

LUTHERAN



The family
is a place for
companionship
and loving care

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Join the “holy relay”

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. Psalm 145:3,4

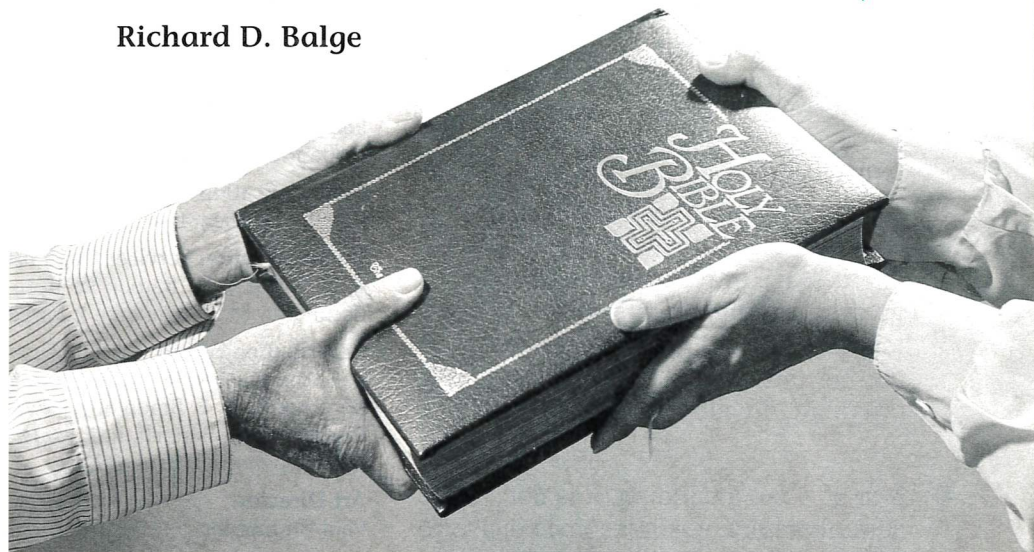
Richard D. Balge

“One generation to another.” The Old Testament scholar H. C. Leupold called it a “holy relay.” Parents to children, teachers to students, pastors to people, neighbors to neighbors—one commends God’s works and his mighty acts to another. “This is what the Lord has done, is doing, will do.”

Hand on what has been handed to you

As disciples of Christ, we have the privilege and responsibility to hand on to others what we have learned from others. We have learned that this is God’s world: he made it, and he is in charge. He has established his law—love God; love your neighbor—and he sees that none of us has lived up to it. On Judgment Day no one will impress him by saying, “I did it my way.” He does not watch the opinion polls or await the expert’s judgment. We have learned that the name of God is not “success,” “security,” or “status.” It is not “the American way of life.” His name is the Lord, and he will not give his glory to another.

From others we have learned that the Lord kept his promise to rescue sinners. He sent his Son to be a baby, a boy, a man who lived the law of love to perfection. He credited Jesus’ righteousness to us, and it is ours through faith. He treated his Son as sin personified so that our sins are not charged to us. He raised Jesus Christ from the dead because these things are so.



Hand on what has been handed to you: “This is my Father’s world.” “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” “The Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel.” “Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.”

You will never run out of things to say

“His greatness no one can fathom.” Unsearchable and inexhaustible is the greatness of the Lord’s power and grace. What we could never fathom, God has revealed. We can know from nature that God exists and that he will hold every human accountable for what they have done with the gift of life.

But never, not from test tube or computer or telescope, could we learn about his gift of salvation. We would not know where to look or what to look for. God has given it to us in the Bible. Moses and David, Isaiah and Paul, Peter and John, and

the rest of the holy writers spoke and wrote of his greatness, as the Holy Spirit moved them to speak and write. Summing up these verses of Psalm 145, Martin Luther wrote: “Christ’s kingdom and power are hidden under the cross. If it were not mentioned with praise . . . who could give thought to it, let alone know anything about it?”

Christ’s kingdom and power have been revealed in Holy Scripture. Dig into the depths of God’s Word daily. Search the record of his mighty works regularly. Patiently learn the meaning of his name and how to praise him. You will never hit bottom, never use up the resources of Scripture. You will never run out of ways to declare the glories of his righteousness and the wonders of his love.

If you have not already done so, join the “holy relay.”

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



- Jesus said that when you visit those in prison, it is as if you were visiting him. WELS members in Michigan take seriously Jesus' command to put faith in him into action for others. Through Project Share, these members visit the imprisoned, bringing the message of repentance and forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Turn to page 10 to read how the gospel reaches through prison bars and offers true freedom to the captives.
- Synod is not a building, it is not administrators, it is not some elusive decision-making group. Synod is you, me, your fellow members—all of us—walking together, working together. See page 35, where Pastor Walter Beckmann reminds us of this and looks forward to our synod convention.
- You may have noticed that this issue was thicker and heavier than usual. We've added four pages so we could bring you photos of the graduates of Martin Luther College. Last month you saw photos of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates. Some of the MLC grads are moving on to the seminary for the final phase of pastoral training. The rest of that class, along with the graduates from the seminary, are our newest public ministers, eager to share the message of salvation with a lost world. Please pray that God will bless their service to him.

—LRB

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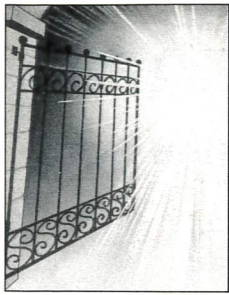
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The family is a place for companionship and loving care

Love is not a feeling or something only to receive. It is an action word and involves lots and lots of work.

Gary G. Kraklow

Last September, on our 15th wedding anniversary, I almost lost the earthly companionship of my wife. Due to a “yes” to her prayer, a good Samaritan in a parking lot, some quick thinking nurses and doctors, and the proximity to our local hospital, I did not.

In the weeks that followed, I became Mr. Mom, in addition to Mr. Dad and Mr. Pastor.

During this time I thought about many things, mostly “what if(s) . . . ?” It took a lot of time to find this woman. It took a while to get her to agree to marry me. We have come to know each others strengths and weaknesses—loving some and accepting the others with Christian love. We are best friends.

The biggest “what if” was the ultimate “what if.” What if I had to start to find another person to be a wife to me, and a mother to my daughters? I thought about one of those ads in the paper. How could I be honest without exaggerating positively or negatively?

“Bald white guy, 41 years old, 6’, 200 pounds (in summer), quirky sense of humor, likes the outdoors, all around nice teddy bear type guy. Minister of local Lutheran church, two wonderful daughters, 12 and 7, willing to split all domestic chores.

“Looking for vivacious, drop-dead gorgeous or average looking



woman, 5'6" to 6' in height, slender to dumpling in size, independent (because I won't be home a lot), active Christian, loving but firm mother, can have own career or stay at home."

The whole experience heightened my awareness of a gift God had blessed me with that I was taking for granted. Even though, as a minister, I have seen others experience the loss or almost loss of a spouse, it's not the same as firsthand experience. I also have a deeper appreciation for the strength of my mother who was 42 years old when my father died.

**Love like Christ loves.
Take primary responsibility.
Invest time, and often.
Invest regularly.**

In putting together a Bible study for the synod convention, my goal was not to have everyone simply agree that "The family is a place for companionship and loving care." My goal was that we would take time to appreciate the blessings that we already have in this area and that we strive to answer the question, "How do we get the companionship and loving care we really want from a family?"

To answer the question I broke it into a few shorter questions:

What is companionship?

I didn't get married to have a cook, cleaning lady, or nanny. I married someone who was my best friend—a Christian best friend who would go with me wherever the Lord would call us. Someone to

share life's experiences and joys with, and someone who would be there to help me when I needed help and whom I would help when she needed me. The companionship of Ruth and Naomi is what I was, and am still, striving for.

However, over time, I started to think of my best friend as the friend who cooks, cleans, and mothers the children.

What are the priorities when seeking a companion?

Paul in 1 Timothy 2:8-10 and Peter in 1 Peter 3:3-7 tell us what God thinks is important. It's husbands treating their wives as partners and as heirs of the gracious gift of life. It's wives not finding their worth in outward adornment and "things," but in "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit." It is the joint worship of God by following his will and priorities.

We joke about a minister's income, but maybe it's a blessing in disguise. While we complain from time to time about its size, it helps us keep our priorities straight.

What is love?

Many couples ask me to use 1 Corinthians 13 for their wedding sermon. It's a wonderful definition of love, but many times I get the feeling that their interpretation of the verses is something like: "I will be so happy when my spouse listens to me and accomplishes all those nice things for me."

The truth is, those words stand before me, and all others, as the biggest challenge a human being has in a relationship with another human being: to be patient and kind; to not envy, boast, be proud, rude, self-seeking, or easily angered; to keep

no record of wrongs but to always protect, trust, hope, and persevere. Love is not a feeling or something only to receive. It is an action word and involves lots and lots of work. And in the last few years I had been coasting because I figured I was better than average, and that was good enough.

Finding answers

So how come I didn't have the companionship and loving care I really wanted from a family? (Don't get me wrong, our marriage was not on the rocks. It was going pretty well, but it was not everything I still wanted it to be.) The answer was that I was focusing on getting rather than giving. I used Paul's words to the Ephesians in instructing others, but I wasn't doing them. Love like Christ loves. Take primary responsibility. Invest time, and often. Invest regularly. Time for relaxing is in the future.

