

LUTHERAN



"Children belong in church."

page 6

Returning to God

page 14

In the beginning—according to PBS

page 31

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Getting the accent right page 16



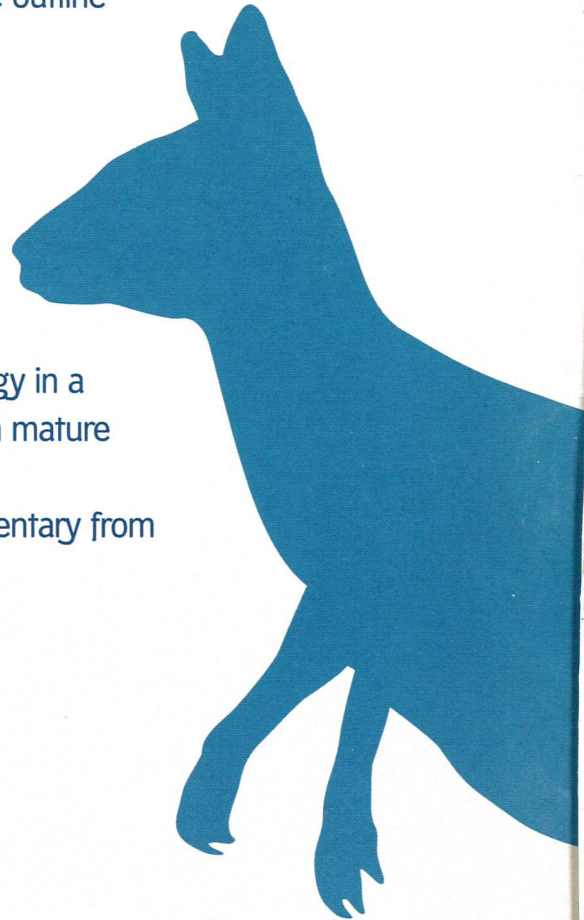
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Rise and shine

Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you, and his glory appears over you. Isaiah 60:1,2

Richard D. Balge

On his deathbed, the poet Goethe reportedly asked for “light, more light!” Perhaps he meant only a physical light. He was, however, a representative of the Enlightenment who had not found the spiritual light he sought. The literary evidence indicates that this world citizen and philosopher, poet and dramatist, did not trust him who is the Light of the world.

The Lord, through his prophet Isaiah, tells us his divine light has shined on us. Now he calls on us to “arise, shine.”

Christ’s light dispels darkness

To build a house, to sail a boat, to fly to the moon—these things people can do without any light other than the light of reason. To govern social relations, to regulate trade, to establish communications between nations, even hostile nations—these things human beings have done, and they can do more.

But what do these activities mean? Why should they be done? What is right and good, true and beautiful? Underlying those questions is the deeper question, conscious or unconscious: “How can what I am, what I do, and how I do it satisfy a just God?” Inability to answer the question and failure to recognize important questions—these testify that “thick darkness is over the peoples.” That was our nat-

ural state, too.

Now, however, “your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” Christ has come and suffered, and, as the first to rise from the dead, has proclaimed light to his own people and to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 26:23). In his life, he was perfect; in his death, he was sinless; in his resurrection, he is declared the Son of God with power. We confess he is “Light of Light.” Where his cross and forgiveness are preached, there light dispels darkness. The difference between that good news and everything else called religion is not the difference between light and twilight. It is the difference between light and thick darkness.

We reflect Christ’s light

“Arise, shine.” Jesus commanded his disciples to take his light to the human race. They did it. Preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name, shining as a light in the darkness of sin and unbelief, of moral and spiritual indifference, they did it. Every book in the New Testament was a mission tool. Every epistle was written to a mission congregation or an individual convert. Revelation was addressed to seven mission churches.

The work the apostles began is not completed. The Lord has not withdrawn his command, not even

modified it. For this one essential assignment the Lord leaves us citizens of heaven here on earth. No one else is equipped to do it.

Where his cross and forgiveness are preached, there light dispels darkness.

We are in Epiphany-tide—a season of mission emphasis. It is a time to ask whether our lives reflect Christ’s light. It is a time to pray that the evidence of our lives and the confession of our lips be unmixed, clearly expressing our hope. It is a time to ask the Lord to fill us with zeal for missions and a generous spirit to support the work of missions. It is always time to rise and shine.

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



- Happy New Year. In "Tears are a part of life," (p. 8) Carl Henkel shares how pain and hurt mar our world. But he doesn't leave you depressed. He also tells you what will make your new year truly happy.
- Since we're at the beginning of a new year, let's talk about another beginning—the beginning of the Bible. Maybe you saw Bill Moyers' series on Genesis on PBS or in national news magazines. Read "In the beginning—according to PBS" (p. 31) and "Oh, that sounds harsh!" (p. 35). Both take issue with those who choose to reinterpret God's Word.
- Does hearing what those Genesis "scholars" say about God make you angry? Read "Tick . . . tick . . . tick . . ." (p. 10) and learn how to express anger in a God-pleasing manner.
- Two articles address the Enlightenment. Read "Rise and shine" (p. 3) to learn how we can reflect Christ's light. Then turn to "Returning to God" (p. 14) and read of one man's journey back to God.

—LRB

Cover photo by Jerry Harders

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Tears are a part of life
page 8



Tick . . . tick . . . tick . . .
page 10



The Liturgy: joining
us to the church's
continuing song
of praise
page 12

- 3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY
Rise and shine
Richard D. Balge
The Lord, through his prophet Isaiah, tells us his divine light has shined on us. Now he calls on us to "arise, shine."
- 6 YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP
"Children belong in church."
Laurie Biedenbender
Is the sound of children disturbing or delightful? How children—and adults—benefit from children attending worship.
- 8 INSIGHTS
Tears are a part of life
Carl R. Henkel
Although Jesus has never promised to take away our earthly tears, he has promised to give them a new dimension.
- 10 CHRISTIAN LIVING
Tick . . . tick . . . tick . . .
Mark E. Braun and Linda R. Baacke
Everyone gets angry. Here are four steps to help you face your anger and handle it maturely.
- 12 WORSHIP
The Liturgy: joining us to the church's continuing song of praise
James P. Tiefel
By including songs and prayers Christians before us have used, the Liturgy allows us to sing a united song of praise with believers who worship the same Christ we do.
- 14 PART OF GOD'S FAMILY
Returning to God
Eric Hester
A man relates how returning to God brought him peace after walking the path of his own choices brought him despair.
- 16 INSIGHTS
Getting the accent right
Eric S. Hartzell
There is only one acceptable accent in heaven—the language of God and of his Son.
- 18 INSIGHTS
Gospel light in foggy surroundings
Rolf F. Westendorf
We may wonder how the gospel can shine through a fog of false doctrine, but we let God be the judge of souls.

- 20 WELS NEWS
 - Readers favor name change
 - Happy anniversary
 - School enrollments secure future
 - Congregations evaluate parish assistance
 - GID—keeping you informed
 - Lawrenz heads up BME
 - Listening to and learning from congregations
 - Auxiliaries provide support for schools
 - From generation to generation
- 26 WORLD NEWS
 - Prayer in school still not allowed
 - Case could threaten tax exemptions
 - Fewer contributors, more contributions
 - O little town of Bethlehem
 - Albuquerque can't bar Jesus film
 - U.S.—third most sinful nation
- 28 BULLETIN BOARD
- 29 SPEAKING MY MIND
Confessions of "a man of the cloth"
Paul J. Lidtke
I would rather be known as "a man of the cross." That tells of my faith, as well as the gospel message I am privileged to preach.
- 30 AN UPSIDE GOD IN A DOWNSIDE WORLD
Samuel: an installer of kings
James A. Aderman
Years of listening to the Lord taught Samuel that God is trustworthy, even when he leads contrary to human sense.
- 31 EDITORIAL COMMENT
In the beginning—according to PBS
Joel C. Gerlach
Only when Genesis is seen as divine revelation of law and gospel, sin and grace, does it accomplish its God-intended purpose.
- 32 YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE
The greeting of peace and the appearance of angels
John F. Brug
- 33 READERS FORUM
- 34 EDITOR'S PEN
"Oh, that sounds harsh!"
Gary P. Baumler
Left to myself, I'd like to discount sin, too. But God won't let me.
- 36 INSIGHTS
Things: useful as tools, worthless as values
Kenneth A. Cherney
Consider what life would be like if we focused on the only thing we really need—forgiveness.

“Children belong in church.”

Is the sound of children disturbing or delightful? How children—and adults—benefit from children attending worship.

Laurie Biedenbender

“I wonder if it’s worth it to bring him to church at all.”

Steve Bilitz, family ministry director at Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., remembers hearing these words from a mother, screaming son in tow, after her third trip to the cry room. Many parents admit thinking

the same. They worry their child is disturbing others and not “getting anything out of” the service anyway.

Worship benefits the children

Bilitz, however, says having the child in the pew is worth it. “I asked the mother, ‘Do you believe the

Holy Spirit worked at your son’s baptism? Why not now? Who’s to know how the Spirit works?’ ”

He adds, “We need to remind each other to be a little more tolerant of those little ones. Children belong in church.”

Paul’s injunction to fathers to



Is your congregation children friendly?

- 🔍 Do you reserve the back pews for families with young children, understanding that they may not come to church much before the beginning of the service?
- 🔍 Is your cry room a comfortable place to soothe children without being a child’s paradise—stocked with toys that may reward older children for misbehaving in church?
- 🔍 If you have a nursery, is it staffed with qualified people and filled with safe equipment?
- 🔍 Does your cry room enable parents to see, or at least hear, the service?
- 🔍 Do ushers look for ways to assist struggling parents without embarrassing them?
- 🔍 Do all members understand that a little noise signifies a healthy, growing church?
- 🔍 Does everything said and done underscore Jesus’ words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them”?

“bring [children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord” and Christ’s words to Peter, “Feed my lambs,” summon parents and the church to the spiritual education of children. Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator, believes some of that spiritual education takes place during the worship service. “One of the most important things we can do is bring our children to church regularly.”

Developmental psychologists tell us little ones absorb more than we think they do. Even as children play, they soak up the Word, the liturgy, and our Lutheran chorales, memorizing and storing them for a lifetime. They also respond emotionally to the worship setting, enjoying the togetherness of the family of believers and sensing the beating of the sinner’s heart: sorrow over sin, joy in forgiveness.

Most important, children hear “the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done” (Psalm 78:4) and the gospel promise.

Children in worship benefit the congregation

Bilitz emphasizes that seeing the Spirit’s work in the next generation benefits the whole congregation, especially older members. “Seeing and hearing little ones reminds them they still have an important role to play in the congregation: to support Christian education and training.”

Kastens adds, “The sound of children is the sound of a healthy and growing church.”

Most churches have a cry room for short-term problems. Is a nursery where children play during the service ever a good idea? Some say

yes. They opt for the nursery so they can feed their own souls instead of monitoring their children’s behavior.

“We say that parents should bring their children to church, but it isn’t always that easy,” says Pastor Robert Hartman, evangelism administrator. He raises the important issue of visitor-friendliness. “Many visitors expect a nursery. If they have chil-

dren and see there’s no place for them, they may not be back.”

Still, all agree that congregations need to do everything possible to underscore Jesus’ invitation: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

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

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Tips for tots in church

“My child will not sit through worship.” Boy, have I heard this over the years. Tips on how to handle your child during worship include the container of Cheerios, small books, paper and pencil, or a small stuffed animal. I’d like to add a couple of different ideas.

Consider **sitting up front with your child** where new faces and activities hold his attention. Sit on the outside aisle so you can make a hasty retreat if needed.

Start with prayer. Put your child on your lap and whisper a prayer: “Dear Lord, thank you for coming into this world to die on the cross to save us. Thank you for bringing Jesus to church today. Please help (list children’s names) to sit still and listen. Amen.”

Realize it’s not easy for anyone, even adults, to sit still for an hour. Break the hour into three segments. First, during the liturgy, **allow your child to participate.** When the congregation is singing or responding, let him add his voice and praise. Second, during the sermon, tell him: “Shhh. It’s pastor’s turn.” Third, after the sermon, the congregation sings, responds, and stands. Let him participate again.

As your child gets older, **have him squeeze your finger when he hears a key word**, such as “God,” during the sermon. Add words as he gets older. When your child learns to read, write words down and have him check key words. These ‘games’ teach him to sit and listen.

There will be trying times, but with prayer and patience you will make it.

Linda J. Hill is a member of Star of Bethlehem, Santa Maria, California.

Laurie Biedenbender adds:

- ☞ Develop a relaxed routine before church so the family isn’t stressed out before walking in the door.
- ☞ Let your child bring a box with crayons, a Bible coloring book, books, snacks, tissues.
- ☞ Open your child’s picture Bible to a page related to the reading or sermon.
- ☞ Know your child’s limits. Infants babble; toddlers talk; preschoolers don’t have much “sit.” They aren’t being naughty—they’re simply being children.
- ☞ Relax. Let your child see that you enjoy worshipping in God’s house.

Tears are a part of life

Although Jesus has never promised to take away our earthly tears, he has promised to give them a new dimension.

Carl R. Henkel

It's Thursday, Dec. 28. Three days after Christmas. Midway between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. A happy time. But my desk diary marks the day in red ink: "The Holy Innocents." Some churches still have an annual recognition of this gruesome event.

Tragedy in the past

This appalling affair is a distressing downside of the first Christmas—a downside generated by human sinfulness and personified in evil King Herod. "Go and search diligently for the child," Herod said to the wise men. "And when you have found him, come and bring me word that I may worship him, too."

What hypocrisy! Herod had no intention of worshiping the newborn King. He intended to harm him. Thus, warned by an angel, Mary and Joseph fled in the night, while the wise men, warned in a dream, returned home by another route.

When Herod discovered the wise men had disregarded his instructions, he flew into a fit of rage and had his soldiers slay all little boys under two years of age in and around Bethlehem. What a tragic intrusion into the Christmas event.

History books call him, strangely enough, Herod the Great. Herod came from a powerful family. His father and grandfather were public administrators who widened their base of authority. Thus in the year 37 B.C., the Romans made Herod

the Great the king of Judea. He founded Caesarea and rebuilt much of Jerusalem, including the Temple.

He was a capable leader, but was notoriously cruel. An arrogant and tyrannical king, Herod executed his second wife and three of his sons. Cruelty became a family tradition. His son, Herod Antipas, had John the Baptist beheaded. We should, therefore, not be surprised at Herod the Great's violent reaction when he learned that the magi disobeyed him. When the magi didn't return, Herod was so angry he initiated what has become known as "the slaughter of the innocents."

