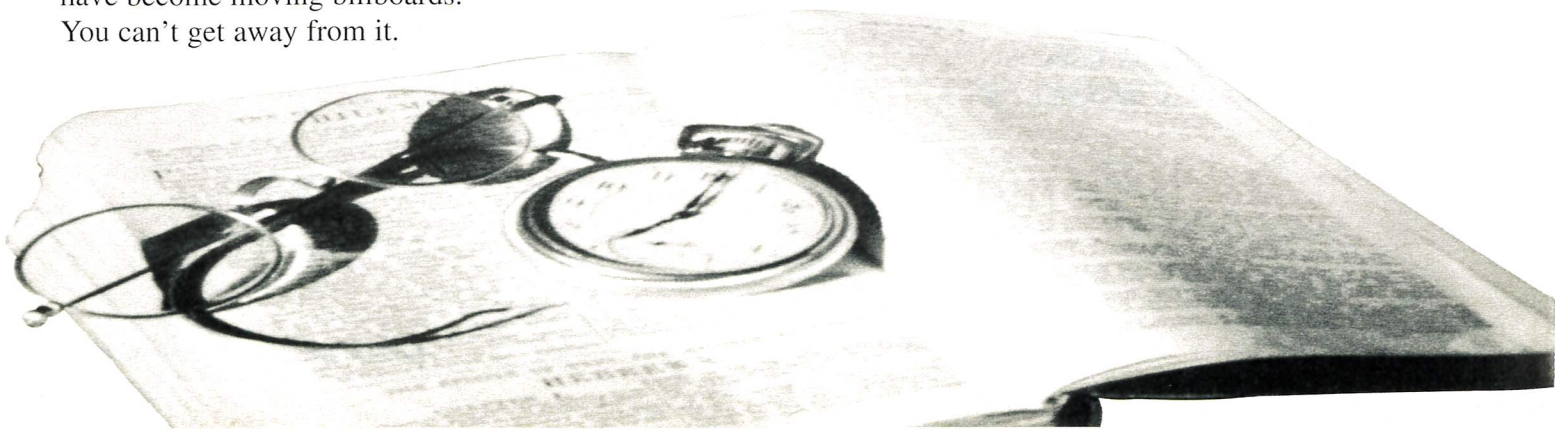
That's because contentment and faith are two sides of the same coin. Paul wrote, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12,13).

You don't need a lot of money and things to fulfill God's purpose. You can face every situation knowing God is there to give you strength. Indeed, riches often work against faith: “Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Being content with what you have is an expression of faith in God's providential care. For “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’ ” (Hebrews 13:5,6).

God is never going to leave you. He will never cease loving you. He will never make you so destitute of support and comfort that you plunge into the depths of despair. He will remain an active part of your life. He will guide you back when you err. He will protect you from evil and preserve you in faith. Trust in the Lord for everything you need for body and soul, and be content. That's an old-fashioned idea still taught in the Bible today.

*Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.*





# The lost art of meditation

Victor H. Prange

For Martin Luther, meditation was a habit to be earnestly cultivated. It was an integral part of his life as a Christian, something he could not do without. And he urged others to practice this art.

Luther maintained that the essential ingredients for the study of God's Word are found in the triad from Psalm 119: "prayer, meditation, and trial." He described meditation as "repeating and comparing the actual, literal words in the book, reading and rereading them with careful attention and thought as to what the Holy Spirit means by them."

He warned against the neglect of meditation: "Guard against being satiated or thinking that when you have read, heard, or said it once or twice, you understand it fully."

Luther practiced what he preached. In his *Large Catechism* he wrote: "Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily."

Are Christians today following the advice and example of this great man of faith? Or has meditation become a lost art?

Many things in our modern world conspire against meditation. First is television. It's difficult to practice meditation while watching television. The visual images keep flashing past with little time for reflection.

Television is only part of the media glut that has hit us. Years ago a Christian with only a few books (often religious) would more likely read and reread them. This

promoted the art of meditation. But now we are flooded with reading materials, plus the opportunity to surf for hours on the Internet. One can't begin to keep up with everything that is being written, let alone read again what is classic.