And these words of James were helpful: "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does" (1:22-25).

Listen and learn. Listen and do. Listen . . .

Gary Kraklow is pastor at Peace, Vancouver, Washington.

NL

First things first

We must unapologetically point people to the cross of Christ as the entry point to heaven.

Wayne A. Laitinen

Several years ago I found myself sitting next to a congressman on a two-hour flight. Though our conversation was cordial, we were obviously not on the same wavelength. I could see that my appeal to the inborn knowledge of God's law was getting me nowhere.

Then the conversation turned to abortion. "Even if we ignore the obvious moral problem," I dissembled, "I would think that abortion would be bad for our country economically. For instance, we're destroying the generation that would pay for our Social Security." His face began to brighten. I had struck a chord. "Now if you were a politician who wanted to oppose abortion," he said, "that's how you ought to do it. You'd have to convince your constituency that they have something to gain by opposing abortion."

I should have been glad for the congressman's praise, but I was getting the uneasy feeling that I had sold out. He hadn't budged. But when I appealed to financial gain, I finally began speaking his language. I had substituted a second thing for a first thing.

What I mean is this: If there are enough workers in the next generation to pay my Social Security, it is a happy by-product of protecting human life. Because it is a by-product, it is a second thing. However, I ought to oppose abortion regardless of personal gain and in spite of personal loss. I ought to do it out of

fear and love for God who said, "You shall not murder." That is a first thing.

Now if I'm only trying to cement a friendship with a congressman, all this talk about first things and second things is an intolerable breach

of etiquette. But if I intend to convict a soul of despising God's gift of life in order to prepare him for his Savior's forgiveness, I must stick to first things.

First things first

Likewise, our churches must stick to first things if we entertain any notion of rescuing people and keeping them in the faith. For a world that demands miraculous signs and high-sounding wisdom, St. Paul made no apologies, "We preach Christ crucified." For Christ's church, the cross of Christ is not only the first thing. It is the only thing. Everything we believe, teach, and confess stands or falls on the teaching of Christ crucified for the salvation of the world. This is the power and the wisdom of God.

There, on a stake of wood, hung our Lord Jesus Christ: forsaken by the God he obeyed and cursed by the world he created. Why must the Innocent suffer so? Because he had compassion upon his enemies. We despised God and his good gifts. We followed Satan and loved the fellowship of the condemned. For us there was no plan, no hope, no comfort—only the everlasting torment we deserved. In our blindness we called this bondage "freedom."

But God saw our miserable condition and how helpless we were. In love he sent his holy Son into the flesh and punished him in our place. In that stroke of justice, our condemnation was removed, and

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

God's mercy toward us prevailed. With the words, "It is finished," the jaws of hell were shut, and the gates of heaven flew open for all the children of Adam. Three days later the Father spoke his "Amen." To this day, Christ's bride exults, "I believe in Jesus Christ. . . . who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried."

We know very well how offensive this teaching is to the unregenerate world. In fact, we may feel a special sensitivity toward non-Christian guests who step into our church on a

Sunday morning. What can the confession of sins, the preaching of the cross, and the mystery of the sacraments mean to them? Some people dismiss the cross as unnecessary. ("I'm better than most. Why should anyone die for me?") To others, the cross is an insult. ("Who do they think I am anyway, a spiritual basketcase?")

We may be tempted to soften, delay, or remove the cross of Jesus so that people will feel comfortable about coming back next Sunday. But without the cross, what would they come back to? We couldn't introduce them to the God who kills with his law and makes alive with his gospel. There would be no forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the devil, or everlasting life. We could only preach about second things: the god of the food pantry;



the god of wellness; god, my psychotherapist; the god of family-healing; god, my ATM-in-the-sky.

Christ's things first

This is not the way we came into the kingdom. The only gate to heaven is at the foot of the cross. When we were baptized we participated in Christ's death and resurrection. At that time we learned that death and resurrection is a daily priority. Through contrition and repentance we drag our rebellious flesh to the cross and crucify it anew. Through Jesus' sacrifice our spirit finds cleansing and eternal life.

If our mission is to prosper, we must unapologetically point people to the cross of Christ as the entry point to heaven.

In the City Church of Wittenberg hangs a painting of Dr. Martin Luther preaching to a small congrega-

tion in a plain, brick church. It would be a common portrayal of worship in Luther's day, but the painter, Lucas Cranach, added a detail so large and so central that our attention is drawn away from both the preacher and the congregation. In fact, that intrusive figure obstructs the view of the congregation so that they cannot even see their preacher. The figure is our Lord Jesus suspended on a cross. When Dr. Luther preached, the people only saw Christ crucified. Five centuries later, Cranach's message to the church is clear: First things first.

NL

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

Setting the captives free

Prisoners and ex-offenders learn about the gospel through Project Share.

Julie K. Tessmer

Since we were young, we were taught to share—whether it was our favorite toy with a sibling or our lunch with a classmate.

As we grew older we shared different things—our thoughts and opinions with coworkers and our innermost secrets with our spouse or close friends.

But how many of us share our most important possession—the gospel?

WELS members in the Bay City, Mich., area are trying to reach people with the news about their Savior.

Their main target is prisoners, ex-offenders, and the disadvantaged. And besides sharing the gospel, they try to help these people get back on their feet.

That's why the program's name—Project Share—makes sense. "We share three things—the gospel, our time, and our resources," said Duane Anderson, staff minister of evangelism and director of Project Share.

The program

When Project Share began in 1995, Mark Schulz, pastor at Trinity, Bay City, had been conducting services and visiting prisoners at the Bay County prison. But he had more opportunities than he could fill. So Project Share began, and Anderson was called to assist.

What began as outreach to Bay City has grown to include much of a tri-county area including Midland, Bay City, and Saginaw, Mich.

Anderson receives many Project



The transition support group. Project Share shares their time and resources to help ex-offenders find jobs and apartments. More important, Project Share shares the gospel in weekly Bible studies.

Share contacts through three different facilities—the Bay County jail in Bay City, a men's shelter in Saginaw, and the Tri-Cap Center (a halfway house where prisoners finish their prison sentence) in Saginaw. Because of the high turnover in these facilities, Anderson has an opportunity to reach hundreds of people with the gospel—even if the prisoners never call Project Share again.

But they do call. That's where the second part of the program—a transition support group—comes in. Project Share helps ex-offenders find jobs and housing and sometimes provides legal and financial advice.

More important, Project Share helps them grow in their faith.

"The glue in the program is encouraging people to keep in the Bible," said Anderson.

Fourteen area congregations

and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, serve as resources for funding and volunteers. The program, entirely funded for one year and partially for two years by WELS Kingdom Workers, will be entirely locally funded in 1998.

The results

The real story of Project Share is how the gospel is affecting the people reached by this ministry:

Robert hit a little girl while driving home one night. He was under the influence and was charged with homicide. He remained troubled by his past, even though he was welcomed back into his WELS church. He writes: "I was looking for help with my emotional problems. I had attended a couple of support groups. They just weren't working for me."

Then he found Project Share.

“Because it was WELS, I was immediately interested. . . . I began to attend the Transition Support Group. It was the best decision I made in a long time. I have been reminded I can’t do everything by myself. My faith in Jesus is the reason I can have confidence again—no matter what has happened, no matter how much I have sinned, he is my Savior who died for me.

“The group meetings include Bible readings and discussion. These readings have shed light on my troubles and have taught me how to deal with them. . . .

“I was re-appointed to the church council. I am employed by General Motors. . . . I am thankful to the Lord for guiding me through this troubled time.”

Robert not only faithfully attends meetings, but also is a mentor and role model for others.

Anthony has been out of jail for over 18 months. He credits this in part to Project Share but even more to God. He writes: “After taking a close look at my path of wrongs—drugs, violent behavior, and life of crime—I realized that I would never have peace in my life.

“Before self destruction was completely on me, I looked towards God. I admitted all my sins and asked him for forgiveness before I set my new course. . . . Without God’s intervention and without the help from Project Share, I would not have made it this far.

“Project Share has helped me with many problems, such as clothing, shelter, at times food, but especially with my business.

“All of these blessings have come from people I know as fellow Christians. But the more I think about it, these blessings have really

come from God. God has been working through Project Share. . . .

“I am enjoying real happiness in my new life with the Lord, who is my true guide.”

James felt like a failure—to himself, his loved ones, and to God. He had to learn how he—through faith in God and the knowledge that Jesus died for his sins—is counted successful in Christ. He writes: “I met Duane Anderson while serving a one-year sentence for drunk driving. . . .

“I wondered what he wanted, and why he was interested in talking to me. While I sat in suspicion, he told me about the Lord. The more time he spent with me, the less suspicious I became. When I finally understood all he wanted was to share God’s Word with me, I looked forward to the weekly meetings. . . .

“The thing I struggled with the most was believing that Jesus died for my sins. . . . I didn’t believe that I was worthy enough. But, by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit was working faith in my heart, and I came to believe that I was included

in his sacrifice. . . . I realized that although I am a sinner, Jesus loves me and died for my sins. . . .

“I pray that the people in my life see that their effort has been worthwhile, and someday, in some way, understand where I was before in my life and where I am today. I believe that I have experienced a miracle from the Lord.”