That we live in the "the real world" is precisely why we need a real Savior.

Not only did Herod's wickedness bring immeasurable pain into the once-happy homes that had thrilled to the laughter of little children, but his jealousy and cruelty also brought pain to Mary and Joseph. They had to take the baby Jesus and flee to Egypt, where they waited for the death of that cruel tyrant.

Herod had no regard for God or humanity. He was a Jew, but by the end of his reign, the Jews despised him, even though on a material level his rule had been quite favorable to them. Herod knew when he

died nobody would shed a tear, so he made arrangements to guarantee that someone would grieve.

According to one source, Herod left orders that, when he died, his soldiers were to round up a group of well-known citizens, frame them for some concocted crime, and kill them. That way, Herod assured himself somebody would shed tears after his death, even if the tears weren't for him.

Tragedy in the present

Though far removed in time from Herod the Great, tears are still a part of life in the 1990s, aren't they? Some are of our own making. Some are the fallout of a sin-infested world. And there are still plenty of Herods around to bring suffering to the innocent.

In today's world, a gunman walks into an elementary school and opens fire.

In our "sophisticated society," drunk drivers snuff out the laughter of unsuspecting toddlers, destroy the hopes and dreams of honeymooners, remove the light of love from behind the eyes of vacationing families, and bring pain into homes where happiness once dwelled.

In the real world, the faces of innocent children appear on the sides of milk cartons, with grieving parents longing for some word of their safety.

In the real world, brakes fail, sparks ignite, jobs are terminated.

In the real world, dentists don masks, and nurses wear rubber gloves.

In the real world, sirens squeal, police officers appear at the door to say "I'm sorry," and doctors announce, "There was nothing we could do."

In the real world, thin ice gives way to reckless snowmobilers, and thick walls give way to terrorist's bombs. Funeral processions and tear-cheeked mourners follow.

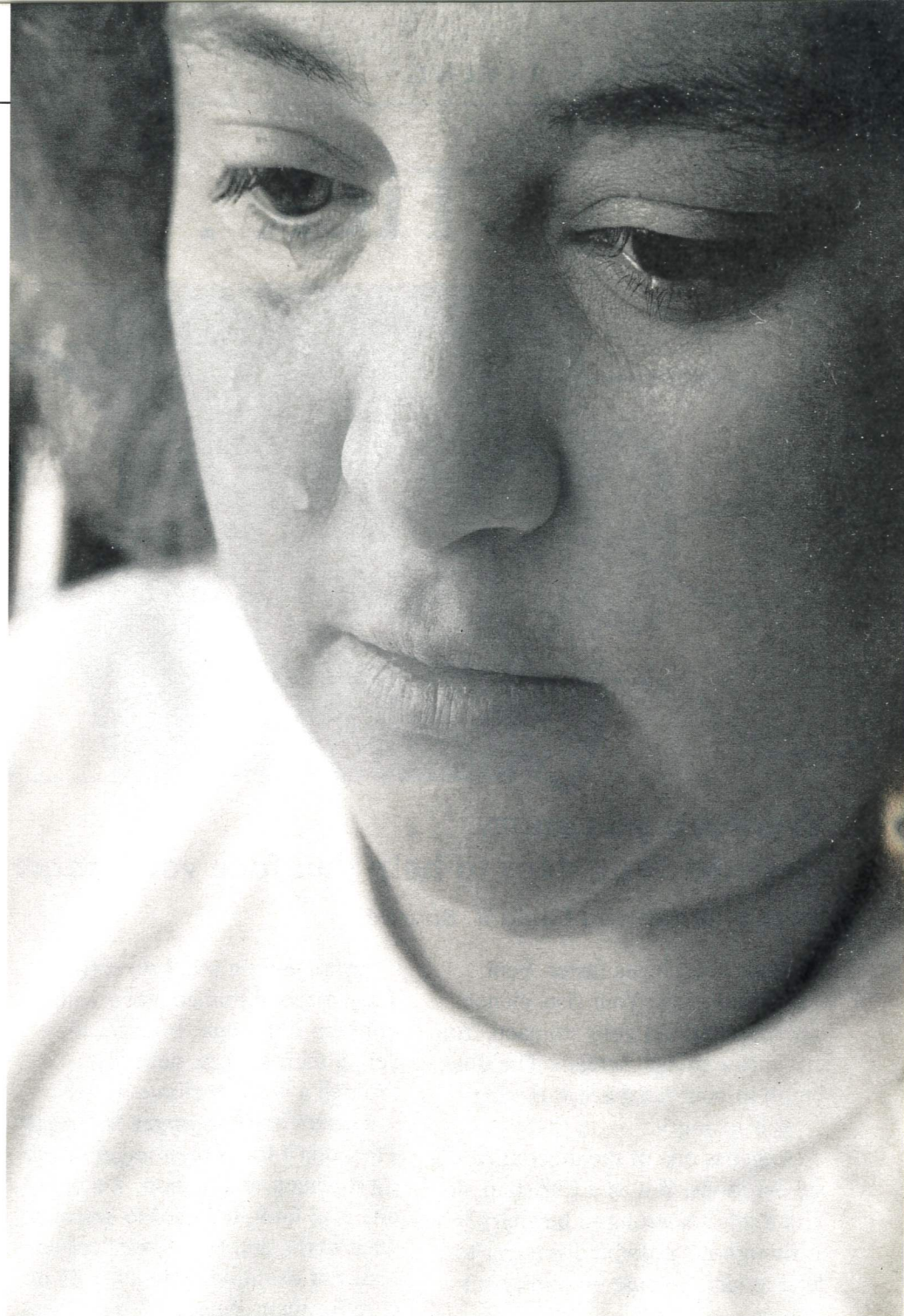
In the real world, 911 is necessary, pain is imminent, and suffering real. At the heart of the matter is sin. Sin continues as the ultimate cause for today's agony and anguish. It may come in miscellaneous forms and be packaged with various wrappings, but sin remains sin.

Hope in the future

That we live in the "the real world" is precisely why we need a real Savior. It's also the reason we need to be close to him. And although he has never promised to take away our earthly tears, he has promised to give them a new dimension. He's promised to be always at our side as he lives in our hearts. He's promised to bring good from evil, gain from loss, hope from despair, and life from death.

Herod was evil, and many suffered as a result. But those who died with hope and trust in the Messiah are basking in the eternal joys of heaven.

So, too, today: "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). But only through Jesus. There is no hope without him, no lasting joy apart from him. Only in Jesus can we have a blessed New Year regardless of which dread words the



doctor speaks or what sad events cause tears to well up in our eyes. Only with our eyes on Jesus can we look at tragedy and see treasure, at pain and see promise, at suffering and see salvation. Only in Jesus.

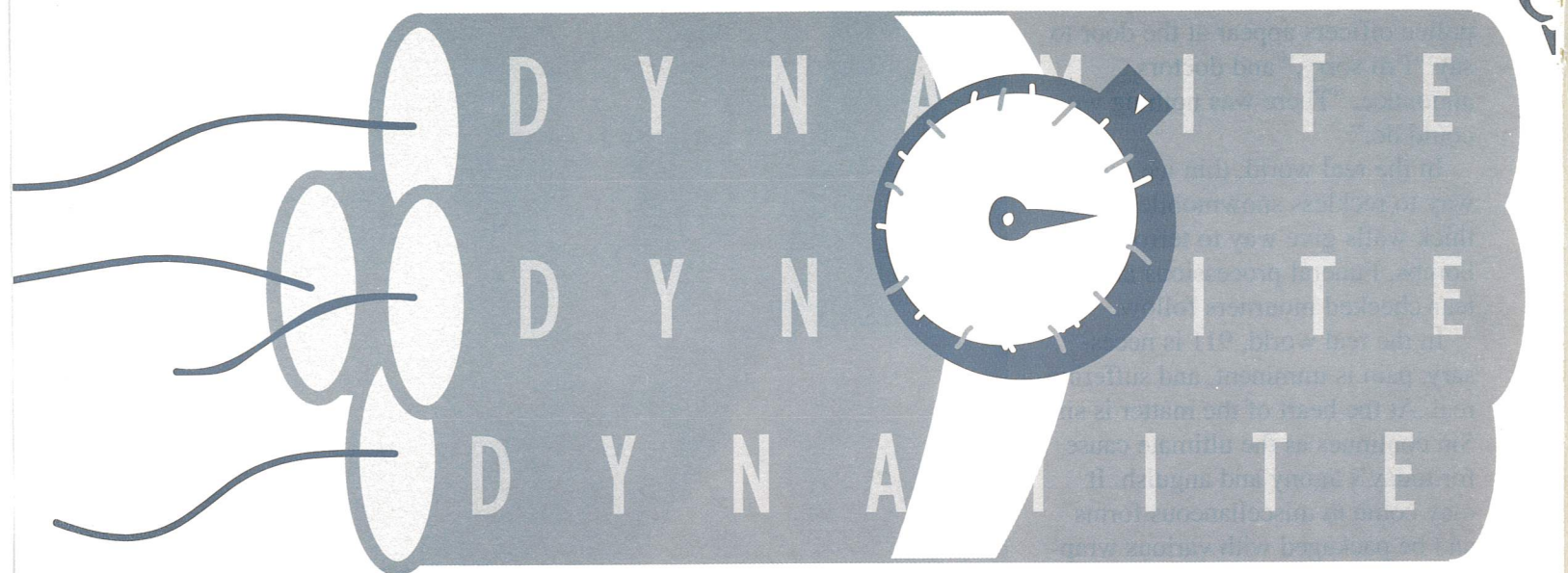
Only in Jesus can we live beyond life's circumstances, through sin's aftermath, and above pain's consequence. Only in Jesus dare I wish

you all a blessed New Year and know that it will be so, regardless of what comes your way. For only in Jesus is there light at the end of the tunnel, love at the end of affliction, and life at the end of tragedy.

Carl Henkel, on leave of absence from Mt. Olive, St. Paul, Minnesota, is serving in Cameroon for one year.

NL

Tick . . . tick . . . tic



Everyone gets angry.

Here are four steps to help you face your anger and handle it maturely.

Mark E. Braun and Linda R. Baacke

Your heart beats faster. Your mind races. Your fists clench. There's a hole in your stomach. You cry, throw things, scream. The time bomb in your head keeps ticking.

You're angry.

Anger is one of the most universal emotions. But as a Christian, do you think it's wrong to be angry? Although it's possible for anger to lead to sin, the pure emotion isn't wrong.

Reacting to anger

No one reacts to anger the same way. Maybe you blow up—or sulk. You quietly count to 10—or take it out on someone else. You become cutting and sarcastic—or take a walk. You pretend nothing's wrong—or deal directly with the source of your anger in a mature, constructive way.

Some people react directly.

They respond immediately, without thinking it through. In anger they yell at their spouse, put a fist through a wall, or stomp away.

Others express anger indirectly.

They don't focus their anger on the right person or situation. When no one is at fault, it's hard to know what to do, and people feel powerless. For example, there may be no cure for their illness, but they complain: The nurses are stupid. Or, my doctor never listens to me.

Others contain anger for the moment and release it after the fact. They wait to get back at somebody, following the old saying "Revenge is a dish which is best served cold." Or during a crisis, people congratulate them on how well they handled it. Two years later they have an ulcer.

Others express anger through self-destructive behavior. They blame themselves for not changing life's course of events. One becomes deeply depressed, another develops a severe rash, diagnosed as stress related. Others indulge in dangerous behavior—drunkenness, reckless driving, violent outbursts.

Handling anger

Anger can be a healthy expression of real emotion. A four-step process helps you handle anger maturely.

First, admit you are angry.

Maybe you cover up anger with more "acceptable" emotions. But read the book of Psalms. The writers shake their fists at God and say, "You're so far away. You're not listening. You don't treat me right." You may wonder why God lets peo-

ple talk to him like that, or why he didn't edit that out of the Bible. We don't know, but Psalms give people a voice when they are angry.

Second, reflect on your anger.

Consider what lies behind your behavior, especially if you denied your anger and now it seeps out in your life. In a crisis three years ago, you didn't get angry—you felt numb. But in the last four months you haven't slept, you have no energy, and you're losing your temper.

Determine if your anger is properly placed. Are you seeing the situation correctly or are you overreacting? Ask friends or your spouse for help. They will see it more objectively and maybe even say, "I think you're wrong on this."

Third, act on your anger in a safe, healthy way. *Keep a journal.* Pour out your feelings on paper instead of bottling them up.

Exercise. When anger surfaces, go for a walk or run, or lift weights.

Visit a counselor or support group. Find people who have experienced the same things you have.

Talk to friends. Blow off some steam with friends, but don't aim anger at them.

Fourth, let your anger go. Don't deny or repress it, but choose to move past the hurt so it doesn't dominate your life. When you hold on to anger, the person you hurt most is yourself. The anger will burn inside you and consume your life.

Sometimes you try to move on and don't realize anger is still there. Maybe you use past hurts only when you really need them—like a "get-out-of-jail-free card" in Monopoly.

Someone hurts you and says, "I'm sorry."

You say, "I forgive you."

But you get hurt again and bring up the past. You haven't let go.

When you truly decide to forgive, you let go of the right you think you have to even the score.

Do you wonder how you can follow these four steps? Do you think you don't have it in you to move on, to let your anger go? You're right. You don't have it in you. You get it only from Jesus.

With his help you can say, "It happened. I can't change it, but I

In the Bible, God is the one who is most angry. Of the over 600 times the word anger or angry appears, God is the subject of the majority of them. Because anger is used so often to refer to God, anger in and of itself cannot be wrong or sinful. But how we use it can be. Here's what the Bible says about anger in your life:

"He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Proverbs 10:18).

Don't lie to get along with others, but speak constructively, be straight forward, and tell the truth.

"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control" (Proverbs 29:11).

Keep a reign on your anger.

"In your anger do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).

It is possible to be angry and not sin.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has

can deal with it. And I can let it go because Jesus lets it go with me every day."

When you say that, your heart rate slows. Your mind calms. Your hands uncurl. The ticking stops. And there's peace in your life.

This series is based on a Bible study held in summer 1996 at St. James, Milwaukee. Information was developed and presented by Mark Braun, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, and reported by Linda Baacke, communications assistant for Northwestern Lutheran and Communication Services.

NL

something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23,24).

Resolve your anger before it turns into something worse than it is—or worse than it needs to be. Unresolved disagreements and anger will eat away at you and get in the way of your worship of God.

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us" (Lord's Prayer).