Add to this the human craving for newness, for what is different. Many are tempted to discard the familiar as too ordinary. The sentiment of William Cowper (expressed back in 1785) is affirmed: "Variety's the very spice of life/That gives it all its flavor."

This fondness for variety shows itself also in the proposal that constant change in the words we use in worship will enhance spiritual meaning and prevent boredom.

In fact repeating an order of service Sunday after Sunday may have the effect of fostering the art of meditation. As we sing and speak familiar words, we have the opportunity to roll these thoughts over in our minds. One Sunday it might be one word or phrase that catches our attention; the next week it will be another. At every stage in life, the Holy Spirit guides the believer into a new understanding of and deeper appreciation for what one hears and says and sings.

People regularly complain about being too busy. Martin Luther would understand. He was often overwhelmed with his labors. Yet because he was so busy, Luther said he needed more time for prayer and meditation. It is an art well worth retrieving.

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

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# Wedding service participants

John F. Brug

*Can a person not in fellowship with WELS play the organ at a church wedding before the bride comes in and after the bridal group goes out? Otherwise, a WELS member plays.*

What happens in a church wedding? The Word of God is proclaimed, we pray, we praise God, and people declare they intend to obey God's will. A church wedding is, therefore, no different from any other worship service, except God's Word and our worship are applied directly to the marriage of two people.

Scripture teaches us only people who agree with the church's teachings should lead its services. Wouldn't it be strange if we invited someone who did not agree with our beliefs to speak a message from God's Word to us? Wouldn't it be just as strange to invite that person to sing such a message from God's Word or to remind us of such a message by playing the melodies that bring it to our minds? For this reason, our regular practice is that we do not permit persons from outside our fellowship to serve as organists and soloists during services of our church.

In the practice you describe, the participants apparently believe the non-member is not playing during the service, but only before and after it, so no principles of fellowship are being violated. This practice seems dubious for the following

reasons. Is it valid to claim the music before and after the service is not part of the worship? If the music has been well-chosen, the organist has begun our worship of God, even before any members of the wedding party have entered the church.

In addition, such a practice can give the impression we are more concerned to uphold the letter of an arbitrary law than we are to fulfill the evangelical purpose of our fellowship practice.

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*Patient discussion, based on the principles of Scripture, is the best way to reach agreement on a sound, evangelical practice.*

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The pastor needs to discuss with the couple their reason for wanting a non-WELS organist to play. Do they want music that is more difficult than the church's organist can handle? If so, the pastor should try to show them their wedding service will be a more beautiful testimony to their faith if they gladly use the talents of a member of our own spiritual family than if they feel the need to bring in someone from outside. If the reason for including non-members is not musical quality, but personal friendship, we must ask: Is it really love for friends and family to let them think the doctri-

nal differences that divide us are not harmful and practicing the biblical principles of church fellowship is a burden we seek to evade?

When pastors give careful, loving, and on-going instruction about the biblical principles of church fellowship, it is less likely these problems will have to be dealt with at emotional occasions such as weddings and funerals, when there is great pressure to compromise to avoid conflict. It must be granted, however, that our principles and practices of fellowship will remain offensive to many people, just as many other parts of God's Word are.

Your letter does not specify whether you think your congregation's practice is too lax or too strict. Regardless of which is the case, talk to the pastor and leaders of the congregation about your concerns. Listen carefully to their explanations so you're sure you have correctly understood the situation and their reason for the course they've adopted. Patient discussion, based on the principles of Scripture, is the best way to reach agreement on a sound, evangelical practice.

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

**Send questions to  
Your question, please,  
Northwestern Lutheran,  
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**In "No schmaltz needed" [Mar.], writer Cherney did a good job of pointing out that maudlin sentimentality is an improper base upon which to build our faith. I wish he would have balanced that with an understanding of the role of emotion in our faith.**

The account of Jesus' suffering and death may be told with "barest details," but certainly not in an "almost offhanded way." The impact can be felt by taking in the tirades of those who wanted our Savior dead, and in Jesus' cry to his Father. God's love is servant-action, but it also reveals how deeply he feels about us.