James now has a job and an apartment in Bay City. He attends church regularly and helps Anderson with a Bible study at a juvenile detention center.

Sharing—a seemingly simple task. But the results can be astonishing, especially when it’s the gospel we share.

Said Anderson: “We talk a lot about the power of the Word and God’s gifts to us. But sometimes we just don’t appreciate it. Seeing the Word work through troubled lives confirms it. God’s Word truly is powerful.”

NL

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



Anderson (far right) and his softball team. Project Share sponsors two teams in a Youth at Risk softball league. Three team members are youth from Trinity; the rest are neighborhood contacts.

At home and away

How can we ever consider ourselves at home in any place where we can't see our Brother?

Paul O. Wendland

“Home is where the heart His.” So they say. But where’s home for you and me? Though you and I might each have our own answer to that question, Jesus makes it simple for us both by saying, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Whatever place I feel drawn to, wherever I find that which I consider good, lovely, and desirable, there is my home. More than a place where I spend the night, more than a shelter from the storm, more than even a house where people stay, home is that one place where I feel safe, happy, and free. I’m there with the ones I love. I’m there with that which gives my life meaning. Home is where I belong, and whenever I’m not there, I feel a shadow on my life. Things are somehow out of joint, and I feel unsettled and restless.

False earthly homes

Some people wander all their days looking for a home but never finding it. They sense a great emptiness in their lives that they try to fill with some new

job, some new place to live, some new relationship, or some new toy to play with. “Here it is at last!” they think. But after a while, the restlessness rises in their hearts again, and off they go on another leg of their vagabond existence. They can be described with the same words an ancient church father once used of himself: “I wandered off from you, my God . . . and became to myself a place of endless need.”

Some people wander all their days looking for a home but never finding it.

Others think they’ve found a home, but are mistaken. Sometimes death overtakes them before they ever find out the truth. Sometimes something terrible happens to deprive them of their heart’s treasure, and they discover that they’ve been living all along inside a false dream.

I once knew a man who loved Model-T cars. On my very first

visit to his house, he took me to his barn where Model-T parts of every conceivable size and description were piled up high to the ceiling. And there in the center was his pride and joy: his own Model-T, “rebuilt from original parts.” He and his wife spent many happy days going to swap meets and touring the countryside on “T” rallies.

Then he came down with a wasting disease, was bedridden and unable to go outside to work on his beloved car. Depressed and angry, he asked me, “Why am I even alive, pastor, what have I got to live for? I’m a piece of junk!” His words hit me hard. You see, I had some idea how he felt. I had lost a few false homes myself.

Nothing we see in this whole wide world—no place so lovely, no person so beautiful, no object so precious—can ever silence the deepest longings of our heart. That same church father I spoke of earlier also wrote, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

That is why the Apostle describes Christians as people who walk by faith and not by sight. Through faith in Jesus we now have spiritual eyes to see what is real, things that the people of this world can't see. And things they regard as genuine and true, we consider to be little more than fog and shadows. None of it lasts. It all will go.

That is also why the early Christians were labeled "haters of mankind" by their persecutors. They weren't obsessed with things pagans thought were the stuff and substance of life. We hear similar voices today ridicule us for wasting our days dreaming about a "pie in the sky by and by when you die."

True heavenly home

Truth is, this earth is now the place of our exile. It wasn't always so for us, but it became so the second the Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts. Jesus became our priceless treasure when we first believed the message of how he graced this hovel we once had called home. Not only was he born among us, not only did he live among us, but he was also willing to do without every earthly comfort, and even the loving presence of his Father, for sheer love of us. The Spirit took that message of love and so warmed our hearts with it that

now we call God our Father, and Jesus our own Brother. In his forgiveness, we've found a place to rest, and our deepest longings are satisfied at last.

How can we ever consider ourselves at home in any place where we can't see our Brother? He said he was going to prepare



a real home for us, and that he would come again and take us to be with him. That means wherever we live now can never be our home. It's just a house, a place where we stay for now. A place where we serve him by faith. A place made bright by hope for things unseen. A place made warm by love for one another.

Another early Christian writer put it this way, "Christians dwell in their own countries, but only as pilgrims and strangers. . . .

Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. . . . Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven." (Epistle to Diognetus 5:5, 5:9. Lightfoot, trans, alt).

So we're like people who return to the land of their birth after many years of living abroad.

What once had seemed so friendly and so familiar now seems strange and baffling. The streets look different.

The people look different. A lot of what they say doesn't make any sense to us. The things they get so excited about don't move us at all.

We know we don't fit in any more, and that we never will.

We long to go abroad again, to be away from this body, away from this earthly existence, and this world so marred by sin. We want to go home.

Home is where the heart is. Our home is where Jesus is.

NL

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

When Pastor leaves . . .

One church's experience reminds us that the time will come in almost every church when it will not have its own full-time pastor for a period.

Linda R. Baacke

Ask Pastor, he knows . . .
 "Pastor, I was wondering . . ."
 "Good morning, Pastor . . ."

On any given Sunday you'll hear one of those phrases in every church. Well, in almost every church.

You see, not every church has a pastor. The 1996 WELS Statistical Report shows 57 vacancies in our 1,235 congregations—almost five percent of our churches. That left 11,168 WELS members without a resident pastor.

Vacancies occur when a pastor retires, resigns, accepts a call, or dies, and another pastor has not yet accepted a full-time call. A nearby pastor, vacationing pastor, or retired pastor serves part time until a full-time pastor arrives.

Sticking together

Members at Abiding Faith, Pinehurst, Tex., have faced two vacancies in the past six years and know the challenges and blessings that vacancies bring.

The first vacancy occurred in 1991, when Abiding Faith was wracked by doctrinal and personal disagreements. The congregation rescinded the pastor's call. The pastor started an independent church down the road. About one-third of the members went with him, another third gave up on all churches, the remaining third stayed.

"It bothers you spiritually," says Lee Wendorf, president at Abiding Faith. "It's like a divorce, but worse, because you're seeing it

happen in the good Lord's house."

Pastor Neil Hansen served during that vacancy. He says the remaining members were anticipating rebuilding for a better future.

"It was a time for evaluation," says Hansen. "They stopped taking things for granted."

Growing together

But not all problems are solved during a vacancy pastor's short tenure. There was still rebuilding to do when Pastor Jeffrey Limpert came in 1992. Because members weren't sure the church would remain open, the challenge was to solidify them as a congregation.

"There were a lot of hurt feelings and questions about church and ministry," says Limpert.

To help the congregation find answers, he emphasized Bible study. Everyone dove in.

"It's a credit to the congregation that they were willing to listen and learn," says Limpert.

Then, instead of dwelling on the past, the congregation focused on their mission. They formed committees to help them fulfill that mission. The vast majority—over 80 percent—of communicants, including teenagers, actively held positions.

Then in 1996, Limpert accepted a call. He wondered what would happen to the congregation that had grown from 25 to 75 communicant members. "But I had led them through such turbulent waters that I felt it was best for the congregation if someone new came in and took them a step further," he says.

Once more, the congregation faced a vacancy. Although the circumstances were far more positive, the vacancy was still hard.



During pastoral vacancies, many members leave their congregation. However, on Easter Sunday, at Abiding Faith, Pinehurst, Tex., three adults and two children were baptized and three adults were confirmed by vacancy pastor Norman Berg.

“You dislike seeing a pastor go,” says Lee Wendorf. “It’s like a member of the family is leaving.”

This time, retired pastor Norman Berg served during the vacancy.

“Pastor Berg was like a father to everyone,” says Wendorf. “He pulled us all together.”

Pulling people together is one positive aspect of a vacancy. Although attendance often drops, the people who stay are strengthened. Members get more involved with administrative work. At Abiding Faith, Bible class and Sunday school enrollment picked up.

“If someone didn’t show up, members called,” says Wendorf. “We wanted to be sure that no one else was leaving.”

Abiding Faith now has another full-time pastor, Fred Schleg, who moved to Pinehurst in April.

What does the future hold? The congregation still faces challenges. One is to overcome their reputation for turmoil. Another is to reach out to a community where two large Missouri Synod congregations are already established.

But Schleg sees these as opportunities. True, Abiding Faith has gone through its share of problems, but “only through hardships do you really grow strong,” says Schleg. “The congregation has shifted gears, and we pray that the optimism catches on.”

And as for being a small church when larger ones are nearby . . . Abiding Faith allows members to play a vital role in church work. “We have an intimate feeling. Everybody gets to be active,” says Schleg. “People want to be a part of that.”

Located in a fast-growing area of Houston, the church has tremendous opportunity for outreach. But one

Life goes on

It’s ideal. A congregation needs a pastor. A retired pastor wants to serve. Why not combine the two?

Norman Berg, who has served vacancies in California, Texas, and Washington, believes that retired pastors’ adaptability makes them some of the best vacancy pastors.

“You might think at our age we’d be rather inflexible, but I think the opposite is true. We’re not as all-knowing as we were when we were out of the seminary five to 10 years,” says Berg, former home missions administrator.

This adaptability has a calming effect on the congregation.

“You don’t come in and change everything” says Berg. “You go with the flow. As a result the congregation feels comfortable.”