God doesn't only forgive us to the extent that we forgive each other. If that were the case, no one could be certain about being forgiven. But because God forgives you, you learn to forgive others.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matthew 18:15).

Go to the source of sin, anger, and disagreement. Often others hear about your anger before the person you disagree with hears about it. It takes more courage to talk to somebody who has hurt you—or somebody you've hurt.

The Liturgy: joining us to the church's continuing song of praise

By including songs and prayers Christians before us have used, the Liturgy allows us to sing a united song of praise with believers who worship the same Christ we do.

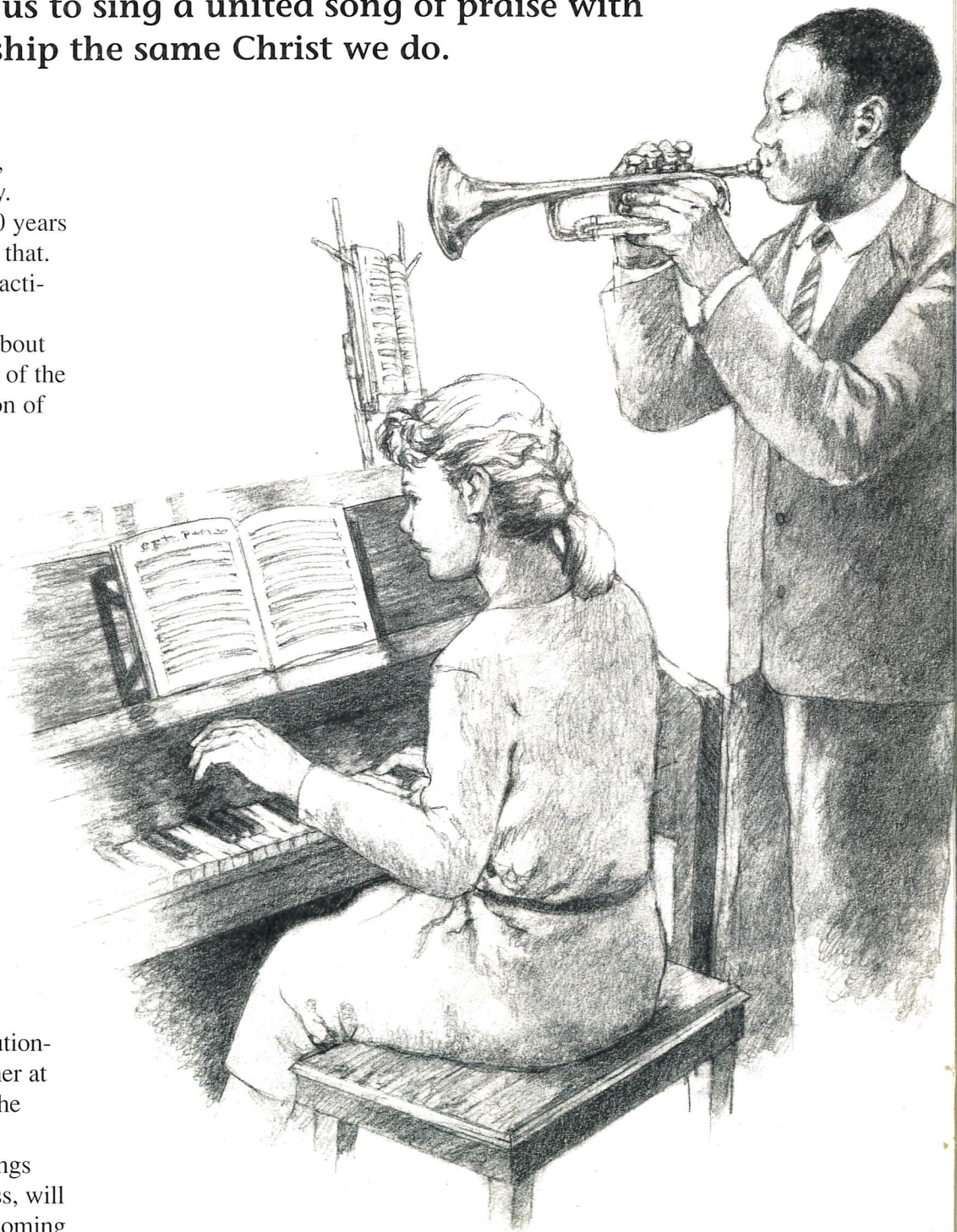
James P. Tiefel

Martin Luther—innovator, trailblazer, revolutionary.

From our vantage point 450 years after his death, Luther was all that. His translation of the Bible practically established the modern German language. His ideas about teaching children (he was one of the first to encourage the education of both boys and girls) have had worldwide influence.

When it came to theology, Luther wasn't exactly an innovator—he wanted to teach only what Christ and the Bible taught. But in order to find what Christ and the Bible taught, he had to blaze a trail through a forest of false teachings that had been growing for centuries. We usually call Luther's work reformation. But in 16th century Europe, Luther's rediscovery of "by grace alone, by faith alone, by scripture alone" was downright revolutionary.

Innovator, trailblazer, revolutionary. Can we expect to see Luther at his creative best as he begins the work of revising worship? Considering the terrible teachings found inside the medieval Mass, will we see something brand new coming



off his pen? Listen to Luther:

It is not now nor ever has been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use from the wretched additions which corrupt it.

(*Luther's Works*, Vol. 53, p. 20)

Listen again:

The service now in common use everywhere goes back to genuine Christian beginnings . . . [though it] has been corrupted by hypocrites. It is not our intention to do away with the service, but to restore it again to its rightful use.

(*Luther's Works*, Vol. 53, p. 11)

If anyone ever had a golden opportunity to change the style of Christian worship, it was Luther. Instead, he chose to retain the pattern of worship used in the church for a thousand years—the Liturgy.

A united song of praise

Martin Luther never thought of the Lutheran church as unique. His church was not a sect. He wrote, "We teach what is old and what the apostles and all godly teachers have taught." He also understood that he and his followers were members of the "one, holy, Christian, and apostolic church," to which believers of every age belong. By using forms of worship which Christians had used for centuries, Luther was affirming his unity with those believers. As he participated in the Liturgy, he was adding his voice to the church's continuing song.

When it comes to forms in worship, we Lutherans tend to build on the past experience of the church. The Liturgy is part of the church's past experience. By including songs and prayers Christians before us have used, the Liturgy allows us to

sing a united song of praise with believers—those alive and those living in heaven—who worship the same Christ we worship.

Building on the traditions

We don't carry on every tradition that has ever been part of the Liturgy, of course. Neither did Luther. Our version of the Liturgy is in English, not in Latin or German. The music of the Liturgy is not Gregorian chant, but music more in tune with our times. Women and men sit together and commune together, and sermons don't last an hour. The Liturgy doesn't insist on rigid allegiance. With its many opportunities for variety, the Liturgy seems to sense that not everything old is worth keeping and actually encourages us to expand its traditions.

Building on the experience of the past allows us to move confidently into the future. We begin with rites and ceremonies that have been tried, tested, and found to be nourishing in the experience of countless believers, and we move on from there. The Liturgy serves as a stable and steady outline, therefore, within which Christians of every age and culture can proclaim and praise the gospel in their own language and style.

Reclaiming the Liturgy

When it came to the Liturgy, not everyone agreed with Luther. The Pietists rejected the Liturgy because it contained more gospel than they wanted and less emotion than they needed. For several hundred years, Lutherans who fell under the influence of Pietism drifted away from the solid rock of God's promises toward the uncertainties of their own feelings. Most of America's first Lutherans were Pietistic, as

were some of the early congregations of our own synod.

It wasn't until Lutherans began restudying the Bible's teachings and the doctrines Luther championed that they also began to reclaim the Liturgy. Liturgical renewal was slow, but an English version of the historic Liturgy appeared by the 1880s. In 1941 it appeared in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Its framers called it the Common Service because they wanted people to understand that this order of service was a service they held in common with Christians and Lutherans of the past.

Christian Worship: a Lutheran Hymnal contains a contemporary setting of the Common Service. The hymnal's Service of Word and Sacrament, although different from the Common Service, is also based on the historic Christian Liturgy.

Maintaining our ties with the past

Most of us aren't "into" the past. Many people hardly know the history of their own country. God encourages a different point of view. We see God's plan to save us in the history of his Son. We hear the story of faith in the history of his people. History comforts us, teaches us, encourages us.

Not because we must use it (the Bible has no laws about the style of our worship), but because we find value in it, we Lutherans have tended to conduct our Sunday worship within the framework of the historic Christian Liturgy. As it has for centuries, the Liturgy has kept our focus on the gospel, encouraged us to participate, and allowed us to unite with the Church of all ages in a continuing song of praise..

James Tiefel is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

NL

Returning to God

A man relates how returning to God brought him peace after walking the path of his own choices brought him despair.

Eric Hester

I left the church 14 years ago, and I only recently returned.

I cannot explain why I returned without explaining why I left.

Like many young people, I broke my parents' hearts. With me, it wasn't falling in with the wrong crowd at school, or failing grades, or drugs and alcohol. It was worse.

During my third year at college, I arrogantly explained to my parents that I—with the wisdom of a 20 year old who had taken philosophy courses and had thought deeply about these subjects—did not believe in original sin. Therefore, I didn't need a Savior, and I didn't need to go to church.

Powerful forces had taken root in my heart and mind. I went to a secular college, and most of the students, judging from their behavior, were not churchgoers. They had more fun than I did. I asked myself, "Why should I miss out?"

The secular university also played on my mind. The liberation of humanistic philosophy was nearly intoxicating. The idea that there is no truth, that there is simply reality; that man is the moral center of the universe; and that man is neither good nor evil, except by his actions towards others, freed me from the chains of what I began to see as antiquated orthodoxy. This philosophy replaced God's truth with man

as truth. Academics call the age of these philosophic developments the Enlightenment. I fell in love with the sound of those words. I was having my own personal "enlightenment."

**I felt utterly lost,
a blind man stumbling
in an unfamiliar room.**

And any student who professed faith in God was something akin to a Nazi. Professors and students alike squelched anyone who mentioned God in a discussion. I remember a student triumphantly writing on the chalkboard the Marxian quote "Religion is the opiate of mankind." This was not the act of a revolutionary; this student was simply stating the mainstream philosophy: God had no place at that university.

The concept of original sin (that is what it became to me, a "concept"—an idea, rather than a truth) became an anathema to my new secular philosophy that original sin is the capacity or tendency to do evil. But, if God is capable of all things, if he is omnipotent, then he too is capable of evil. So, why should humans be the only ones

damned because of our evil possibilities? Original sin had to go. It was so oppressive, so un"enlightened."

I tried going to church, not believing in original sin, listening to only the happy news. But the inconsistency became apparent: If I didn't believe in original sin, why did I need a Savior? Eventually, church became a philosophic house of cards, a quaint vestige from some time before the Age of Enlightenment.

I stopped going and began living by my own lights, which are dim indeed. I never stopped believing in God, that is, in God's existence. I believed, "Sure, God exists. He created the world and set in motion the forces of nature that have given birth to humans, but that's it. He doesn't play a role in my daily life." Divine intervention was inconsistent with my new philosophy, which placed man at the center of all things. No, I was a secular humanist, alone in the universe, expecting nothing from God.

Over the years, I earned a law degree from a prestigious university, passed the bar exam on the first try, and got a good job at a big downtown law firm—all things the secular world prizes as grand accomplishments. But I was filled with utter discontent. I counted my accomplishments as nothing. Life began to have no meaning.

My days became endless repetitions of meaningless tasks. I didn't really hate my life, or even dislike it. I felt nothing in particular about it, living in an emotional and spiritual anesthesia. If I felt anything at all, I felt utterly lost, a blind man stumbling in an unfamiliar room.

Then something happened that I could not discount as meaningless. My wife and I had our first child, a girl. We talked about how we would raise her. Would we take her to church? I began thinking about church again and, equally as impor-

tant, I began to feel things I hadn't felt in a long time—joy and unconditional love.

One night, I couldn't sleep after giving the baby a bottle. I sat up and read *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* by Dale Carnegie. In the chapter on the power of prayer, Carnegie said something like, hey, little man, you can't handle all that life throws your way, so hit your knees and say a prayer. That point hit me like a lightning bolt.

That's what I'd been doing for years—trying to handle life all on

my own—and I was failing miserably. I cried so hard our dog came over and put her head in my lap. And then I prayed.

Not long after, I went to church for the first time in years. I began to see I had fooled myself. You can stop believing in original sin, but it is still there. In fact, my utter despair was perfect evidence of the Old Adam. I began to see I was not alone. God does play an active role in my life.

You can stop believing in original sin, but it is still there.

One of the first Sundays following my return, the pastor spoke of the minister who wrote "Amazing Grace," a slave trader who in mid-life came to the Lord. Then we sang that lovely old hymn, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound," and it nearly reduced me to tears.

I missed 14 years worth of Sundays. I find myself now in the pew not wanting the service to end, to start over in the liturgy and hear more readings from the law and gospel, to learn from another sermon, sing more hymns, and commune again at the Lord's table.

By God's grace, I will never again turn my back on the church. Walking the path of my choice led to despair. Returning to God and his mercy has brought me peace.

NL

Eric Hester is a member at St. Mark, Citrus Heights, California.



Eric Hester, his wife, Kelly, and daughter, Erin. For 14 years, Eric tried to live life on his own. He finally discovered that only through God could he have true peace.

Getting the accent right

There is only one acceptable accent in heaven—the language of God and of his Son.

Eric S. Hartzell

Texas talk funny. Everyone I have met smiles good-naturedly when someone has the poor taste to bring that up. I think though, that behind his gracious smile, he must be thinking, “You, my friend, are the one who talks funny.”

Everyone has an accent

You can be standing in line for fast food, and before the person ahead of you can get through the word “cheeseburger,” you know where he comes from. He, on the other hand, knows when you say “cheeseburger” that even though your license plate says you are from Texas, you are really from someplace else.

Like it or not, even notice it or not, we all speak with an accent. We got it from our folks and our friends. It seeped into our being from our surroundings. We learned it by long exposure. We learned it the way we learn anything: we copied sounds we heard and made them our own.

And along the way we liked the way they sound. (What person would really want to get rid of a hometown accent?)

There is really no way to get an accent. Nothing quick anyway. A person fresh into Texas can’t talk like a Texan. To consciously try and do it would be an insult.

There is, however, a way to honor the accent and learn to speak it right—stay there a long time. Live with Texans. Talk with Texans. Be with Texans. Then the acquired accent over a period of time will say, “Because I am committed to being with you, I am starting to talk like you. I can’t help it. I like you. I like it here.”