In our fear of emotionalism, let's not throw out the real emotions present at Calvary—and present in the hearts of everyone who loves Jesus. There is more to this—the excitement of Easter, people running to the scene, running to tell people. Pastor Cherney does a good job of reflecting the joyfully emotional faith that lives in Easter's afterglow.

*John P. Huebner  
Elkridge, Maryland*

**What a refreshing perspective—Lutheran education is for "equipping the saints" to "stand firm in the face of society's challenges" as Laurie Biedenbender explains in "Christian education: it doesn't cost—it pays" [Mar.]. I have no doubt God's Word can make Christians of unbelieving children, but evangelism is not the primary purpose of Lutheran education.**

I have heard people justify the expense for their school by calling

it "our evangelism outreach." The school's primary purpose is to educate not evangelize. Others may want Lutheran education for their children too (and we should be ready to accommodate them), but "equipping the saints" must be our foremost reason for maintaining Lutheran schools.

*William Heine  
Stony Plain, Alberta, Canada*

**Thank you for the March issue of NL.** I was happy to read about Allan Hess' class of science and the Bible for the people of Akademgorodok, Russia. It is also encouraging to hear that Russian communism has officially abandoned atheism.

I am glad that Paul Boehlke could attend a national science workshop that will help Martin Luther College evaluate its science curriculum and ask, "What do our future pastors and teachers need to know?"

When I read that the first of 16 studies in "His Word—My Life" will be on Genesis, I am hopeful that its pages will reflect a proper natural history. With provision made for "extra resources," this course could stay up-to-date in any science matters.

Finally, I note minimal Lutheran church attendance in Germany. A longer news article would have identified a major reason for lack of interest: no true gospel preaching where rationalism holds sway. Let this teach us to do our best with teaching, including the teaching of science in our schools.

*Gerhold Lemke  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

## rē·li'giōn

### Defining religion

**Enoch:** An exemplary believer who lived before the Genesis flood. He was taken directly to heaven by God without experiencing death (Genesis 5:21-24). Enoch was also the father of Methuselah, the oldest human being mentioned in the Bible.

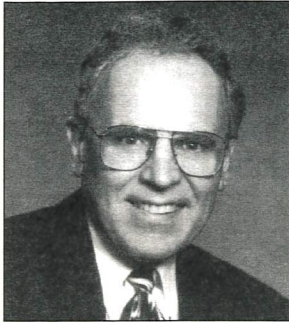
## Through my Bible in 3 years

### June 1996

1.  1 Samuel 4:1b-22
2.  1 Sam. 5:1-7:2
3.  1 Sam. 7:3-8:22
4.  1 Sam. 9:1-10:16
5.  1 Sam. 10:17-11:15
6.  1 Sam. 12
7.  1 Sam. 13
8.  1 Sam. 14
9.  1 Sam. 15
10.  1 Sam. 16
11.  1 Sam. 17:1-54
12.  1 Sam. 17:55-19:24
13.  1 Sam. 20:1-21:9
14.  1 Sam. 21:10-22:23
15.  1 Sam. 23, 24
16.  1 Sam. 25, 26
17.  1 Sam. 27, 28
18.  1 Sam. 29, 30
19.  1 Sam. 31
20.  Ephesians 1:1-14
21.  Eph. 1:15-23
22.  Eph. 2
23.  Eph. 3
24.  Eph. 4:1-5:2
25.  Eph. 5:3-6:9
26.  Eph. 6:10-24
27.  Job 1-3
28.  Job 4, 5
29.  Job 6, 7
30.  Job 8:1-9:24
31.  Job 9:25-10:22



# A prayer for you in your success



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

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*Health is good,  
income is steady,  
friends are true.  
The sun shines  
on your life. You  
want for nothing.  
Do you seek God's  
help then—  
not to mention,  
thank him?*

---

Troubled?  
Pray!

I'll pray with you. I'll pray for you.

Haven't you said to others as you met them in their suffering: "You're in my prayers"?

Haven't you begged in moments of abject helplessness: "God, help me!"?