When vacancy pastors come in, members are concerned with major needs—Word and sacrament. Even though members know the basics will be covered, Berg believes in open, honest communication.

thing determines the results says Schleg. “It all depends on how the Lord blesses our future.”

Serving together

The vacancies Abiding Faith experienced may seem unique. They are not. In the next two years, instead of decreasing, the number of vacancies are expected to increase because the Board for Home Missions plans to open 40 new missions. There isn’t a surge of new pastors, so there will be more vacant positions.

This isn’t necessarily negative, says Harold Hagedorn, administrator for home missions. Congregations and pastors may have become

“You have to establish ground rules about relationships, even financial things. I believe in being real up front,” says Berg.

He suggests drawing up a checklist of which duties the vacancy pastor does, and which ones are the congregation’s responsibility. Vacancies are most productive when members step up and take responsibility for keeping the church going.

Obviously the congregation benefits from having a retired pastor serve them. But plenty of benefits exist for the retired pastors too.

The first is activity. The richness and diversity of ministry keeps pastors young. The second is exposure to more Christians and their viewpoints and activities.

Other benefits? “It keeps you out of your wife’s kitchen,” says Berg.

But they won’t be out of the kitchen for long. One day a pastor will accept a full-time call, the retired pastor will leave, and the congregation will move on.

For both, life goes on.

comfortable with the pastor doing all the work or with simply staying the present course. Churches with vacancies take a fresh look at themselves.

“The pastor learns to shepherd the flock instead of doing the work of the sheep,” says Hagedorn. “It’s amazing how much service can be conducted by faithful lay people.”

That’s one reminder everyone needs to hear, vacancy congregation or not: The work of God needs to be done, the Word of God needs to be spread. It isn’t just the pastor’s job.

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

NL

Peacemaking pastor, professor, president

Johannes Peter Carl Meyer served faithfully under difficult circumstances.

Morton A. Schroeder

Zittau is a small village 24 miles southwest of Appleton, Wis. Truckers careering through it on state road 110 barely slow as they pass its modest buildings: houses, cheese factory, and tavern. Several hundred yards north of the main intersection is a typical white-frame rural church with satellite parsonage and history-heavy cemetery.

Zittau's hold on fame is the cheese made and sold there by three generations of the Metzsig family. For WELS members, it has another distinction: the birthplace of Prof. Joh. P. Meyer. For 68 years Meyer served his Lord as pastor and in three synod schools as professor, dean of students, and president.

His faithful family

Meyer's father, Rev. Johann Meyer, who came from Germany via Milwaukee, arrived in Zittau in 1871 under dreadful circumstances. His predecessor, Rev. August Wiese, and two daughters, one 15 months old, the other three months beyond five years, died within 26 days of each other in 1870 of what records refer to as "black pox." The epidemic closed public venues, churches and schools included, and the entire area was quarantined. Wiese's widow, pox-scarred and isolated, who with her four-year-old son managed to survive the plague, kept house for Meyer until his fiancée arrived from Germany.

In a poignant letter dated Feb. 6, 1871, Meyer urged his "beloved Meta" to "hurry to come here." He warned her about the primitive living conditions she would face. He painted a grim picture of the "deplorable, barnlike" church and their tiny log house, begging her not to think of her future home in terms of the "stately parsonage" she was used to seeing in Germany.

Anna Meta Behnken did not quail. She came to America, married the man who styled himself

a "bush preacher," and, like others of her time who lived beyond the pale of polite civilization, bore their son in the woods—far removed from other houses or people. Named after his father, this child grown to manhood would lead by faith. He would make a difference.

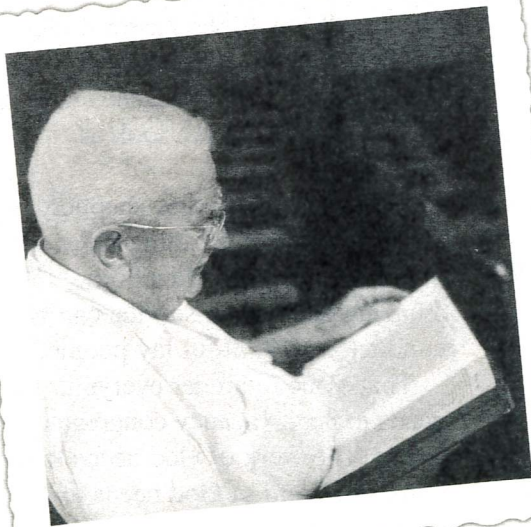
The elder Meyer's parish, including as few as three and sometimes as many as seven congregations and a preaching station, was formidable. Meyer met its challenge, serving as *de facto* circuit rider and as teacher and janitor for almost six years. He left in October 1876 for Trinity Lutheran Church, Caledonia, Wis. A little girl, Sophie, remained behind—in the Zittau cemetery.

The younger Meyer, now of school age, said of his education: "As far as my training is concerned, I attended parochial and district grade schools, Northwestern College at Watertown, and our theological seminary, then located in Wauwatosa."

His evangelism and peacemaking

The story of Meyer's public ministry divides itself into two unequal segments. The first covered 24 years and saw Meyer accept calls from congregations and colleges from Oconomowoc, Wis., on the east to New Ulm, Minn., on the west.

Meyer's ministry was characterized by what is today called outreach and by an evangelical effort to solve vexing disputes. While he



Meyer at the 1957 synod convention in New Ulm, Minn. Meyer spent a large part of his ministry—44 years—teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

ministered to his first charge in Beaver Dam, he also started a congregation in Trenton and served another in Fox Lake.

In three situations Meyer was expected to be a peacemaker. The congregation in Oconomowoc experienced difficulties, which Meyer



Feb. 27, 1873, born to Pastor Johann and Anna Meta Behnken Meyer, in Zittau, Wis.

1893, graduated from Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

1896, graduated from Lutheran Seminary, Wauwatosa, Wis.

1896-1902, pastor, St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

1902-1903, professor and dean, Northwestern College

Nov. 26, 1903, married Lydia Reinke

1903-1915, professor, Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

1915-1918, pastor, Oconomowoc, Wis.

1918-1920, president, DMLC

1920-1964, professor, Lutheran Seminary, first in Wauwatosa, then Thiensville (now Mequon), Wis.

1937-1953, president, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

1963, published *Ministers of Christ*

Nov. 10, 1964, died

was called to help resolve. Both Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College were wracked by destabilizing, wrenching problems—Northwestern's centering about the office of dean and DMLC's about the reaction of some faculty members to anti-German feelings roiled by the World War. Meyer was at Northwestern less than a year, resigning as dean because of "nervousness." His DMLC experiences were more satisfying. After serving as professor, he returned as president to calm the agitation and satisfy both the Wisconsin Synod and the state of Minnesota.

His seminary years

The second segment of Meyer's ministry was a 44-year period of fruitful teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. A few facts highlighted his unprecedented tenure. Not counting the present faculty for statistical reasons, the seminary has had 38 called and tenured teachers. As a body, they served 692 years; as individuals, they served an average 18.2 years. Meyer served nearly 2.5 times that. He was co-worker of 18 of the 37 other teachers.

Meyer was also an important link with the past. He was a student of Dr. Adolph Hoenecke, served in the ministry for 12 years while Hoenecke was the Wisconsin Synod's leading theologian, and was, for a total of 30 years, a colleague of J. P. Koehler and August Pieper, the two men who with Hoenecke were instrumental in shaping the synod's approach to theology.

To measure Meyer's worth only in years served would do him an injustice and withhold from his Lord,

who gave him the strength to persevere, the honor due his name. Meyer's principal teaching fields were Christian doctrine and New Testament Introduction, but he taught, says one source, "every course offered except one." At one time, almost every pastor in the synod had been his student.

Meyer's students called him "Nixie," an affectionate play on words that combine the Latin word *nix*, meaning "snow," and Meyer's thatch of white hair. They remember him as rugged, meticulous, aware, and scholarly, at ease in Greek, Latin, and German, quoting New Testament, church fathers, and Luther each in fitting language. He was self-effacing. When commissioned to write a book on conservative Lutheran doctrine, he said, "If I wrote that book, forever after my students would quote John Meyer. I much prefer they quote Scripture."

Meyer served his congregation and the church-at-large in many ways: unofficial assistant pastor, St. Marcus, Milwaukee, for 36 years; prolific contributor to church periodicals; itinerant conference essayist; frequent office holder in WELS and the Synodical Conference; and often member of ad hoc and standing committees and boards. And then more.

Meyer was active until the very end. He conducted his classes on Friday, Oct. 23 and insisted on preaching on Sunday, the 25th. He entered the hospital on Monday, Oct. 26. The Lord called him home 15 days later.

NL

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

The Lord takes care of the heart

Anyone can let the tears flow with a friend in the hospital, but only a Christian can point to the one who dries tears.

David L. Hein

The cancer was in remission. The eye surgery had gone pretty well, not as well as she'd like, but she was thankful to see at all.

Yet, for neither of these afflictions had I rushed to the hospital to see her. She had fallen and broken her hip and was asking for me.

As I peeked into the room, I almost didn't recognize her. The

amount of pain she was bearing had left a tortured distortion of the woman I knew. She was awake . . . and hurting. I knocked quietly, and when she saw who it was, she gave me the broad smile that was normally at home on her face. She gripped my hands in hers with all the strength of her heart.

care of her heart.