Christians have an accent

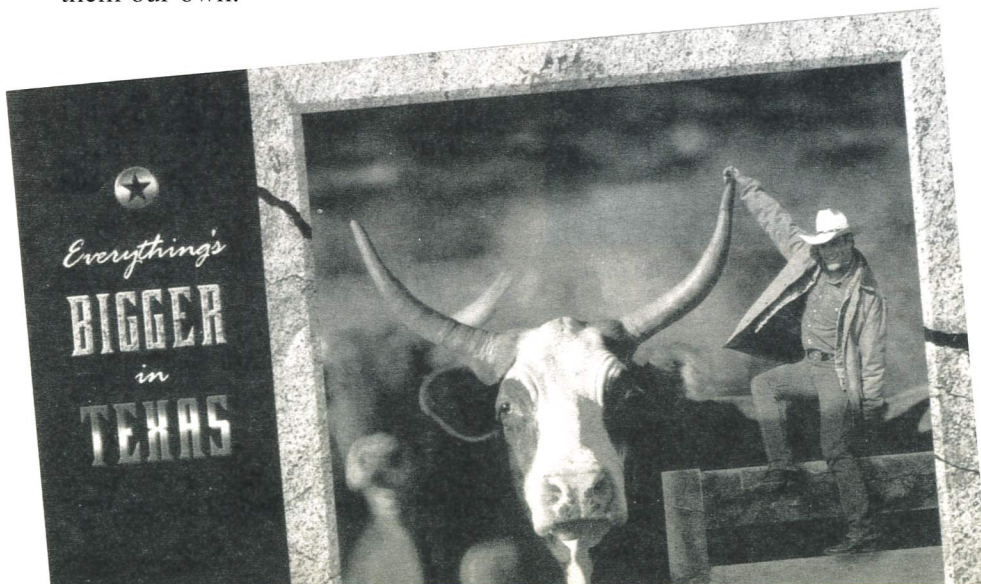
Have you noticed that Christians have an accent too? If they are true to their roots, they won’t be able to say very much before you will know them to be Christian. Notice where they place the emphasis in words like “I” and “you.”

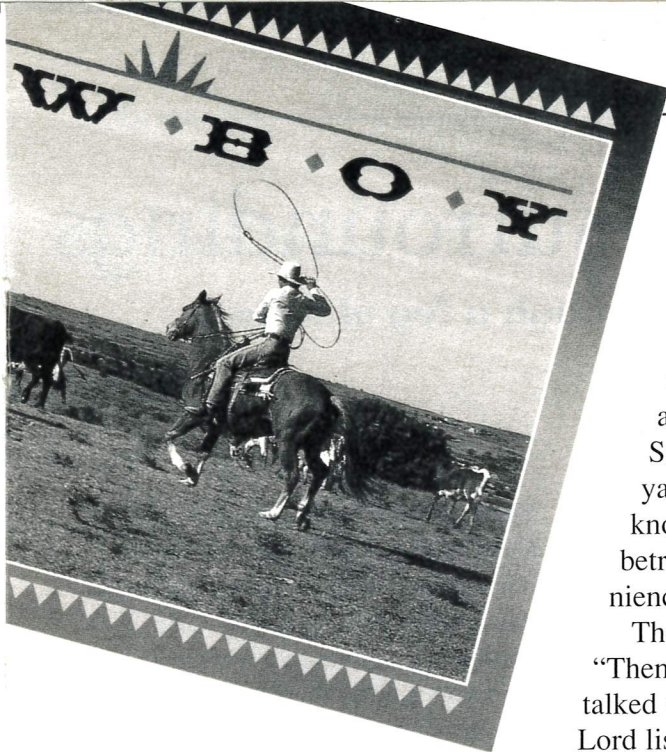
You’ll be able to know them by what they say and by what they don’t say.

Lots of people think Christians talk funny, but that doesn’t really bother Christians because their Father and their Brother speak that way too. In fact, that Father tells them, “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt.” Their Brother says, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.” And again, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.”

You can learn the accent of a believer—in the only way anyone can learn it. You have to spend time listening to the Father’s words.

You can’t ape the accent of a Christian. The Christian can’t even teach it to you in one quick and easy lesson. But you can learn the accent of a believer—in the only way





anyone can learn it. You have to spend time listening to the Father's words, be in his house often, be with those who are his, be committed to staying with him a long, long time. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Jesus said, "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:10).

Christians need to work on their accent

Sometimes Christians are embarrassed and ashamed of their accent, and they make apologies for it, or try and talk like someone else. Peter tried this by a fire one cold night in the courtyard of a high priest. He failed. Jesus' enemies came with their ears cocked, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away."

Then his speech became salty, but not in the way the Lord wanted it to be seasoned with salt. "Then

he began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'"

Thank God he forgives us when we shame the accent. Thank God our Savior looks out of the courtyard window at us too, and we know that even though we betrayed him for fear and convenience, he will never betray us.

The prophet Malachi said, "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard" (3:16). They had the right accent. They spoke something better than the

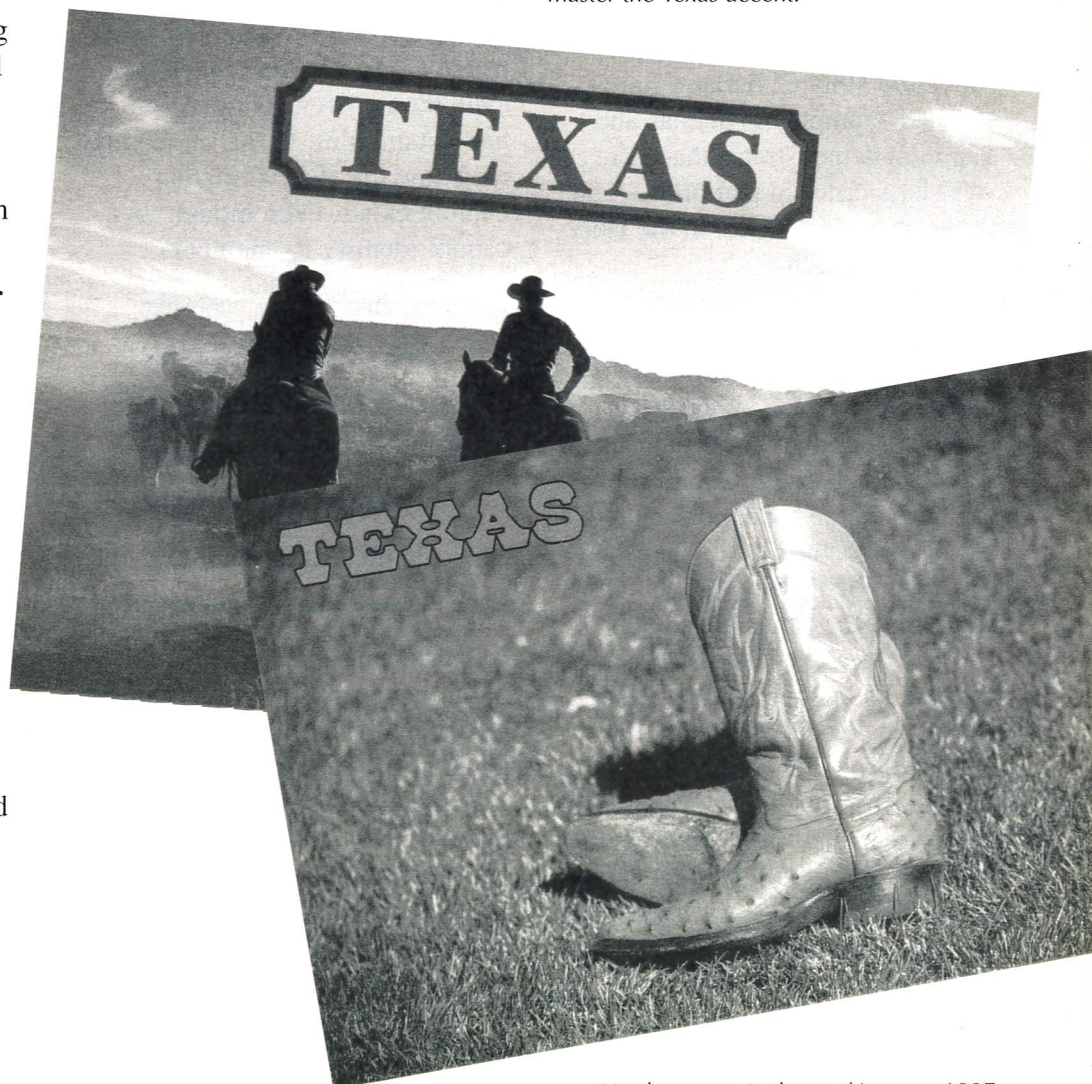
King's English. They spoke the language of their homeland Heaven, the place where everyone speaks like God does.

It's not that way here. Texans talk like Texans, but not everyone is a Texan. There is only one acceptable accent in heaven—the language of God and of his Son. He teaches it to the people of this earth who are not ashamed to speak with his accent.

Do you want to learn it? Pay attention to what the Father said to all who would speak it well: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."

Eric Hartzell, pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas, recently moved from Arizona and is still trying to master the Texas accent.

NL



Gospel light in foggy surroundings

We may wonder how the gospel can shine through a fog of false doctrine, but we let God be the judge of souls.

Rolfe F. Westendorf

“I believe in the Holy Christian Church.”

We say it almost every Sunday. This statement of faith is included in both the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creed. But what does it mean?

No earthly organization contains the Holy Christian Church

To start, understand that we aren’t talking about any church organization like WELS, for instance. Even the crowd that gathered on Pentecost could not be called the Holy Christian Church. The sad example of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates that there were hypocrites in that body—and there are no hypocrites in the Holy Christian Church.

There aren’t because faith in Christ is an absolute requirement for membership in this church. Unbelievers are automatically excluded, no matter how pious they may appear, because God himself excludes them. And God can do that because God and God alone can see true faith. That’s why this church is also called the “invisible church.”

This church is called “Christian” because its members believe that Christ was God’s own Son, true God and true man, who died and rose again to pay for their sins. This church is called “holy” because all believers live in forgiveness, thanks to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. But only God knows for sure who these believers are.

God has his people in many churches

Since the Holy Spirit creates faith through Word and sacrament, we expect to find these believers wherever the gospel in Word and sacrament is proclaimed. But we cannot know for sure who qualifies for membership, because we can’t look into anyone’s heart. That’s why we have to say, “I believe in the Holy Christian Church.” Just as we have to say, “I believe in the triune God.” We know he exists even though we cannot see or understand him. In the same way we know the Holy Christian Church exists, even though we cannot identify its members.

We can rejoice over each one who finds his Savior in another church, no matter how tarnished its teaching may be.

This means that some members of our congregations might not be Christians. They might be only pretenders. We hope this isn’t true, but only God knows which congregation members belong to his church and which do not.

This also means that there are members of God’s church in other congregations and denominations.

There will be Catholics and Methodists and Baptists in heaven, not because of their false teachings, but in spite of them—for these churches teach that Jesus is true God and that he died on the cross for our sins. Though less likely, members of God’s church might even be found among those who deny the Trinity, not because they believe those teachings, but because they have learned from their Bible, or their former churches, things that these churches never taught them. When we say we believe in the Holy Christian Church, we are saying we believe God has his chosen people in many churches and denominations.

God still wants us to separate from false teachers

Does that mean that one church is as good as another? Absolutely not! We know our Savior through God’s Word. When that Word is tarnished or contaminated, the vision of Jesus is distorted, sometimes so drastically we wonder how anyone can find Jesus in that maze of false teachings.

Besides, we have a command from Jesus to continue in his Word and to beware of false prophets. We can wonder about the success of contaminated teaching, but only God can judge the outcomes. We need to preserve all of God’s truth in our teaching and avoid those who teach otherwise. At the same

time, we can rejoice over each one who finds his Savior in another church, no matter how tarnished its teaching may be.

Even though I avoid an evangelist like Billy Graham because of his false teachings, I can rejoice that he preaches Jesus to the masses and pray that God's good news in Christ will reach many through him, even though his converts end up in other churches. I can compete with the Catholic churches in my neighborhood because my teaching is not distorted by salvation by works. But at the same time I can be glad for those Catholics who repent of their sins and believe that Jesus alone paid for their sins.

We live with a tension only God can resolve

An unavoidable tension tugs at us between believing in the Holy Christian Church and preserving pure teachings. On one hand,

we oppose those who contradict what the Bible says. On the other, we rejoice when God uses false teachers to lead people to faith in Christ. And sometimes we don't distinguish as we should between the two God-given truths. Nevertheless, we believe in the Holy Christian Church. I have had the opportunity to attend a number of Baptist funerals. I am regularly disappointed by what I hear. There



is much talk about how good heaven is and how bad this world is. And I hear that the deceased at least tried to be good. But I do not hear that the deceased went to heaven because Jesus paid for his sins. Still, there was

one funeral, outwardly similar to all others, where the preacher praised the deceased. But then he declared the deceased was in heaven, not because of what she had done but because of what Jesus had done for her. I wanted to go up and hug the preacher.

When it comes to defending pure teaching, we must not yield an inch. But when it comes to judging other Christians, we can yield a mile because we believe in the Holy Christian Church. We may wonder how the gospel can shine through a fog of false doctrine, but we let God be the judge of souls.

NI

Rolf Westendorf is pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.





Happy anniversary

Five WELS congregations celebrated their first anniversary in 1996.

The congregations are Risen Savior, Fort Walton Beach, Fla.; Living Savior, Valrico, Fla.; Messiah, Green Bay, Wis.; Risen Savior, Oostburg, Wis.; and Mountain of the Lord, Wausau, Wis.

Each young congregation received a grant from AAL. The grants can be used to establish congregational libraries, plan outreach programs, conduct special music programs, or match member gifts.



Speaking of the Green Bay Packers . . . Dan Sargent, a WELS missionary in Chipata, Zambia,

Africa, and his wife were flying in for a two-month furlough after being gone for 22 months. He phoned his folks to ask them to pick him and his wife up at the airport on a Sunday afternoon in November in Chicago. There was a pause and then, "Wait a minute. I've got to check the schedule." After a few seconds came the reply, "Oh, no problem, it's a Monday night game in Dallas!" Good thing—otherwise Dan and Lisa would have had to spend a night in Chicago. Cheeseheads!

*Mark Rieke
Malawi, Africa*

Readers favor name change

In October we asked how you felt about the name *Northwestern Lutheran* for this magazine.