People who seldom remember to pray at other times seldom forget in the hospital emergency room.

What an indescribable advantage, that our God invites us: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you. . . ." (Psalm 50:15)!

I usually don't write with exclamation marks, but prayer is that amazing, as Paul Wendland reminds us in his series on prayer. I'm not here either to tell you what he can say better than I.

I'm thinking about the events that stir us to pray (not to be confused with faith that is at the basis of all true prayer) and, more to the point, events not so stirring. What about when things are going along just fine? Health is good, income is steady, friends are true. The sun shines on your life. You want for nothing. Do you seek God's help then—not to mention, thank him?

In God's Proverbs (30:8,9), Agur son of Jakeh offers insights on the "problem" of having things go "too well." He asks God, "Give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?'"

My prayer in time of trouble is constant and includes you in your trouble. May God deliver us as he promised. And may we always see heaven with Christ as the final deliverance.

But now let me pray in our times of success. Please join me:

† Gracious Father, many of us have riches and blessings beyond the dreams of most people on this earth.

† Help us, O God, in our prosperity. Teach us to think of it not as our due but as your legacy to us. Move us to use it in ways unselfish and pleasing to you—especially to help spread your gospel and to help others less fortunate than we.

† Help us, O God, not to grow self-satisfied and self-indulgent in our success. Let us see ever more clearly that without you we are nothing and have nothing of real worth.

† Teach us, O God, to wear our successes with true humility. Not a show of piety that makes us proud to be humble, but an acute awareness of how unworthy we are to be so blessed.

† Make us content, O God, with the basics to sustain our lives and with your eternal love, that we do not forget you now or curse you should we lose all else.

† Turn us, O God, from measuring the value of our lives by the size of our possessions and the power of our positions. Keep us from burying ourselves in our work to the neglect of our duties as friend, church member, neighbor, parent, spouse.

† Forgive us, dear Savior, our endless failings. Thank you for your unfailing forgiveness. In all we have and all we do, may your name be glorified. In Jesus, we pray.