When you visit a friend in the hospital, remember that. It is important to just be there for somebody, to give her someone to talk to, to sit and let her know you care and are there for her.

But just about anyone can talk and just about anyone can listen and just about anyone can sit and commiserate with a friend. Only a Christian can share Christ. Anyone can shake his head and say, "Oh, that's too bad." Only a Christian can bow his head and say, "Father, please help." Anyone can sit and let the tears flow with a friend, but only a Christian can point to the one who dries tears even in the face of the most frightening diagnosis.

Don't avoid the hospital. Go and visit. Be sure to peek in or check with the nurse so you're not interrupting much-needed sleep. If he's up to it, sit and share yourself with a friend. And be sure to share our Friend with your friend.

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when . . . did we see you sick . . . and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:37, 40).

David Hein is pastor at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

Here's how one volunteer serves in hospital ministry:

Every Monday morning, using the altar flowers from the Sunday service, small bouquets are made—one flower and greenery tied with a small ribbon.

These are taken to the hospital or nursing homes where the volunteer has gotten names of any patient registered as unchurched or as Lutheran with no home church. The volunteer greets each patient and says, "I'm from _____ Lutheran Church. We'd like you to have this flower and tract to brighten your day." The volunteer stays for a brief visit whenever appropriate.

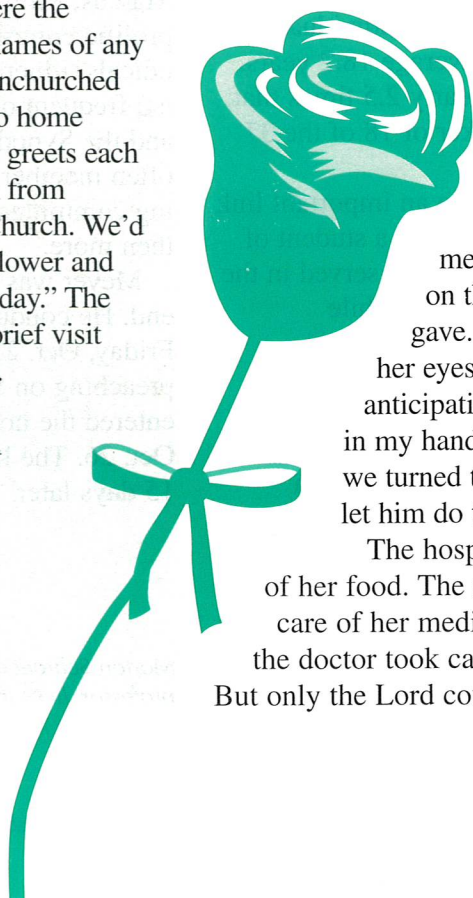
*Dick Coleman
South Atlantic District
Newsletter*

Consider doing this and including a copy of Northwestern Lutheran.

Don't avoid the hospital. Go and visit.

"I knew you would come," and so our talk began. She told me of her fall, of waiting for her son to find her. She spoke of how every pothole had so rudely introduced itself on her long ambulance ride. I commented politely on the details she gave. And then her eyes gazed with anticipation at the book in my hand, and together we turned to the Lord and let him do the talking.

The hospital took care of her food. The nurses took care of her medication. And the doctor took care of her hip. But only the Lord could take



Martin Luther College

New Ulm, Minn.

1997 GRADUATES

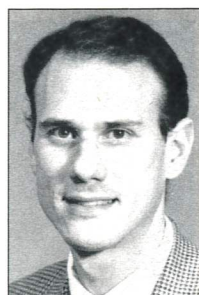
One hundred thirty-two people graduated from Martin Luther College on May 17.



Holly R. Adams
Winthrop Harbor, Ill.



Anne E. Adickes
New Ulm, Minn.



Philip J. Adickes
Phoenix, Ariz.



Rachel H. Armstrong
Lake Mills, Wis.



Michael P. Ash
Manitowoc, Wis.



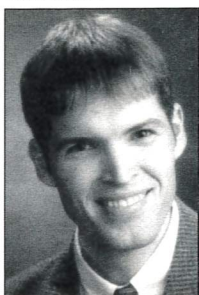
David A. Backus
Tawas City, Mich.



Amy J. Bauer
New Ulm, Minn.



Jennie M. Birling
Menasha, Wis.



Jamie S. Brei
Belvidere, Ill.



Steven M. Bruns
St. Peter, Minn.



Jennifer L. Cares
Nampa, Idaho



Paula F. Carter
East Jordan, Mich.



Charlotte J. Conrad
Inver Grove Heights, Minn.



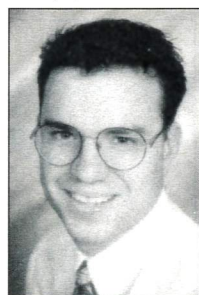
Natalie M. Cooper
St. Charles, Mich.



Heather L. Crist
Inver Grove Heights, Minn.



Michele R. Diener
Milwaukee, Wis.



Brian C. Doeblor
Lindenhurst, Ill.



Jeffrey D. Enderle
Lees Summit, Mo.



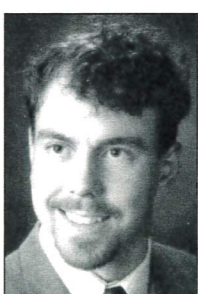
Trisha H. Engelbrecht
New Ulm, Minn.



**Norma Patricia
Fernandez Espinosa**
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon,
Mexico



Jeanette R. Ewart
Broken Arrow, Okla.



Arthur L. Faught
Siren, Wis.



Kimberly E. Festerling
Vancouver, British
Columbia, Canada



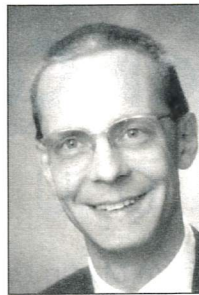
Susan K. Finn
Fond du Lac, Wis.



David P. Fulton
New Ulm, Minn.



Kristin E. Gaeth
Gagetown, Mich.



Harland H. Goetzinger
Milwaukee, Wis.



Wendy L. Gouvion
Milwaukee, Wis.



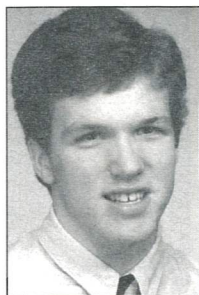
Chad R. Grambsch
Weyauwega, Wis.



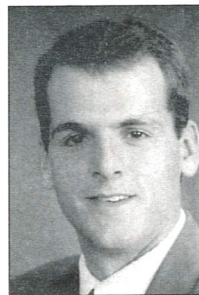
Tracy A. Gray
Inver Grove Heights, Minn.



Wendy L. A. Groth
Neenah, Wis.



Bart R. Gurgel
Lake Mills, Wis.



Joel S. Heckendorf
Jackson, Wis.



Melanie E. Hahn
Oak Creek, Wis.



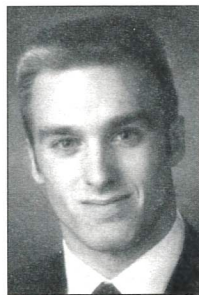
Nicole R. Hartman
Benton Harbor, Mich.



Kara L. Henkel
Roseville, Minn.



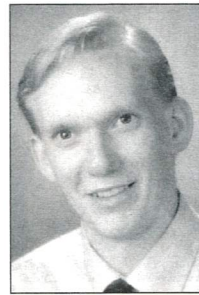
Victoria L. Hoffman
Chandler, Ariz.



Matthew A. Holtz
Saginaw, Mich.



Michelle L. Holtz
Saginaw, Mich.



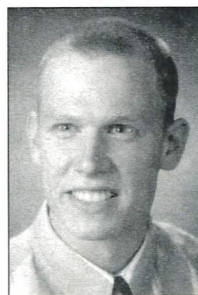
Christopher J. Hopfensperger
Delafield, Wis.



Beth A. Huntoon
Kenosha, Wis.



Tanya L. Jahns
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Christopher D. Johnson
Saginaw, Mich.



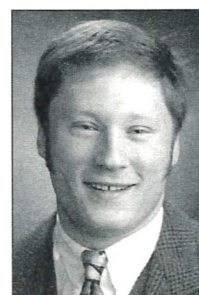
Shaun E. Kabelowsky
Milwaukee, Wis.



Jennifer R. Kaiser
Green Bay, Wis.



Sarah J. Karg
Baraboo, Wis.



Joshua W. Kesting
Kewaskum, Wis.



Kristen L. Kieselhorst
Cedarburg, Wis.



Sara J. Kleist
Milwaukee, Wis.



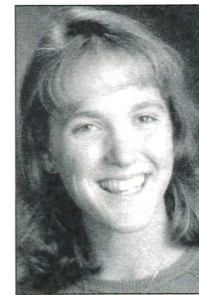
Theodore A. Klug
Lake Mills, Wis.



Michael R. Kumwenda
Lilongwe, Malawi, Africa



Anne E. Lauersdorf
Jefferson, Wis.



Melissa L. Mantey
Port Orchard, Wash.



Kerri L. Marion
Webberville, Mich.



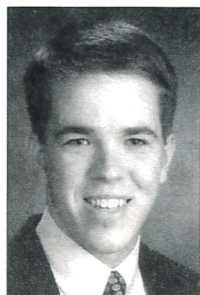
Brad J. Marten
New London, Wis.