Here's how you responded:

Keep the name NL (31)	24%
Change the name (83)	65%
It doesn't matter (13)	11%

Some pointed out that the name "Northwestern" held confessional meaning when it was adopted and still does because of its history. Others felt the present name doesn't have much meaning anymore, and a change will better reflect who we are.

Here are some suggested names of the over 90 submitted:

- Confessional Lutheran
- Lutheran Christian
- Lutheran Messenger
- Lutheran Observer
- Lutheran Pathway
- WELS Chronicle
- WELS Link
- WELS Lutheran

Here are some reader comments:

- I believe that to change now would be counterproductive. You do not have to live in the Northwest to be able to read NL.
- Would a rose by any other name smell as sweet?
- Change for the sake of change doesn't make sense. Change is not always for the better.
- The connection to WELS needs to be more obvious.
- I feel we can reach out to others with a more descriptive name.



- We enjoy and appreciate all the changes in our magazine over the past years. It is much more readable! It also touches on subjects that are more relevant to our lives. Most of all it has remained true to God's Word. Don't change that.
- I'm all for the changing of the name because its title implies an isolated geographic audience.

Thanks to all who responded to our readers' poll. The results will be discussed and concerns addressed before any action is taken. We welcome your further input.

rē · li · giōn

Defining religion

justify: A courtroom term meaning to declare innocent or not guilty. When Jesus died and rose again God justified the world. He declared the whole world not guilty. He forgave all the sins of all people of all time.

Auxiliaries provide support for ministerial education schools

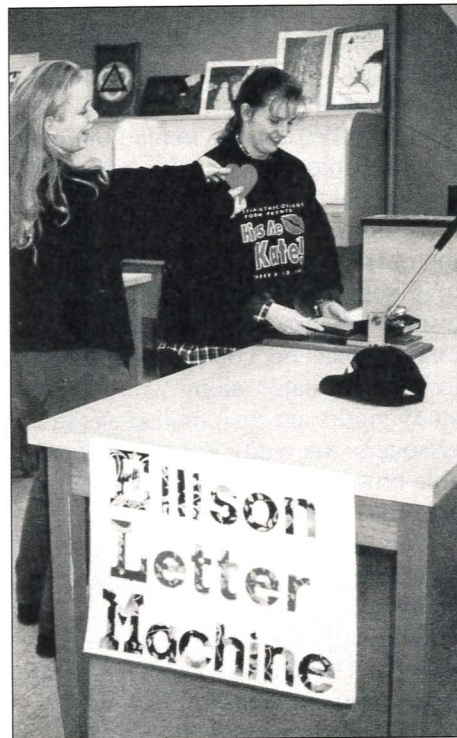
The auxiliaries of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., and Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., both met this October to provide special-projects support for the schools and to promote increased interest in them.

Over 200 people attended the 24th annual seminary auxiliary meeting, led by president Anita Schulz. Besides hearing about the exploratory work in Thailand and vicar experiences in mission settings, attendees voted to support projects—communication radios, a conveyor toaster, and shades for the auditorium windows.

The MLC Ladies' Auxiliary, led by president Eunice Reese, enjoyed tours of the campus and selected projects for 1997, which ranged from a ping pong table to a digital satellite receiver. Formerly known as the Dr. Martin Luther College Ladies' Auxiliary, the now MLC ladies' auxiliary contributed over \$12,000 in 1996, with money going to library and scholarship funds, choir robes, CPR mannequins, camcorders, video projector, laser disc player, and student employment in the admission office.

The MLC Auxiliary functions primarily in Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota. For more information on how

to get your congregation involved, contact Eunice Reese, 612/923-4531. For more information about the Seminary Auxiliary, contact Anita Schulz, 608/241-8034.



MLC students use the Ellison letter machine, one of the items purchased in the past by the MLC Ladies' Auxiliary. Since its formation in 1960, the auxiliary has given a total of \$220,000 in non-budgeted items to the college.

School enrollments secure future

The first semester enrollments at WELS ministerial education schools were promising for the future of the church. The four WELS-subsidized schools were Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis.; Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.; Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis.; Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich.

The increase in enrollments is promising because in 1996 all available graduating candidates were assigned. In fact, some congregation's requests went unfilled. Does that mean WELS will face a shortage of pastors and teachers in the future?

The increase, "especially at MLC in pastor and teacher tracks, promises adequate candidates for the future," said Wayne Borgwardt, former administrator for ministerial education.

Ministerial education schools first semester enrollments

School	1995-96	1996-97
WLS (on campus)	111	123
MLC	772	816
LPS	506	475
MLS	319	335
Total:	1,708	1,749

Congregations evaluate parish assistance

"Blessings abound. More people are in the Word. Worship attendance has grown. There is less frustration."

What is this person talking about? Parish Assistance.

Parish Assistance is a consulting service established by the Board for Parish Services to help congregations assess, plan, and develop their ministries of outreach and nurture. Since 1993 over 100 WELS congregations have used parish assistance.

Ron Heins heads the service and, with other consultants and congregation members, provides personalized help to congregational leaders.

But is the program effective?

Through a survey, 51 percent of parish assistance users found the process quite helpful and 49 percent found it very helpful. And 99.5 percent would recommend and encourage other congregations and their leaders to use the service.

"It was one of those blessings one just wanted to share," said another user.

Another commented, "It gave us a proper perspective on the past and helped focus us on the biblical way to view the future."

For more information on the parish assistance program, contact Ron Heins, 414/771-1235.



GID—keeping you informed

Elections are over. Inaugurations are this month. Your



government is now in session. You want to keep informed, but you're not sure how you can stay on top of the changes. And often the information you receive has a media bias.

That's where GID comes in. GID is WELS Lutherans for Life's Government Information Division.

GID has one bias—God's. GID provides clear, timely, up-to-date information on federal and state legislation relating to abortion, private education, homosexual issues, sex education, church-related items, genetic engineering, physician-assisted suicide, and parental consent. Each report lists applicable Bible passages.

GID does not encourage people to vote one way or another—it states only the facts of the legislation and the facts of God's Word.

Christians are reminded that elected leaders and our national and state laws create an environment for us to carry out our purpose in life—sharing the message of salvation through Christ. Politicians, legislation, and regulations do not accomplish this purpose in and of themselves.

GID is a subscription service. It is available through mail, by FAX, or on the Internet. However, in January you can try the Internet access on a free trial basis. Reach WLFL's homepage at www.wels.net/wlfl/. Scroll down to reach the link "Government Information Division (GID)." When you are prompted for a name, type in—January. The password is also—January. (This is case sensitive).

Write or call WELS Lutherans for Life, 2949 N Mayfair Rd Suite 309, Milwaukee WI 53222-4304; FAX 414-774-1360.

Outreach in prison

Over 200,000 copies of an easy-to-read contemporary translation of the Bible will be printed in February to fill requests for Bibles.

The requests didn't come from home or world mission fields, but from another growing area of outreach—prison ministry.

The Commission on Special Ministries, working closely with the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS), has mailed out over 30,000 Bibles this year for prisoners throughout the United States.

Besides sending Bibles, OWLS members, who do most of the mailings, send Bible study guides with tests to the prisoners. Volunteer pastors and teachers correct the returned tests. Certificates, along with the next study guide, are then mailed to the prisoners. Six study guides are available now, with an additional six available by 1998.

The Living Water, a devotional newsletter, is also included with every mailing.

Originally the Commission served only the 110 WELS members known to be in prison. In 1995, however, they decided to make all their

materials available, free of charge, to over 600 prison chaplains for distribution in the prisons. Ever since, the numbers keep growing.

"God has given us an unusual opportunity for reaching out to the unchurched," said Alfons Woldt, special ministries administrator. "The response that we get from the prisoners indicates the Holy Spirit is working on their hearts. We pray to God for his continued blessings."

How can you get involved in this exciting mission field? One way is to become a pen pal to one of the over 600 prisoners requesting a Christian friend. Here's how:

- DO NOT write directly to the prisoner. Instead write WELS Special Ministries, P.O. Box 452, New Ulm MN 56073.
- Soon you will receive a packet containing a letter from a prisoner, some generic stationery, and instructions on how the pen pal program works. All letters sent to prisoners and received from prisoners go through a P.O. box in New Ulm, Minn. This way you can be an anonymous friend who offers Christian support.

**DON'T
KEEP THIS
MAGAZINE!**

The following is from a letter Joanne Halter wrote to her home church—Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis. Halter served the medical mission in Zambia, Africa, and returned to the U.S. last fall.

"I took a packet of stuff to read during my walk, and as usual, I was asked what I was reading and if they could have it. I had finished reading several bulletins and church newsletters, so there I was distributing them in the bush country. You never know where your message will end up. Perhaps I'll start walking with my *Northwestern Lutheran*."

How have you shared NL? Call, write, FAX, or e-mail us. We'll replace your copy—free. *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; phone—414/256-3232; FAX—414/256-3899; e-mail—nl@sab.wels.net.

Obituaries

Lucille J. Kiekbusch 1924-1996

Lucille J. Kiekbusch was born July 24, 1924 in Courtland, Minn. She died Oct. 29, 1996 in Rochester, Minn.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she taught at Baraboo, Wis., and at St. Martin and St. Matthew, both in Winona, Minn.

She is survived by husband, Donald; one son; one daughter; five grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; three brothers; and one sister.

Caroline Doletzky 1940-1996

Caroline Doletzky was born Feb. 28, 1940 in Valentine, Neb. She died Sept. 8, 1996 in Wayne, Mich.

A 1962 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Doletzky served at St. John, Westland, Mich.

She is survived by husband, Richard; four children; her mother; three sisters; one brother; and nieces and nephews.

Lynette Johannpeter 1939-1996

Lynette Johannpeter was born Jan. 29, 1939 in St. Louis, Mo. She died Oct. 28, 1996 in Glendale, Ariz.

Johannpeter served at St. John, West Bend and St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, both in Wis.; Good Shepherd, Phoenix; Redeemer, Tucson; Grace, Glendale; and Emmaus, Phoenix, all in Ariz.

She is survived by a brother, nieces, and grand nieces and nephews.

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Defining religion

Messiah (Christ): Anointed one. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil to set them apart for God's service. God also promised a special anointed one to serve all people. Jesus is the fulfillment—our great prophet, priest, and king, who came to save us.

District news

Arizona-California

Lutheran Counseling Services

Southwest Association celebrated its fourth anniversary in November. The association, composed of five congregations in the Tucson area, is looking at expanding to the Phoenix area. . . .

Good Shepherd, Vallejo, Calif.,

observed its 25th anniversary on Oct. 27, 1996. . . . **Gary Krug** celebrated his 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry on Oct. 20, 1996. . . . **Grace, San Carlos, Ariz.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary in November. . . .

Reformation, San Diego, Calif., celebrated Reformation with a Friendship Sunday and encouraged members to share their Lutheran heritage with friends and family. . . . WELS members in California joined members of **Ascension, Escondido**, to raise money for Jerry and Teresa Cavanaugh. During a robbery, Jerry Cavanaugh was shot once in the head. Doctors say he will be blinded for life.

Hermann John

Minnesota

St. Paul, St. James, Minn., celebrated its 110th anniversary on Sept. 29, 1996. The congregation renovated their building in preparation for its celebration. . . . **Courtland,**

Courtland, Minn., celebrated its 75th anniversary on Sept. 29, 1996.

Jeffrey Bovee

South Atlantic

Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla., dedicated its multi-purpose building on Nov. 10.

Southeastern Wisconsin

St. John's (68th), Milwaukee, celebrated its 150th anniversary with special services in December. . . . **Hope, Twin Lakes, Wis.**, dedicated its new church on Oct. 27. . . . **Tom Mellon**

celebrated his 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry at Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis., on Oct. 20. He presently is a teacher at Kettle

Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis. . . . **Risen Savior,**

Milwaukee, celebrated

its mission festival in

November by baptizing

seven children in one

service. The children

from three families

range in age from a

year and a half to nine.

Their parents are friends of the congregation through the evangelism efforts of a grandmother and the preschool.

George Ferch



Supporting WELS: listening to and learning from congregations

During the fall of 1996 and the winter of 1997, listening and learning sessions are scheduled with various congregations' leaders. The leaders will share how their congregations want to financially support the WELS mission.

There will be 27 sessions with representatives from 81 congregations. Two or three sessions are scheduled in each district and each session will

involve pastors and lay leaders from three congregations. The districts will select and invite the congregations, and the congregations will select their representatives.

Following the session, the office of Communication for Financial Support will develop a report summarizing all information received, and offer recommendations to the Conference of Presidents.



As I was taking our visiting three-year-old grandson back home, we stopped to watch a train. Along with many other questions, he asked where the train was going. Feeling fairly safe, I answered that it was probably going to La Crosse, Wis. After the train was out of sight we continued toward home.

After an unusual quiet (at least five minutes), a little voice came from the back seat, "Oma, when the train goes to the cross, will it have to die there?"

*Jo Thomas
Onalaska, Wisconsin*

YOUTH NEWS

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

From generation to generation

Area Lutheran high schools are spanning the generation gap with opportunities for seniors and students to interact.

Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., cooperates with Grancare Nursing Home in a program called Adopt-a-Grandparent. In this program, students "adopt" residents of the nursing home, visiting the residents at study hall during school. The nursing home also provides quarterly dinners for the students and residents.

"The students strike up quite a close friendship with the residents," said Pastor David Haag, director of the program and professor of religion and Spanish at WLA. "It also gives them a sense of helping someone, as well as a chance to put their Christian faith into action."

St. Croix LHS, St. Paul, Minn., has grandparents' days when grandparents are invited to visit the school. This school year, 150 grandparents from states as far away as Arizona, Washington, and California, toured classrooms, attended chapel, ate lunch with their grandchildren, and visited with other grandparents.

Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis., invited grandparents to a catered brunch, which included entertainment and personal school tours by the grandchildren.

Lois Brunner said it was an honor to be invited.

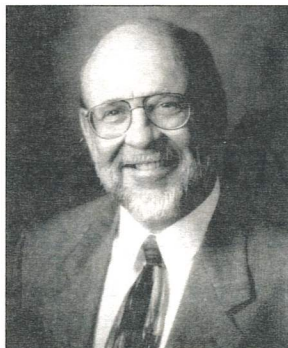
"It was so nice to have your grandchild alone—just with you," said Brunner. "It's also a nice one-on-one time when you have more than one grandchild."

Lawrenz heads up the Board for Ministerial Education

Dr. John C. Lawrenz isn't going to face his new position sitting down.