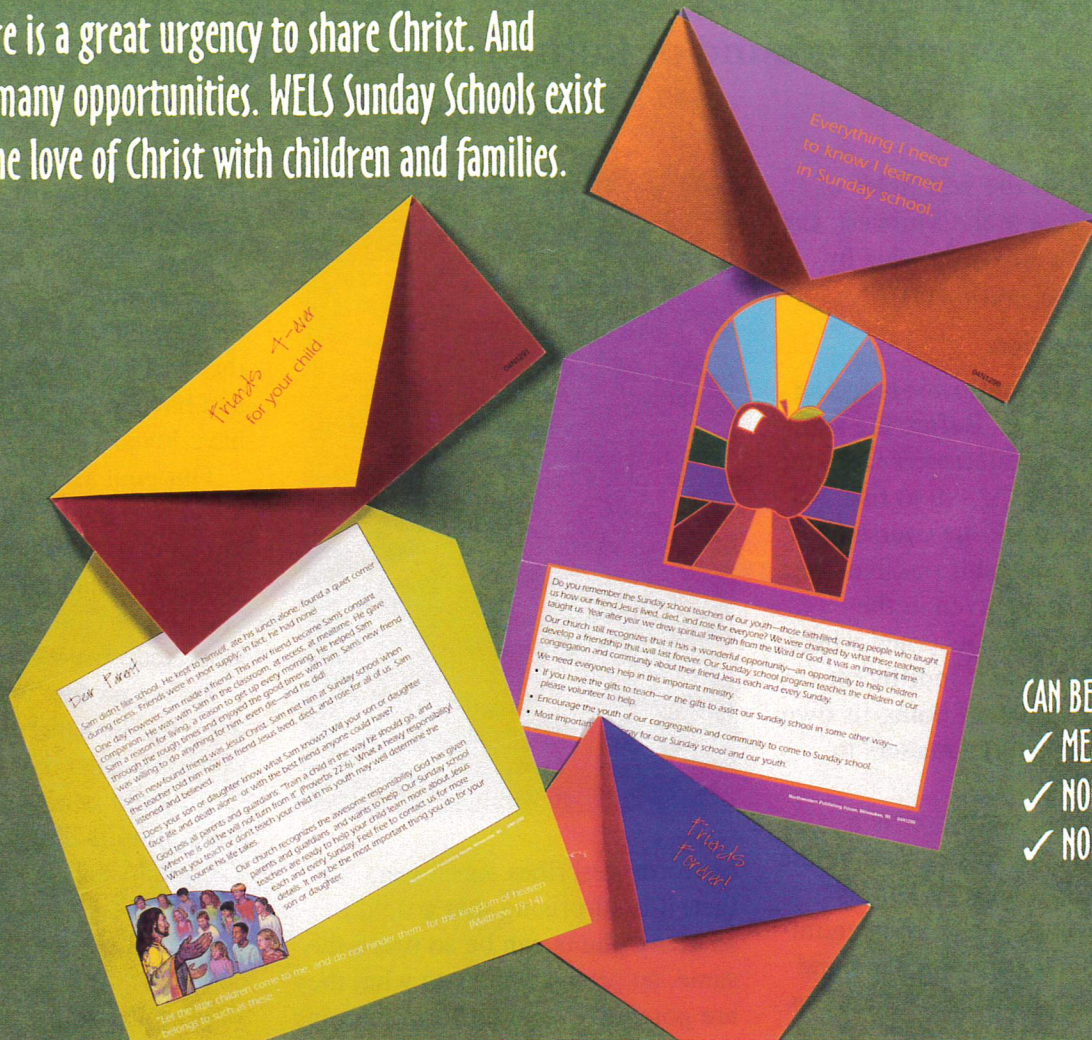
*Gary P. Bauml*



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# Smelling the sunflowers?

The Christian church God envisioned is like a field of sunflowers—one common ground of faith, one need, one Son of God.

Eric S. Hartzell

Go to one of the vast fields of sunflowers in the Midwest. Let the cars on the highway whiz by, and look at the sunflowers.

## Unity in direction

Every single sunflower is facing the same direction. Before the sun comes up, every sunflower faces the east, waiting for the sun to rise. All day long they track the course of the sun. Not one holds out. Not one in the whole field, even in the whole world, is unconcerned where the sun is. Not one is indifferent, distracted, lazy, or off doing its own thing. Only one thing matters to sunflowers: the sun.

Imagine each sunflower is a human being. God's sun rises on the just and on the unjust. Where is everyone looking? Is there unanimity? There is only one true God and one Sun of Righteousness. There is only one source of spiritual and physical warmth and life and good.

But human beings are not as smart as sunflowers. They look everywhere but the right place. By nature they do not go toward the light, but away from it. It's hard to see any uniformity.

What is beautiful and breathtaking about sunflowers is something people disdain. Consider the adjectives "unique," "one of a kind," "independent," even "different." We get good vibrations from these words. We yawn when we hear "the same," "predictable," "uniform," "dependent." But the second group



of words describes sunflowers. In fact, it is surprising that a field of so many plants can be so much the same, so predictable as to what they are going to do, so uniform in doing it, so obviously dependent on the light source.

## Unity in faith

The Christian church God envisioned is like a field of sunflowers. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:3-5). Our goal as Christians and believers in the Son, across all cultures, is that we do

the same things, that there be true uniformity of faith.

Jesus prayed about all of us throughout all the world: "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23).

Our goal as missionaries is not to accentuate the differences of cultures but to stress the sameness. One common ground of faith, one need, one Son of God, one spiritual genetic makeup from God's own image.

Believers live with their eyes tracking the same Jesus across the same sky each day. The location of the field is not important. The cultivation is basically the same. The plants are the same. The reason for their being planted the same. What makes them grow and flourish, the same.

King David probably never saw a sunflower. But had he stood by the road and surveyed sunflowers with us, with their heads all turned the same way, individual plants looking so much alike—at such a sight, King David might have been moved to say, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! . . . For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" (Psalm 133:1, 3).

*Eric Hartzell is an exploratory pastor at Georgetown, Texas.*