Rebecca R. Miller
Inver Grove Heights, Minn.



Scott J. Miller
Garden City, S.D.



Joel T. Mittelstaedt
Largo, Md.



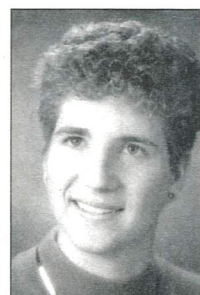
Luke J. Myslik
Abrams, Wis.



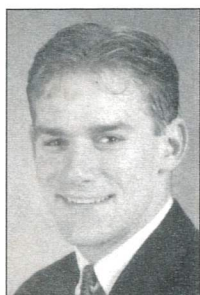
Penny R. Nell
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Nichole M. Niehoff
Juneau, Wis.



Carolyn B. Olsen
New Ulm, Minn.



Matthew S. Pearson
Mahtomedi, Minn.



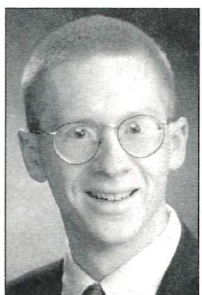
Jennifer L. Perry
Chesaning, Minn.



Thomas A. Plitzuweit
Phoenix, Ariz.



Martin V. Plocher
Marshall, Wis.



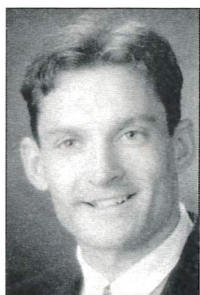
Christopher J. Pluger
Fairborn, Ohio



Krista L. Proeber
Cudahy, Wis.



Lori E. Ramirez
Brown City, Mich.



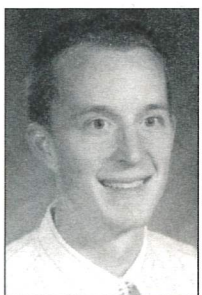
Dave H. Reinemann
Howards Grove, Wis.



Jill M. Richards
Fowlerville, Mich.



William R. Ritchie
Louisville, Ky.



Eric S. Rodmyre
Kent, Wash.



Jennifer L. Rodmyre
Rainier, Wash.



Mark J. Rohrback
Kalamazoo, Mich.



Patricia M. Rusert
Winona, Minn.



Jonathan E. Scharf
West Allis, Wis.



Amy L. Scharrer
Fenton, Mich.



Kurt R. Schaser
Darien, Ill.



Joshua J. Schoeneck
Federal Way, Wash.



Jill C. Schmidt
Hartland, Mich.



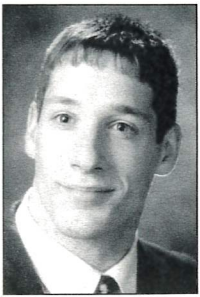
Janette K. Schramm
Jackson, Wis.



Jennifer S. Schramm
Jackson, Wis.



Elizabeth M. Schroer
Stevensville, Mich.



Daniel J. Schulz
N. Fond du Lac, Wis.



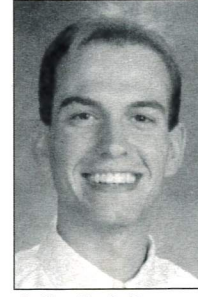
Janine A. Schulz
Madison, Wis.



Paul T. Schulz
Milwaukee, Wis.



Andrew D. Schwartz
Saginaw, Mich.



Jeffrey R. Sell
Juneau, Wis.



Michael G. Sheppard
Saginaw, Mich.



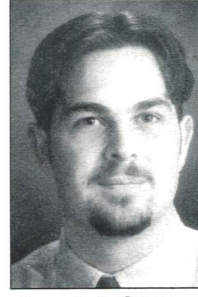
Deborah M. Shilling
New Ulm, Minn.



Kara D. Soukup
Madison, Wis.



Kathryn L. Spangenberg
Appleton, Wis.



Joseph A. Stone
Phoenix, Ariz.



Johnold J. Strey
Cedarburg, Wis.



Martin R. Strobel
New Ulm, Minn.



Kristi L. Stueber
Watertown, Wis.



Tina M. Syring
Edgar, Wis.



Valerie K. Teague
Mercer, Wis.



Jonathan M. Tjernagel
Cottage Grove, Minn.



Michelle C. Vasold
Saginaw, Mich.



Rebecca L. Wagner
Burlington, Wis.



Heather L. Walth
Mobridge, S.D.



Ryan K. Walz
Wauwatosa, Wis.



Benjamin B. Washburn
Jackson, Wis.



Andrew C. Wehausen
Grafton, Wis.



Nicole M. Wentker
Manitowoc, Wis.



James M. Werner
Cochrane, Wis.



Sarah M. Westphal
La Crosse, Wis.



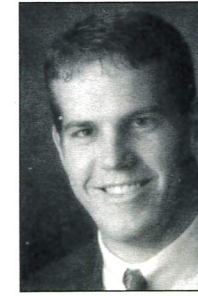
Dinah L. Wiederich
Girard, Ohio



Kip D. Wilson
Tomah, Wis.



Gary A. Wong
New Ulm, Minn.



Paul T. Zarling
Sterling, Va.

MISSING PHOTOS:

Andrew S. Aguilar, Robert J. Buss, James M. Carlisle, Anthony W. Crowder, Jason T. Hagedorn, Jessica A. Herlich, Scott R. Hill, Joshua P. Hillmann, Erik B. Landwehr, Joshua C. Martin, Michele M. Messman, Doris L. Panning, Heidi L. Plocher, Peter M. Reese, Julie D. Schiffer, Christopher L. Schroeder, Michael P. Sullivan, Russell A. Wilke III, Donovan M. Zastrow

A S S I G N M E N T S

The Conference of Presidents met May 15-16 to issue calls into the teaching ministry to these Martin Luther College graduates. Assignments include graduates from previous years.

- Adams, Holly R.**, Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn.
- Adickes, Philip J.**, California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
- Aguilar, Andrew S.**, St. John, Montello, Wis.
- Ash, Michael P.**, Living Word, Mission Viejo, Calif.
- Backus, David A.**, Gethsemane, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Bauer, Amy J.**, Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
- Behrens, Joanna L.**, Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill.
- Birling, Jennie M.**, St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn.
- Bischoff, Jeffrey H.**, Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
- Bock, Jeremy D.**, Lord of Life, Friendswood, Tex.
- Boese, Heather M.**, St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.
- Borlaug, Julie A.**, Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.
- Bornschlegl Jr., Arlin M.**, Faith, Anchorage, Alaska
- Borree, Rebecca L.**, Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.
- Braun, Katherine L.**, Gloria Dei-Bethesda, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Buss, Robert J.**, St. Luke, Oakfield, Wis.
- Cares, Jennifer L.**, Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo.
- Carlisle, James M.**, Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Conrad, Charlotte J.**, St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.
- Cooper, Natalie M.**, Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.
- Crist, Heather L.**, Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Diehm, Heather K.**, St. John, Pigeon, Mich.
- Diener, Michele R.**, St. Peter, Plymouth, Mich.
- Ewart, Jeanette R.**, Martin Luther, Plzen, Czech Republic
- Fernandez Espinosa, Norma P.**, Mass Communications for Latin America, El Paso, Tex.
- Festerling, Kimberly E.**, Martin Luther, Plzen, Czech Republic
- Finn, Susan K.**, Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.
- Fulton, David P.**, St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.
- Gaeth, Kristin E.**, St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.
- Geiger, Sarah B.**, St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.
- Gouvion, Wendy L.**, Green Valley, Henderson, Nev.
- Grambsch, Chad R.**, Apostles, Billings, Mont.
- Groth, Wendy L.A.**, Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
- Hagedorn, Jason T.**, St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
- Hahn, Melanie E.**, Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
- Hartman, Nicole R.**, St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
- Henkel, Kara L.**, St. Peter-St. Paul, Hopkins, Mich.
- Herlich, Jessica A.**, MLS, Saginaw, Mich.
- Hill, Scott R.**, Peace, Hartford, Wis.
- Hoffman, Victoria L.**, California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
- Hopfensperger, Christopher J.**, Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Huntoon, Beth A.**, Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.
- Jahns, Tanya L.**, Our Savior, Pomona, Calif.
- Kabelowsky, Shaun E.**, St. Philips and Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Karg, Sarah J.**, St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
- Keller, Debra L.**, St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.
- Kieselhorst, Kristen L.**, Crete, Crete, Ill.
- Kleist, Sara J.**, Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.
- Klug, Theodore A.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Kumwenda, Michael R.**, St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
- Landwehr, Erik B.**, Trinity, Castries, St. Lucia, West Indies
- Lauersdorf, Anne E.**, St. John, Fox Lake, Wis.
- Lawrenz, Sarah H.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Marion, Kerri L.**, St. Peter, Balaton, Minn.
- Marten, Brad J.**, St. John, Burlington, Wis.
- Marten, Stephanie L.**, Peace, Livonia, Mich.
- Meitner, Matthew S.**, St. Paul, St. James, Minn.
- Mensching, Randy L.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Miller, Rebecca R.**, Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich.
- Nell, Penny R.**, Salem, Owosso, Mich.
- Niehoff, Nichole M.**, St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn.
- Olsen, Carolyn B.**, St. John, Dakota, Minn.
- Pearson, Matthew S.**, St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
- Plitzuweit, Thomas A.**, St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb.
- Plocher, Martin V.**, Our Savior, Bylas, Ariz.
- Proeber, Krista L.**, Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
- Raiser, Danielle S.**, Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
- Ramirez, Lori E.**, Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.
- Reinemann, Dave H.**, Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
- Richards, Jill M.**, St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis.
- Richmond, Jennifer L.**, Zion, Chesaning, Mich.
- Rodmyre, Eric S.**, Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis.
- Rodmyre, Jennifer L.**, Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
- Rusert, Patricia M.**, Emanuel-Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
- Scharrer, Amy L.**, St. John, Burlington, Wis.
- Schmidt, Jill C.**, Our Savior, Bylas, Ariz.
- Schneider, Lisa A.**, St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
- Schoeneck, Joshua J.**, Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
- Schramm, Janette K.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Schramm, Jennifer S.**, MLS, Saginaw, Mich.
- Schroer, Elizabeth M.**, Zion, Valentine, Neb.
- Schulz, Daniel J.**, Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
- Sehloff, Naomi R.**, St. John, Princeton, Wis.
- Sell, Jeffrey R.**, St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.
- Shilling, Deborah M.**, St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Siverly, Dorene S.**, Good Shepherd, Benton Harbor, Mich.
- Soloviyov, Lori L.**, St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.
- Sonnenburg Jr., Charles G.**, Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
- Soukup, Kara D.**, Gethsemane, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Spangenberg, Kathryn L.**, Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Steele, Chanda I.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Strehlow, Jeffrey D.**, Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
- Stueber, Kristi L.**, First, Elkhorn, Wis.
- Swift, Sarah A.**, St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash.
- Syring, Tina M.**, St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
- Teague, Valerie K.**, MLS, Saginaw, Mich.
- Tomlin, William J.**, St. John, Newark, Del.
- Tracy, Damon S.**, Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
- Vasold, Michelle C.**, St. John, Montello, Wis.
- Wagner, Rebecca L.**, St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.
- Walz, Ryan K.**, Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
- Washburn, Benjamin B.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Wehausen, Andrew C.**, St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
- Wentker, Nicole M.**, Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.
- Westendorf, Jennifer L.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Westphal, Sarah M.**, LPS, Watertown, Wis.
- Wiederich, Dinah L.**, St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
- Wilson, Kip D.**, Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.
- Zastrow, Donovan M.**, St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.