"I don't intend to be a desk jockey," said Lawrenz, new administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education (BME). "I want to be out in the schools."

He continues: "My number one goal is to have our ministerial educational system work as a system. I want our schools to produce students who think and function in the 21st century, which means learning to adapt to a culture that is becoming less Christian and more pagan as well as increasingly more multi-media and cross cultural."



He also wants the schools under the BME to "join hands" with other schools including Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee; Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary (ELS), Mankato, Minn.; and area Lutheran high schools.

A 1970 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran

Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Lawrenz has a master's degree in archeology and a doctorate in Mediterranean studies, both from Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass.

He served as a parish pastor at Zion, Gainesville, Fla.; was president and taught at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; served as president

and taught at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and served as vice president for student life and professor of Hebrew at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Besides these positions, Lawrenz taught Hebrew at the University of Florida, taught field archaeology at Tel Aviv University every summer from 1978-1984, and co-directed three Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary summer quarters in Israel.

He and his wife, Phoebe, a German teacher, have three children: Sarah, 23; Benjamin, 21; and Susannah, 18.

Lawrenz is replacing Dr. Wayne Borgwardt, who accepted a call to direct the WELS telecommunications and technology task force. Borgwardt served as administrator from 1987-1996.



The following new items have been added to the AVA library:

Life on the Edge
Focus on the Family produced a series for teen-agers and young adults, in which Dr. Dobson discusses some of life's most important issues. The presenter should point out suggestions of decision theology. The series includes:

The Myth of Safe Sex (Code 8300), 1996. 53 min., color SCA

Keys to a Lifelong Love (Code 8302), 1996. 53 min., color SCA

When God Doesn't Make Sense (Code 8304), 1996. 53 min., color SCA

Emotions: Can You Trust Them (Code 8303), 1996. 53 min., color SCA

Love Must Be Tough (Code 8301), 1996. 53 min., color SCA

Bible Stories for Children
These videos for children have taken some liberties with the biblical record, but essentially the facts of the story are accurate. The new items include these animated videos:

Discovering the Baby King—The Story of Christmas (Code 8314), 1996. 25 min., color PIJ
Joseph's Reunion (Code 8267), 1996. 25 min., color PIJ
Solomon (Code 8266), 1996. 25 min., color PIJ

How to Build a Solid Foundation (Code 8294), 1996. 25 min., color CA

This video uses real life situations to demonstrate the scriptural principles for a life-long marriage.

Videos are available for rental for \$7.50 by congregations, schools, and church groups. Order from Audiovisual Library Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD FINANCIAL REPORT
CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Nine Months Ended September 30, 1996

District	Communicants 12/31/95	1996	Year to date projected	September offerings	Nine months offerings	Percent of sub.	Annizd Ave. per comm.
		Total Subscription			Offerings Received		
Arizona-California	16,630	\$985,340	\$659,931	\$53,428	\$649,615	98.4%	\$52.08
Dakota-Montana	9,375	426,387	251,310	20,683	257,426	102.4	36.61
Michigan	36,926	2,132,175	1,363,597	127,386	1,320,723	96.9	47.69
Minnesota	43,642	2,369,952	1,519,917	128,348	1,395,343	91.8	42.63
Nebraska	10,110	560,636	332,634	29,188	372,236	111.9	49.09
North Atlantic	3,646	302,506	212,390	25,551	220,744	103.9	80.73
Northern Wisconsin	61,574	2,498,651	1,525,025	139,470	1,503,562	98.6	32.56
Pacific Northwest	4,770	268,056	173,506	12,069	167,143	96.3	46.72
South Atlantic	6,303	394,707	282,775	34,309	294,767	104.2	62.35
South Central	4,126	345,765	236,153	27,664	268,816	113.8	86.87
Southeastern Wisconsin	58,087	3,261,224	1,996,481	234,643	1,919,095	96.1	44.05
Western Wisconsin	59,910	2,972,138	1,878,694	215,944	1,905,591	101.4	42.41
Total - This Year	315,099	16,517,537	10,432,413	1,048,683	10,275,061	98.5	43.48
Total - Last Year	316,221	16,434,979	10,322,239	1,101,862	10,067,038	97.5	42.45

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities/ Three months ended September 30, 1996

Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets	1996 actual	1995 actual	1996 budget
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$ 3,455,708	\$ 3,353,261	\$ 3,364,000
Gifts and memorials	2,216,216	481,756	929,000
Bequests/planned giving	392,390	4,614	119,000
Tuition and fees	2,744,497	2,508,309	2,650,000
Other	37,547	10,091	27,000
Transfers-endwmt/trust earnings	66,947	56,178	59,000
Transfers-gift trust	1,884,623	2,059,572	1,913,000
Transfers-continuing programs	964,486	937,343	957,000
Transfers-other	-	50	-
Total revenues	11,762,414	9,411,174	10,018,000
Expenditures:			
Administration Division	813,883	642,807	914,000
Home Missions Division	1,688,795	1,423,608	1,854,000
World Missions Division	2,013,658	1,886,071	2,066,000
Ministerial Education Division	5,477,541	5,683,016	5,321,000
Parish Services Division	323,873	335,277	385,000
Fiscal Services Division	371,098	417,181	414,000
Total expenditures	10,688,848	10,387,960	10,954,000
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets	1,073,566	(976,786)	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Bequest/planned giving	18,654	-	-
Change in value of trust agreements	42,655	-	-
Satisfaction of restrictions	(2,388,383)	-	-
Total revenues	(2,327,074)		
Change in temp restricted net assets	(2,327,074)		
Net assets - beginning of year	5,109,960	627,702	-
Net assets - end of period	3,856,452	(349,084)	-

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	September 30, 1996	September 30, 1995
Assets:	\$	\$
Cash and cash equivalents	2,360,955	207,256
Due from other funds	-	11,610
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	97,250	91,750
Other accounts receivable	144,352	64,707
Contributions receivable	2,370,193	-
Mortgage note receivable	19,567	21,240
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	36,080	53,561
Total assets	4,936,397	358,124
Liabilities and net assets:		
Due to other funds	35,970	-
Due to schools	833,305	524,414
Accounts payable	210,670	182,794
Total liabilities	1,079,945	707,208
Unrestricted net assets	2,370,193	-
Temp restricted net assets	1,486,259	(349,084)
Total net assets	3,856,452	(349,084)
Total liab. and net assets	4,936,397	358,124

—Randy Matter, Controller



Prayer in school still not allowed

In November 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal to reinstate a Mississippi state law allowing student-led prayer in the state's public schools.

The justices, without comment, left intact lower court rulings that struck down a 1994 law that would have allowed "invocations, benedictions, or nonsectarian, nonproselytizing student-initiated voluntary prayer" at "school-related student events."

A federal judge halted implementation of the law except for voluntary, student-led prayers at high school

commencements because the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in an earlier case, ruled that graduation prayers led by graduating seniors were legal.

U.S. District Court Judge Henry Wingate ruled that the law was unconstitutional except when applied to graduation ceremonies, and a three-judge panel of the 5th circuit upheld Wingate's decision.

The justices' action did not address the merits of the Mississippi law, nor clear up the confusion educators say exists because of different rulings by different courts.

Court case could threaten religious property tax exemptions

A case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court could threaten tax exempt status of nonprofit groups, including religious organizations, say church-state attorneys.

At the center of the case is a Christian Science summer camp that draws 95 percent of its campers from states other than Maine. The town of Harrison imposed \$30,000 in property taxes on the camp, arguing that local taxpayers should not have to subsidize an organization that primarily serves people from outside Maine.

The justices heard arguments in October 1996 about whether state and

local governments may impose property taxes on traditionally tax-exempt charities that "principally benefit" people from out of state.

Lawyers for nonprofit groups warn that the case could have implications nationwide. "If the camp loses, then revenue-hungry states and municipalities will have nothing to stop them from taxing the real estate of all but the smallest and most parochial charities," said Steven T. McFarland, director of the Annandale, Va.-based Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom.

O little town of Bethlehem

Plans are underway to renovate Bethlehem's Manger Square, traditionally believed to be the site of Jesus' birth.

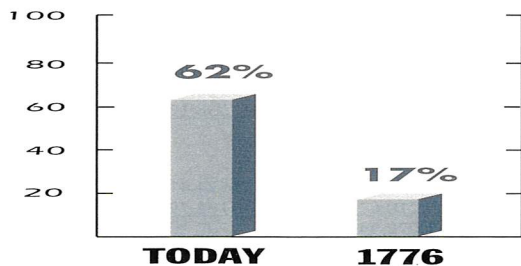
The first part of the project will study the costs of renovating the square. An international support group of church leaders will be established to oversee the work. The Palestinian National Authority plans to complete restoration by the year 2000.

The square, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity, is in an area dominated by tourist shops and parking lots. Bethlehem is an important center for pilgrims and tourism.

In brief

- Even though suicide rates for other age groups have stayed the same or declined slightly in recent years, **among 15- to 19-year-olds suicide increased 30 percent between 1980 and 1993.** For younger kids (10 to 14), the suicide rate increased 120 percent in the same time period. [*Time*, July 22, 1996 quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, October 1996]
- **Americans annually spend something like \$400 million on Bibles.** They have plenty of different versions to choose from. *Publisher's Weekly* estimates there are 450 translations or paraphrases of all or part of the Bible. [*Time*, Sept. 9, 1996, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, November 1996.]
- **One out of three sexually active 12- to 18-year-olds reports that the media influenced their decision to engage in sexual intercourse.** They said TV and movies make it seem normal. [*Youthworker Update*, Sept. 9, 1996, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, November 1996.]

Percentage of Americans involved in a church



[Servant, Summer 1996, quoted in *Current Thoughts & Trends*, September 1996.]

Fewer contributors, more contributions

Although church attendance is at its lowest in 15 years, Americans remain active financial contributors to local churches and religious centers. In fact, 45 percent of Americans donate money to a place of worship in a typical month.

The survey also found that 41 percent gave to a nonprofit organization other than a church or place of worship. Of those, 34 percent gave to Christian organizations, commonly referred to as parachurch organizations. Nearly 15 million households support such ministry efforts.

The Christian parachurch



ministries with the highest proportion of donors were overseas missionaries or missions groups (61 percent) and youth ministries (45 percent). Others supported ministries such as social welfare, Christian education, and evangelistic organizations.

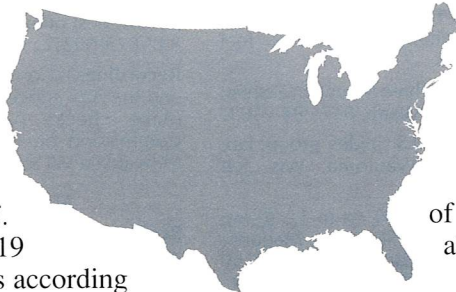
The survey of 1,004 adults, ages 18 and older, was conducted by the Barna Research Group and is accurate to within plus or minus three percentage points. [*Barna Research Group, Ltd.*, June 7]

U.S.—third most sinful nation

Spain is the most sinful nation in the industrialized world, according to a survey by Swedish business journal, *Svensk Export Strategi*.

The journal ranked 19 industrialized countries according to the seven “modern deadly sins” of smoking, drinking, drugs, gambling, overeating, night life, and prostitution.

Spain topped the list particularly because of its night life and gambling. France was ranked the second most



sinful nation because of its high consumption of alcohol. The United States was third because of the rate of drug abuse.

Rounding out the top five were

Great Britain and the Netherlands. The Nordic countries of Sweden, Finland, and Norway were at the bottom of the list, as were Portugal and Japan.

Albuquerque can't bar Jesus film

In October, the Supreme Court refused to let city officials in Albuquerque, N.M., bar the showing of a film at federally funded senior citizen centers. The film seeks to convert people to Christianity.

The court turned down arguments that said showing the film at city-owned centers would violate the Constitution's church-state separation requirement.

In 1994, Don Kimbro, pastor of the non-denominational Church on the

Rock, sought permission to show the film “Jesus” at the city's senior centers and to hand out large-print New Testaments. The film urges viewers to accept Jesus as “Savior and Lord” and to pray to him every day.

City officials refused to let Kimbro show the film at the centers because, they said, federal law providing money to run the centers barred religious instruction or worship at the centers.

Election bites

- In voting on a ballot initiative, Colorado rejected a measure that would have imposed property taxes on churches and other nonprofit organizations.
- Here's a rundown of how Americans voted by religion in the 1996 presidential election.

Religious conservatives:

Clinton: 26%; Dole: 65%; Perot: 8%

Catholics:

Clinton: 54%; Dole: 36%; Perot: 8%

Jews:

Clinton: 83%; Dole: 13%; Perot: 4%

Muslims:

Clinton: 48%; Dole: 38%; Perot: 10%

[Voters News Service Sample: 16,338 voters. American Jewish Congress Sample: unscientific survey of 2,112 voters. Minaret Magazine and Muslim Public Affairs Council Sample: unscientific survey of 400 individuals]

CORRECTION: The three teachers (James Tank, Donald Potthast, and Edith Arndt) who celebrated anniversaries were from Trinity, Brillion, Wis., not Trinity, Oshkosh, Wis., as was reported on p. 24 of the October NL.

Mark Bannan, not Mark Bannaff, submitted a letter to Readers forum in the November issue.

rē·lī'giōn

Defining religion

petition: A request. The Lord's Prayer contains seven requests or petitions. God wants us to bring all of our requests to him in prayer. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6).

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3231;
FAX, 414/256-3899; e-mail, nl@sab.wels.net
Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors:

Andrus, Eugene R., from Trinity, Elkton, Mich., to St. John, Ann Arbor-5N, Mich.
Kolander, Mark D., from Our Savior, East Waukegan, Wash., to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
Lawrenz, John C., from MLC, New Ulm, Minn., to administrator, Ministerial Education, Milwaukee.
Pitt, Philip K., from Faith, Russellville, Ark., to Our Hope, Chippewa Falls, Wis.
Quandt, John E., from Good Shepherd, Kearney, Neb., to Beautiful Savior, W. Des Moines, Iowa
Radunzel, Steven J., from St. James, Evanston, Ill., to Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.
Reede, Paul N., from Christie/Immanuel, Neillsville, Wis., to St. Paul, West Bend, Wis.
Schwab, Rodney R., to Martin Luther Memorial Home, Holt/Hope, Portland, Mich.
Spaude, Joel R., from Lutheran Church of Central Africa, Chipata, Zambia, to Lutheran Church of Central Africa, Zomba, Malawi
Spevacek, Kirby A., from Lutheran Church of Bulgaria, Sofia, to Albania
Stone, Scott J., from St. John, Victorville, Calif., to Vacaville (exp.), Vacaville, Calif.
Styx, Randall D., to St. John, Sturgeon Bay-7NE, Wis.
Wilkens, Steven E., from Peace, Rio Rancho, N.M., to Bethany, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Workentine, Paul M., from Cross of Glory, Washington, Mich., to Thailand
Zimdars, Ernest H., from Confessional Evangelical, Puerto Rico, to Our Savior, Pomona, Calif.

Northwestern Publishing House will be closed for inventory on Jan. 30 from 9 AM to 8 PM and Jan. 31 from 9 AM to noon.

Congregation treasurers

The cutoff date for Congregational Mission Offering (CMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 1996 lock box offerings will be credited as 1996 receipts through Jan. 9, 1997, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as "December" offerings on the remittance coupon. Please note that offerings must be mailed to the lock box rather than delivered to the synod offices.

Randy Matter, controller

CALL FOR NOMINATION

The Board of Control of Luther Preparatory School is seeking nominations for the position of professor of music. Duties include choral directing and possibly instrumental responsibilities. Candidates should be qualified to teach music on the high school level, have a understanding of the synod's ministerial education system, a love for young people, and an evangelical approach to teaching and ministry. Send nominations by Jan. 30 to President Mark Schroeder, LPS, 1300 Western Ave, Watertown WI 53094; FAX, 414/262-8118; e-mail, mschroed@lps.wels.net.

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 54th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 28-Aug. 1 at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Details will be announced later.

Any memorials to be included in *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BoRAM) must be submitted by Feb. 1. Send to the Office of the President, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; e-mail, usr18@sab.wels.net.

Tel/Tech Task Force seeks input

The WELS Tel/Tech Task Force (Dec. NL, p. 21) has begun meeting and is looking for input to help meet its objectives. How can we best use technology and telecommunications for worldwide outreach, synodical communications, and education? If you have an idea, a name to contact, or a question to ask, contact Wayne Borgwardt, director, or Gary Baumler, chairman, at WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; e-mail Borgwardt, borgway@aol.com; e-mail Baumler, garyb@sab.wels.net; FAX, 414/256-3899.

COMING EVENTS

Men's retreat—Jan. 10-11. Willmar Conference Center, Holiday Inn, Willmar, Minn. \$30. Joel Thomford, 612/235-5996.

Men's retreat—Jan. 17-18. Three Mountain Retreat, Clifton, Tex. \$50. Pastor Bill Werth, 817/294-9303.

SHARE winter retreat—WELS singles' group. Jan. 24-26 at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Jeff Leonard, 414/929-9429.

Mission/ministry seminar—7:30 AM to 12:30 PM, Feb. 4-6, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. To register, contact Paul Rutschow, 6717 W Wartburg Cir, Mequon WI 53092; 414/512-0276.

Concert—Contemporary music concert featuring Artesian WELS. 1 PM, Feb. 9. Fairview, 137 N 66 St, Milwaukee, Wis. Sue Hahm, 414/797-0695.

Holy Land tour—Feb. 17-26. Led by Lloyd Huebner, retired president of DMLC, New Ulm, Minn. \$2,279. New Ulm Travel/Travel Fun Tours, 507/359-2051; 1-800-657-0151.

Women's retreat—Christian Woman Today. March 14-16. Holiday Inn SunSpree resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Jan Kneser, 414/781-1955.

Women's retreat—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. April 11-13. Radisson, Rochester, Minn. Registration deadline: March 15. Bev, 507/931-1866 (AM only).

Convention—for WELS mission for the deaf and hard of hearing. July 25-27. Radisson Hotel, La Crosse, Wis. Gene Seidel, 414/536-1651.

Germany Lutherland tour—July 7-17. Hosted by pastors Richard Starr and Scott Stone. Cost: approx. \$2,300. Scott Stone, 16700 Greentree Blvd, Victorville CA 92392; 619/245-9090 or Witte Travel, 1-800-469-4883.

Canoe trip—July 13-18 into the BWCA/Quetico, Provincial Park. Led by men from Faith, Antioch, Ill. Cost: approx. \$300. For information and application, contact Terry Beguhn, 847/746-1766.

ANNIVERSARIES

Milwaukee, Wis.—Salem (150). Jan. 12—anniversary year kickoff with WLS choir. 8 and 10:30 AM; chili dinner following. 6814 N 107 St, Milwaukee WI 53224-4306; 414/353-8141.

Livonia, Mich.—St. Paul church (125) and school (50). Jan. 12—festival service, 4 PM. March 2—WLS choir concert, 8:30 and 11 AM. Apr. 27—confirmation anniversary service, 8:30 and 11 AM. Aug. 24—outdoor school anniversary service, 10 AM. Oct. 5—mission festival celebration, 8:30 and 11 AM. 17810 Farmington Rd, Livonia, MI 48152; 313/261-1360.

Fond du Lac, Wis.—Faith church (50) and school (35). Feb. 6—service, 6:30 PM. Feb. 8—choral concert, 6:30 PM. Feb. 9—services, 7:45 and 10:30 AM; dinner, noon; service, 3 PM. 55 Prairie Rd, Fond du Lac, WI 54935; 414/923-6313.

NEEDED

Book—*Martin Luther—Hero of Faith*, Frederick Nohl, Concordia Publishing House, 1962. Clyde Wobeck, Luther HS, Onalaska, Wis.; 608/783-7986.

Church anniversary plates—Donations of plates to be displayed at the synod administration building. Send to Lois Brunner, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3888.

AVAILABLE

Organ—Thomas Eldorado 792, 2 keyboards, 32 pedals. Best offer and cost of shipping. Mrs. Bass, 847/825-6937.

Recordings—Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts concert. CDs, \$13.50; tapes, \$9.50. Make checks payable to WELS. Send to Commission on Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

NAMES WANTED

Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada—Steve Nuss, Apostles, 1353N Benjamin Cr, Regina SK Canada S4X 4L3; 306/543-9985; FAX, 306/543-0332.

Vacaville, Calif.—Scott Stone, 16700 Greentree Blvd, Victorville CA 92392; 619/245-9090 or 619/245-3440.

SERVICE TIMES

Eagle, Colo.—Planning a winter vacation to Colorado's ski country? Join us for worship at Mountain Valley in Eagle (30 miles west of Vail on I-70). Service time, 9 AM. Worship held at Colorado Mountain College, Broadway and Second St., Eagle, Colo. Brent Merten, 970/328-6718.

POSITION AVAILABLE

English teachers—Evangelism-minded couple to teach English and help with church work in Ashikago, Japan. Have to pay round trip air fare to Tokyo. Employer pays rent, car, and utilities. Pay: \$1,000/person a month; bonus of \$1,800/person at end of year. Looking for college graduates who are good with children. Contact Missionary James Sherod, Orimoto 558-3, Shimodate-Shi, Ibaraki-Ken 308 Japan; e-mail, 100216.2122@compuserve.com.

Resource development—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, is seeking entry level as well as experienced individuals for its resource development division. Applications are being sought for the following positions: grant writer, foundation and corporate giving, deferred giving, major gifts. Contact Susan Waldhuetter, WLC, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226; 414/443-8867; FAX, 414/443-8514.

Confessions of “a man of the cloth”

Paul J. Lidtke

“**B**ut, Pastor, you’re a man of the cloth.”

I heard those words only once in my ministry, but that was enough for me. The phrase “a man of the cloth” doesn’t impress or motivate me.

I don’t know where that phrase began, but I can guess. In times past, a called servant of Christ could be recognized by the clerical collar and other vestments he wore in public. That clothing gave the man a certain aura in the eyes of most. He was not simply a man of faith and conviction, but a man of perfection.

So whenever a clergy member is referred to as “a man of the cloth,” his moral conduct is called into focus. The thought is: “Pastor, someone of your high calling shouldn’t do or say that.”

I agree with the qualifications for the public ministry that St. Paul writes to Titus. Paul says a pastor ought to “be blameless.” Being blameless doesn’t mean being “a man of the cloth;” it means not bringing public reproach on himself. Paul never intended for a man serving in the public ministry to be without sin. If that were a qualification, no man could ever preach God’s Word.

Perhaps that’s why the phrase “a man of the cloth” annoys me. I never step into a pulpit to preach as a perfect man to a congregation of sinners. I never want the people I serve to see me as someone who can do no wrong. Rather, I hope people see me as a man who struggles with sin as much as they do, but who is convinced that Jesus is the only answer for that sin.

Instead of being referred to as “a man of the cloth,” I would rather be known as “a man of the cross.” That tells of my faith and my conviction, as well as the gospel message I am privileged to preach. It also points to the source of my motivation for ministry.

I don’t wish for those I serve to view me as a “perfect pastor” who makes all the right decisions and never makes a mistake. The higher the pedestal I am placed on, the farther I have to fall. Also, there will be many disappointed congregation members when I fail to live up to their, or God’s, expectations.

However, if I’m viewed as “a man of the cross,” people will know me as someone who confesses, like St. Paul, that he is “the worst of sinners.” Those who hear me preach will know I need the Savior as much as they do. Those who look to my example for strength will find it exactly where I find it—in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Some pastors may want to be known as “a man of the cloth,” but I’m not one of them. Other men of God may want to boast of their superior moral qualities, but I don’t. I’d rather be a humble pastor who admits his wrongs and finds his only boast, as well as his forgiveness, in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul Lidtke is pastor at Our Savior, Freeport, Illinois.

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Samuel: an installer of kings

Years of listening to the Lord taught Samuel that God is trustworthy, even when he leads contrary to human sense.

James A. Aderman

Their words stung like a face slap on a frigid January day. "Appoint a king to lead us," the tribal leaders demanded of **Samuel (8:5)**. The prophet had spent his life leading Israel. Now the people he tirelessly served rejected him.

Demanding a king

The tribal elders rarely agreed on anything, but they couldn't avoid noticing the Philistine soldiers stationed throughout their country. Other neighboring nations bullied them as well. And since Eli's death, there was no central worship facility to unite Israel spiritually. The answer, they concurred, was a strong leader to unify them and to focus their strength.

We expect the prophet to rage against their ungrateful demand. But the Lord's listening servant had learned to bow to God's will rather than personal pique. The prophet sought God's advice.

"It is not you they have rejected, . . . but me," the Lord pointed out. Nevertheless "listen to all the people are saying to you, . . . and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do" (8:7, 9). The Lord's father-heart would not give a king without his people's informed insistence.

But "the people refused to listen to Samuel. 'No!' they said, 'We want a king over us'" (8:19).

This second slap could not have stung any less. Yet, once again,

Samuel sought God's guidance and refused to give in to hurt feelings and fuming frustration. God responded, "Give them a king" (8:22). The decision made, Samuel sent the elders home to await the day God would crown his king.

Anointing the king

Then the scene shifted to a tall, handsome, and wealthy man from the politically insignificant tribe of Benjamin. The Lord described this unarmed man to Samuel and brought him to the prophet. "Anoint him leader over my people," God commanded (9:16).

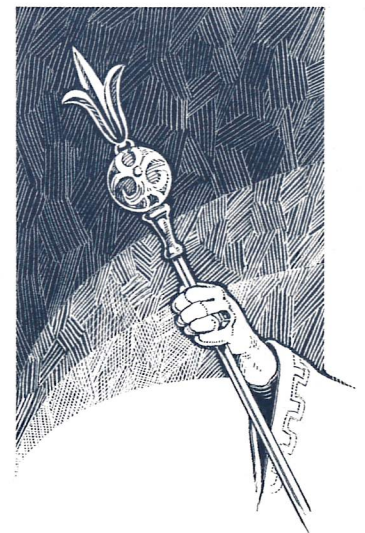
To Samuel's credit, he treated Saul with hospitality although Saul was about to replace him. Years of listening to the Lord taught Samuel that God is trustworthy, even when he leads contrary to human sense. Years of watching taught him how God provides an upside to every downside of life. Years of trusting had shown him that God's grace guarantees God's blessing.

One wonders if Samuel's hand quivered in nervous anticipation as he anointed Saul king. In Israel's history, this was a first. With a kiss, Samuel pledged his support. Then he explained, "Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance" (10:1)?

Samuel stands tall in a long line of faithful believers who obeyed God at the cost of prestige and power: Abraham and the wealth he

left to settle in the Promised Land; Hosea and the marital happiness he gave up to illustrate God's faithfulness to adulterous Israel; and John the Baptist, who willingly allowed his influence to wane so the Savior's ministry waxed. The grace of an upside God generates no less obedience in all Christians.

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Look up Habakkuk 3:17-19. Compare that prophet's trust in God with Samuel's. What's the ultimate reason Habakkuk felt he could count on the Lord?
2. In what areas of your life has God challenged you to do something different than seems advantageous to you? How has God's grace in Jesus led you to accept his challenge?

In the beginning—according to PBS

Joel C. Gerlach

Genesis—A Living Conversation is a widely publicized, 10-part series airing on PBS. It has aroused an extraordinary degree of interest nationwide. The program, hosted by Bill Moyers, includes a small group of scholars in hour-long discussions of the book of Genesis.

Many of the guests regard Genesis as “a mix of myth and legend shaped by several hands.” So it is no surprise the treatment Genesis received from them is frequently nothing short of blasphemous.

Naomi Rosenblatt, a psychotherapist and a Bible study facilitator on Capitol Hill, calls the story of the Fall “an allegory about growing up and leaving Eden—leaving home.” Stephen Mitchell, translator of Genesis, says that if that idea is true, then God is a terrible parent. “This is a jealous, bungling, punitive god,” he suggests, “not the god we can love with all our heart and soul.” Elaine Pagels, a religion teacher at Princeton University, adds, “He’s jealous of the species he’s made, and he’s punitive, and he seems to be deficient of understanding.”

The story of Abraham’s offering of Isaac receives similar treatment. Rabbi Burton Visotsky says, “If faith is being tested here, it’s a kind of faith I don’t want to subscribe to.” In a discussion of the Flood, Karen Armstrong, British author of a commentary on Genesis, accuses God of “behaving in an evil way” for destroying innocent animals along with guilty sinners. She asserts that God’s actions set a precedent for the Nazi holocaust. We’ve heard people blame Martin Luther for the holocaust. Now even God has to share the blame.

To their credit, some of Moyer’s guests pleaded with fellow participants to stay with the text of Genesis. One scholar com-

plained that the participants often sound more like ventriloquists than interpreters. But their pleas fell largely on deaf ears.