STAFF MINISTER

Bruns, Steven, Heritage, Gilbert, Ariz.



Administrator retires for health

Duane Tomhave would never tire of visiting world missionaries and seeing their work and worship, from his first trip overseas to Africa in 1982 to his last trip to Hong Kong and Thailand in 1996—and the 28 trips in between.

But his body tired out. After 13 years of serving as administrator of the Board for World Missions, Tomhave has resigned due to health. He suffers from a rare and incurable disease called amyloidosis, which has damaged his kidneys.

“It’s hard for me to let go of my world mission family and reapply myself as husband, father, son, and grandfather,” said Tomhave. “But it’s time to do so.”

Tomhave has visited almost every WELS world missionary, having opportunities to live with them, see their work, and “worship in languages you don’t even understand.”

“The mystique of world missions became real to me,” said Tomhave.



Duane Tomhave, former administrator for the Board for World Missions, and Dan Koeplin, new administrator, at missionary Pieter Reid’s house in Indonesia. The Christmas tree was painted on the wall at the Reid home.

Besides traveling overseas, Tomhave handled administrative tasks and made presentations in about 300 congregations, conventions, and conferences since he became administrator in 1984.

“What a privilege to have seen the work firsthand in all the WELS world fields and to report how the Lord has blessed the gospel message on the tongues of over 60 missionaries on five continents,” said Tomhave.

The other thing he will never forget is the comedy and the drama of international travel.

“You really have to have a sense of humor,” he said.

And a strong faith.

Tomhave also served at Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz.; St. Thomas, Phoenix; St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.; and Reformation, Genesee Depot, Wis.

Reaching out to Hispanics

Over 45 pastors and lay people met at San Juan, El Paso, Tex., to discuss mission outreach to Hispanics. At the May conference, they heard from Hispanic WELS members who gave insights about their culture, and how

pastors and lay people could reach Hispanics better with the gospel.

Pastors who work with Hispanics shared ideas about what has worked in their outreach: emphasizing the gospel, gaining prospects’ trust,

speaking Spanish, holding vacation Bible school and other outreach to children, sufficient laity help, and offering English-as-a-Second Language classes.

Language is a big concern for outreach to Hispanics. There are many opportunities to reach Hispanics with the gospel. However, there are often not enough people who speak Spanish fluently. The WELS Board for Home Missions recognized this and has given language study grants to those who want to learn, or continue learning, Spanish.

Out of all this came the reminder that no matter what, God’s power through the gospel overcomes language and cultural barriers.

WELS Kingdom Workers financially supported much of the conference.

Michael Festerling

At a May conference, people interested in reaching out to Hispanics discussed how to better serve the Spanish-speaking population with the gospel. Participants learned about materials that are available in Spanish, but most important, they were reminded that the gospel transcends all barriers.



Former missionaries share joys and challenges

In the shadow of Pike's Peak, Florissant, Colo., nine former missionary couples met with two psychologists to share the "peaks and valleys" of missionary life.

The five-day conference, held in May, was led by John Kurth, coordinator for mission training. Kurth works with world mission families in both orientation for cross-cultural life and ministry and eventual repatriation to life and ministry in the United States.

Kurth reminded the participants that the missionary and his family do not have return tickets in their pockets when they go to a called field. The culture shock experienced when arriving at a field, and when returning to the United States to fit in an ever-changing culture, is a challenge to the mission work and to the workers.

Then the missionaries shared their stories:

"The altar fell over during worship. . . . A snake was hanging from the elephant grass ceiling in front of me during the liturgy when I turned around to pray. . . . A chicken and pig were shooed out of a service—when the dog came in he was allowed to stay—members said he was Lutheran. . . . 39 baptisms and 101 confirmations in a single service.

"The voices of African students harmonizing their evening Vespers wafting up the hill to our house. . . . A night service under a single bulb with electricity 'borrowed' from a nearby high-line. . . . A thermometer on the car seat getting to 118 degrees en route home from a rural service.



These former world missionaries met to discuss the culture shock of life in a world mission setting, but also the culture shock of returning to the United States.

From left: Laura and Robert Seifert, Malawi; Jan and Gary Schult, Indonesia; Connie and William Greenlee, Zambia; Dave Sternhagen, Zambia; Daniel and Marianne Jensen, Zambia; Dr. John Johnson, WELS member and psychologist; Sue Bilitz, WELS member and counselor; John Kurth, Malawi; James and Vicki Behringer, Japan; Walter and Diane Westphal, Malawi; Richard and Laurie Starr, Brazil; Front row: Carol Sternhagen, Zambia; Bani Kurth, Malawi.

"Sending young children off to boarding school. . . . Losing a personal goods shipment in the Red Sea after months of shopping and packing.

"The stress of strained relationships with fellow workers and national leaders on the field. . . . Maintaining closeness with loved ones in the United States. . . . The agony of experiences with robbery. . . . Dealing with the rumors of distress and impending political problems of our adopted countries. . . . The death of a child. . . . Health problems. . . . Dealing with the rampant spread of diseases like AIDS."

These stories reaffirmed the thread of commonality that brings all missionaries together no matter which field they have served.

How do returned missionary families meld the wealth of field experiences into their lives in today's world? As they all visit the peaks and valleys of their cross-cultural lives and use these experiences to bring a special strength and richness to their life and ministries now, they acknowledge that foreign mission experience is a paradox—the best

of times, the worst of times.

All returnees need a time for reflection on field experiences and a time for refocusing on the future. These WELS veterans of world missions took home a refreshed spirit encouraged by a new network of friends who have also survived the rigors of missionary life.

This first of a planned series of repatriation retreats for former missionary families was funded by a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans.

Baniata Kurth

UPDATE

We have a new district reporter for the South Atlantic District. Pastor Paul Zell, Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga., will be replacing Pastor Philip Wilde, who accepted a call to Wisconsin. Send your news to:

Rev. Paul Zell
4130 Pineset Dr.
Alpharetta GA 30202



Working together

District presidents, circuit pastors, and the synod and district commissions for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS) explored their roles—and how they can work together within these roles—in funding the synod's budget.

The Rosemont, Ill., conference theme was "cherish our unity as brothers."

The conference began with an inspirational presentation from Missionary Kirby Spevacek about the missionaries' escape from Albania. This gave attendees a broader picture of WELS work but also motivated them in their ministries.

The over 240 attendees separated into two groups—the district presidents and circuit pastors, and CCFS members. The district presidents and circuit pastors discussed how they can help called workers and congregations cherish the doctrine of the divine call. CCFS members considered how to better communicate the synod's mission and encourage support for that mission.

Then attendees considered their roles as a team in helping fund the synod's budget. Finally they separated by district and discussed programs for within each district.

"The ideas were flying," said David Russow, pastor at St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo., and second vice president of the Nebraska district. One idea for his district was to have joint district mission festival services.