The blasphemous comments are not the only questionable feature of this conversation about Genesis. It’s objective is also flawed. One of its purposes “is to make Genesis a common ground where all of Abraham’s spiritual offspring—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—can meet.”

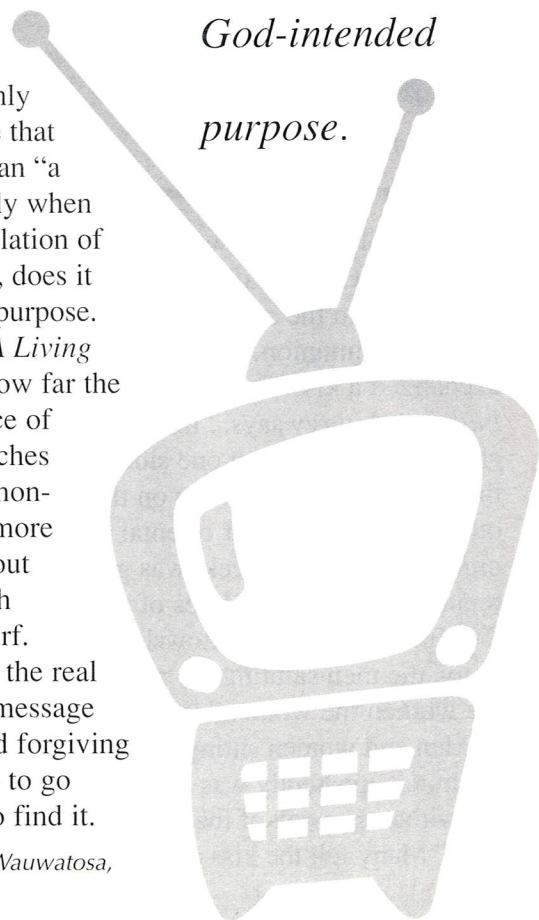
To that end, a companion book, *Genesis With Bill Moyers*, is offered through WNET, the PBS-sponsoring station. Bookstores throughout the country are promoting a resource guide for viewers. Over 300 interfaith councils nationwide are encouraging Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim congregations to gather for joint study of Genesis. Such studies would be commendable only if they begin with the premise that Genesis is something more than “a mix of myth and legend.” Only when Genesis is seen as divine revelation of law and gospel, sin and grace, does it accomplish its God-intended purpose.

If nothing else, *Genesis—A Living Conversation* demonstrates how far the Bible has fallen from the place of authority it once held in churches and in our culture. It also demonstrates that people today are more interested in conversation about God than in conversation with God—on his terms and his turf.

People who desire to learn the real meaning of Genesis with its message of divine judgment on sin and forgiving grace for the sinner will have to go somewhere other than PBS to find it.

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

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The greeting of peace and the appearance of angels

John F. Brug

Why don't we use the kiss of peace in our services, since the New Testament often encourages it (Romans 16:16)?

The New Testament encourages Christians four times to greet each other "with a holy kiss" and once "with a kiss of love." A kiss was the form of greeting between people of the ancient Near East, and the New Testament may be referring to such greetings.

**Some Lutherans have
reintroduced the exchange
of peace as a handshake
rather than a kiss.**

The "holy kiss," however, quickly became a liturgical ceremony. At some point in the service, often before Communion, worshipers exchanged a kiss. Reed's *The Lutheran Liturgy* says, "In the early church the men sat on one side of the church and the women on the other, and this familiar oriental greeting, cheek to cheek, was given regularly in the assemblies of the faithful as a mark of fellowship and unity, the men saluting the men and the women the women" (p. 367).

Men and women sitting together in church apparently was a factor in the withering away of the "holy kiss." Many felt the kiss couldn't

remain holy in these circumstances. Some remnants of the "holy kiss" were preserved in the medieval liturgy—a greeting among clergy officiating at the mass and worshipers kissing a tablet passed through the congregation. Luther preserved the essence of the custom by emphasizing a greeting of peace without the kiss. We still have this in our liturgy, before the Sacrament. "The peace of the Lord be with you always" (*Christian Worship*, p. 23). We also exchange greetings on pages 17 and 21 of *Christian Worship*.

Some Lutherans have reintroduced the exchange of peace as a handshake rather than a kiss. Judging from the letters to the editor in Lutheran magazines, some love the custom, and some hate it.

The holy kiss was an appropriate expression of fellowship in the culture and worship setting of the early church. When this form of exchanging peace was no longer culturally appropriate, the churches found other ways of expressing their unity. We may do the same.

*Send questions to
Your question, please,
Northwestern Lutheran,
2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398;
e-mail, nl@sab.wels.net.*

At what time in art history did angels change to a feminine appearance or the form of an infant? In the Bible they appear as men.

For hundreds of years, angels' form in Christian art was constant—dignified young men with great feathered wings and flowing robes, surrounded by light. Angels project an air of authority.

This form continued to be prominent in Christian art, but in Renaissance paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries other forms became common—angels more feminine in appearance and baby angels called cherubs. These angels often appear with Mary and other female saints. Some art historians connect this shift with the intensification of the cult of Mary. The angels around Mary take on some of her traits, but they are not referred to as "she." The angels that seem more feminine in appearance are still intended to represent young men. The baby angels that often appear with the Christ Child are similar to the cupids in paintings of mythological scenes.

Christian art no longer had a clear purpose of instructing the people. Instead, it gave the artist a chance to express new interest in antiquity and the more humanistic spirit of the Renaissance.

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



The statistics provided by the WELS Commission on Evangelism are accurate [Oct.]. They are, however, misleading. Evangelism accounts also for adult baptisms and professions of faith. These categories were not included in the members gained column. That would raise members gained to 7,415—nearly twice the number listed. The congregation average members lost becomes fewer than one, not the four suggested. Evangelism is not a numbers game. I don't understand the purpose of publishing such negatively biased stats.

*George Ferch
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Robert Hartman, administrator for evangelism, responds:

Pastor Ferch is correct. The information is misleading if used for comparison purposes. The total communicant gains by adult confirmations and professions of faith in 1995 were 6,735 (adult baptisms are included in adult confirmations), an average of 5.3 per congregation. We have another chart that shows total membership gains and losses in the synod each year. These two charts are intended to show the average gains by adult confirmations and member losses (releases and removals, commonly called "back door" losses) by district.

I found the article "Teenager's perspectives on worship—some surprising findings" [Oct.] disturbingly deficient. It reported the results of a survey, which apparently consisted of only one question. How do we know the teen respondents represent a reliable demographic sampling? How were the 479 chosen? Why from only five states? The percentages of the responses were

omitted—the "highest ratings" could have been 20 percent, as long as all the others fell below it.

The survey question is flawed: "How appropriate do you think this music is for the church?" The respondents didn't even need to be a part of nor care about this nebulous "church." A better question—one I imagine would provoke much different responses—would be, "What kind of music would best convey your personal worship of God?" Bearing in mind our heritage, which says that worship occurs in individuals' hearts, isn't the answer to that question more pertinent for Lutheran Christians?

Finally, the article seemed to brush aside the conclusion that a majority of unchurched teenagers rated "traditional choral" music "lowest." I found that information probably the editorial's most significant. Perhaps we ought to be discussing how we might "become all things to all people" and encourage each other to develop worship forms that clearly and accurately communicate the gospel to anyone who might attend our services, even if they are young and unchurched.

In worship we always need to resist this sort of "neo-Amish" fixation on quaintness and be true to our Lutheran heritage.

*Bob Diener
Oshkosh, Wisconsin*

An article by Barbara Resch, survey conductor, and a 90-minute lecture on cassette are available from the Commission on Worship, 414/256-3278.

Bryan Gerlach, administrator for worship, responds:

The survey should be judged for what it is, not what it is not. Certainly other questions should be asked about teens, music, and worship. But, according to music educa-

tion faculty at Indiana-Purdue University, this was unique research. The students came from 33 different religious backgrounds; 12 percent were unchurched. Unchurched teens didn't rate "traditional choral" the lowest; they rated classical instrumental music and contemporary Christian music the lowest—music targeted by Christian radio to women, age 25-40.

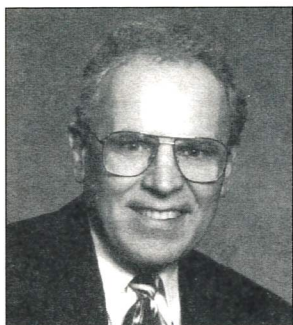
Yes, we should discuss how we might "become all things to all people." But let's not make negative assumptions about the power of church music—done well—to communicate the gospel to people of many ages and cultures.

Through my Bible in 3 years

February 1997

1. Matthew 4
2. Matt. 5:1-16
3. Matt. 5:17-48
4. Matt. 6:1-18
5. Matt. 6:19-34
6. Matt. 7:1-12
7. Matt. 7:13-29
8. Jonah 1, 2
9. Jonah 3, 4
10. Joel 1:1—2:17
11. Joel 2:18—3:21
12. Zephaniah 1
13. Zeph. 2:1—3:7
14. Zeph. 3:8-20
15. Nahum 1
16. Nahum 2, 3
17. Habakkuk 1:1—2:5
18. Hab. 2:6-20
19. Hab. 3:1-15
20. Hab. 3:16-19
21. Obadiah
22. Matthew 8:1-22
23. Matt. 8:23—9:8
24. Matt. 9:9-34
25. Matt. 9:35—10:23
26. Matt. 10:24-42
27. Matt. 11:1-24
28. Matt. 11:25—12:21

“Oh, that sounds harsh!”



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

Left to myself,
I'd like to
discount sin, too.
But God won't
let me.

When I saw my words printed in the *Journal Sentinel* for all the Milwaukee area to read, I thought, “Oh, that sounds harsh! Maybe I should have chosen my words more carefully.”

The subject was homosexuals and the church's attitude toward them. The words that caused me to flinch were “as we reach out [to sinners], we identify sin as damnable.”

Yes, I said that. But now I was reading it with eyes whose vision is sometimes obscured by “political correctness” and by a society increasingly unwilling to listen to God's Word. I wondered how it would look to readers.

Who calls sin “damnable” any more? If you read the October articles written about the Book of Genesis in *Newsweek* and *Time*,* you might conclude that only a dwindling group of rabid fundamentalists do. But their voices are drowned out by ecumenical scholars who have declared such judgments bogus.

Listen to those voices as reported in the news magazines:

On Genesis: “As a story of creation, the Book of Genesis long ago crumbled under the weight of science, notably Darwin's.” Genesis is filled with “magnificent, infuriating tales” and when “examined too closely, it becomes a scandal.”

On God: How does God fare? He sounds more like the sinner than the sinned against. He's viewed as “a deity . . . who doesn't always know his own mind.” “God's character is repeatedly called into question.” The account of Noah and the Flood “becomes an occasion for rejecting a God who would resort to such an extreme measure.” God is “jealous of the species he's made, and he's punitive, and he seems to be deficient of understanding.”

On sin: When the account of sin's ori-

gins is perceived as myth under a God who is at best arbitrary in his dealings with humans, sin will hardly be taken too seriously. So we hear, “Americans still proclaim their belief in God, but divine authority is hardly absolute.” And the account of sin originating in Eden is dismissed with the assertion: “But the text says nothing about sin.” As if disobeying God isn't sin unless the word “sin” is used. Finally, “sin” becomes a part of evolution—therefore not damnable—and original sin our instinctive failings: “Evolution has given all children ‘the instinct of unlimited self-assertion’—‘their dose of original sin.’” With that view, Eden isn't something we left behind but something “on the horizon” for humans to attain.

Yet, in the face of all that, I dared to call sin damnable—publicly. Sin drove us from Eden and keeps us from Eden. It's a harsh statement—and unpopular. But it's still true and needs to be heard. It won't change by cloaking it in myth. It is no less absolute when we ignore it. We can ignore cancer, too, until it kills us.

I'm not the one who came to that conclusion. Left to myself, I'd like to discount sin, too, with so many others. But God won't let me. He's the one who has declared, “The soul that sins will die.” He has warned, “The wages of sin is death.” He reminds us, “The sting of death is sin.” We ignore that reality to our own peril.

And we miss the impact of God also saying of Jesus, “This my Son, whom I love. Listen to him,” and of John the Baptist announcing, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

* Prompted by and reporting on the PBS series, *Genesis—A Living Conversation*. See also p. 31.

Gary P. Baumler



EASTER '97

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life...whoever lives and believe
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John 11:25,26

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Things: useful as tools, worthless as values

Consider what life would be like if we focused on the only thing we really need—forgiveness.

Kenneth A. Cherney

My computer is obsolete. That's what I'm told, anyway. The funny thing is, it's only two years old. Even funnier, it still does—very well—everything I want it to do.

Infatuation with things

I probably don't demand enough from my computer—that's the problem. If I did, I'm sure I would have realized long ago that my 486 isn't big enough, and I need a pentium processor. And if I ever do wake up and realize that, and do something about it, I'll probably no sooner get the machine home than I'll find out I haven't bought a big enough upgrade again. And then, again. And again.

Not only am I behind. I'm falling further behind every day, and at a faster and faster rate.

This, I'm told, is bad. I should be disturbed by this. Disturbed enough, I suppose, to march into Computer World and hand a salesman a couple thousand dollars—and then start making plans to do it again, and soon. The fact that I really don't care about how obsolete I'm becoming makes me a major disappointment to some people. Computer salesmen, mostly.

Frankly, I'm not a bit sorry. Many people like me actually cultivate this kind of apathy. Not just about computers. About everything.

Think what would happen if we



could all disabuse ourselves of the notion that our problems will vanish and life will be glorious once we “upgrade” the Ford to a Lincoln, or the 35-hp to an 85-hp, or the two bedroom bungalow to a four bedroom ranch. Think of what it would be like to end our love affair with things and the ruthless competition between us that it causes.

Real love with Christ

Now, think of what it would take to do that.

We would need a source of contentment and security that isn't thing-based.

We'd need what Paul, in the Bible, calls “godliness with contentment.” He means an

approach to life centered on the confidence that our greatest need—the need for forgiveness—has been fully met by God in Jesus Christ. That confidence is the lens through which a Christian looks at the world, and at things. Through that lens we can finally see things for what they are: useful as tools, worthless as values.

As one Christian put it, the things we accumulate in life should mean no more to us than

an awl does to a shoemaker: something he uses in his trade, but which he puts aside without a second thought when the day is over. You know, I've yet to meet a shoemaker who was infatuated with his awl. But I've known people to be infatuated with things. Maybe you have, too.

Infatuations, of course, can be diverting. But they're nothing like real love.

Anyone who knows Christ can tell you that.

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