"It was the best gathering I've been to of this nature," said Russow. "We didn't focus on the practicalities, but on the mission."

The conference was sponsored by CCFS.

New world missions administrator calls for cooperation

Although he is serving as the new administrator for the Board for World Missions, one of Daniel Koelpin's first priorities is working with synod areas of ministry at home on joint projects.

"I see an era where there's greater cooperation between divisions of synod," said Koelpin.

In the end this will help reach the lost—both at home and abroad—with the gospel.

Koelpin sees various ways world missions can work together with the different areas of ministry:

- Home missions. World missions can share ethnic insights, translated materials, world mission expertise, and manpower to help reach cross-cultural groups in the United States.

Koelpin also wants to coordinate campus ministry work with our overseas national churches to ensure follow through with converted foreign students returning to their native country.

- Ministerial education. "I would like to see further involvement of the teacher track in efforts of world missions," said Koelpin. Teachers can serve in overseas schools or as support people to our missionaries. He also wants to look into establishing international schools and regional seminaries and having WELS professors and pastors temporarily serve in those settings.

- Other synodical divisions and parasynodical groups. These groups



Dan and Carol Koelpin

can help promote awareness of world missions as well as provide ways lay people can help with overseas outreach.

A 1971 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Koelpin served at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Trinity, Waukesha, Wis. He has been on the Board for World Missions since 1983, serving as a member of the executive committee for Southeast Asian missions and as secretary of the board.

He and his wife, Carol, who works at GE Medical systems, have four children: Dawn, 23, Nathan, 21, Jessica, 17, and Joseph, 15.



My son Aaron's first grade teacher asked him what Jesus said to the thief on the cross. "It's your lucky day!" was his immediate response.

Paul Vander Galien, pastor, St. Paul, Henry/Emmanuel, Grover, S.D. Aaron attends St. Martin's, Watertown, S.D.

District news

South Atlantic

King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., is on track for a Sept. 7 dedication of its remodeled facilities. Modular classrooms have been replaced by a Family Life Center with space for two classrooms, a large meeting room, and a serving area. The gymnasium has room for a regulation basketball and volleyball court. The other half of the project is an entryway to the sanctuary. The former entryway is being turned into new seating; an alcove will allow for about 50 seats. . . . **Abiding Peace, Greenville, S.C.**; **Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.**; and **Hope, Irmo, S.C.**, are involved in relocation projects, and **Sola Scriptura, Decatur, Ga.**, is considering the idea. . . . **Beautiful Savior, Summerville, S.C.**, renovated their worship-education-fellowship unit into a ministry center, paved their parking lot, and refurbished their parsonage. They plan to worship in an off-site facility during their exploratory phase. . . . Building expansion is being considered at **Prince of Peace, Martinez, Ga.**, and implemented at **Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga.**

Philip Wilde

Southeastern Wisconsin

On June 8, **St. Marcus, Milwaukee**, dedicated its renovated chancel area. A new altar and pulpit were installed, in keeping with the original design of the church. The renovated altar, lectern, and pulpit were from the historic St. Jacobi church, now demolished, on 13th and Mitchell. . . . Then, on June 15, St. Marcus celebrated **Juneteenth Day**. This celebration commemorates the day in 1865 when great numbers of slaves in Texas heard for the first time that they had been set free two and a half years earlier. A TV station covered the outdoor service where people were told that Jesus' death set them free from the slavery of sin. That same day, St. Marcus recognized



Swedish fire station to combat new kind of fires

People will be saved in a different way when going to the fire station in Ljungby, Sweden.

That's because the fire station will be used in a different capacity—as a church. St. Mark, Ljungby, in south central Sweden is undertaking this unusual remodeling project. At first, the upper story, where the firemen lived, will be made into apartments to provide income to help pay for the building. The lower floor will become the church. Eventually the upper story can be converted for church use.

The 200-ton fire tower, which stood next to the station, would have been an impressive looking steeple, but the government required it be demolished. As it was being toppled, it struck the building a glancing blow. Insurance should cover the damage.

The congregation hopes to hold services in the building by Fall 1997.

St. Mark is a member of the Lutheran Confessional Church of Sweden and Norway, one of our sister churches in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

John Brug



Members of St. Mark, Ljungby, Sweden. The congregation converted a fire station into their new church building.

Eileen Uttecht who taught Sunday school for 56 years.

Western Wisconsin

Gerald Heckmann, a WELS planned giving counselor, celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry on May 30.

Minnesota

On May 18, St. Paul, Montrose, Minn., recognized **Carol Horsch** for 50 years of teaching Sunday school. She has taught between 400 and 500 children and about 2,000 Sunday school class periods during that time.

Jeff Bovee

Michigan

St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich., celebrated the 45th anniversary of teacher **Werner John Roekle** on May 18.

North Atlantic

Our Savior, Sterling, Va., broke ground for its new worship and Christian education building on March 30. . . . **Abiding Word, Orleans, Ontario, Canada**, is offering Sunday school for children and adults during the summer months. The Sunday school—called “Promiseland”—includes new teachers, new curriculum, and other surprises.

Kevin Schultz



YOUTH NEWS

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

A teacher at Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich., gave a letter-writing assignment to her class. The students were able to write to anyone they wanted. **Jenny Strieter**, a third-grader, decided to write the local newspaper, *The Ann Arbor News*, and share why she liked her Lutheran elementary school. The newspaper published her letter, and it turned out to be good public relations. Since then the Strieters have received calls inquiring about the school.

Sarah Buelo, a graduate of Lewis Cass High School, Walton, Ind., attended the Presidential Classroom Scholars Program in Washington, D.C., where she met with government leaders and learned about the democratic process. She was also chosen as Ms. Future Business Leader of Indiana and represented Indiana at the National Conference of Future Business Leaders of America in California. Buelo is a member of Faith, Kokomo, Ind.

rē · li · giōn

Defining religion

creed: A written statement or confession of what one believes. The three creeds commonly used in Christian worship—Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds—are brief summaries of the basic teachings of Scripture.

A sweet tradition

A tradition began in 1971 in Somers, Wis., a very sweet tradition at that. Helen Greve and Mickey Mallmann stirred up a batch, or a dozen batches, of peanut brittle to raise funds for Shoreland Lutheran High School.

The tradition and recipe came from Appleton, Wis., where proceeds from a similar project were given to Fox Valley Lutheran High School.

Over the years this project has grown. Work began in the Mallmann's home, moved to the Greve's home, then to the Somers Town Hall. This year the new fellowship hall at Friedens, Kenosha, Wis., was the ideal location.

Members of six congregations participate in this tradition. The week of cooking—with experienced "brittlers" teaching new volunteers—is a sight to see. Among the work, and across the stove, good Christian fellowship is shared.

A crew of about 15 is necessary for this assembly-line mass production. A "measurer" fills the pots according to the guarded recipe; then onto the stove where the "cookers" take ownership; next it is poured onto slabs of marble where the "turners" flip it to cool it; then "pullers" pull it ever so thin. (The measure of a perfect piece is no two peanuts should be touching.) Then



Volunteers pull peanut brittle at Friedens, Kenosha, Wis. They made 1,136 pounds of peanut brittle to raise funds for Shoreland Lutheran High School and WELS Lutherans for Life.

onto the cooling racks before it is weighed, packaged, and counted.

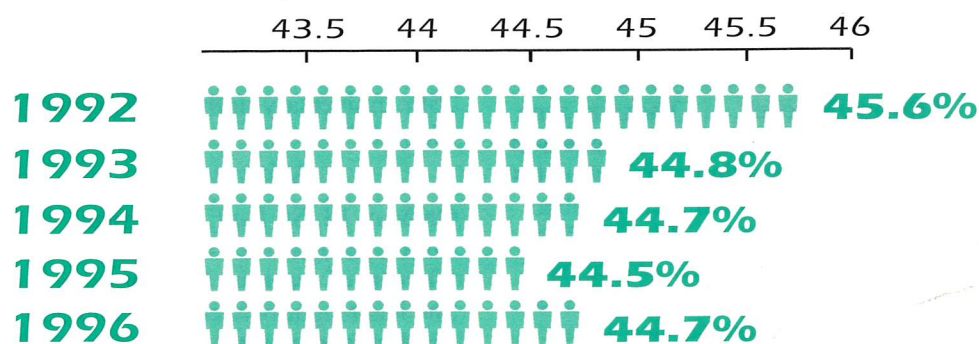
This year 1,136 pounds were made, requiring 469 hours of volunteer labor.

The first year, the volunteers made \$106.25 for the school. This year's effort will garner nearly \$3,500. That amount will be matched through AAL's Helping Hands program. All funds were originally donated to Shoreland. Since 1987 the proceeds are shared equally between WELS Lutherans for Life and the school.

Betsy Lentz

WELS worship trends

(percent of WELS members attending church services)



Following a 20-year low of 44.5% in 1995, average Sunday attendance in WELS inched up to 44.7% in 1996. This is still well below the high of 47% in 1980 and 1981.

Celebrating families

Why would people from California and Texas come to Wisconsin in May? If you said, "For the weather," you guessed wrong. If you said, "To celebrate families," you guessed right.

In fact, 42 people came from eight states to celebrate families at the WELS Outdoor Ministry Conference at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.

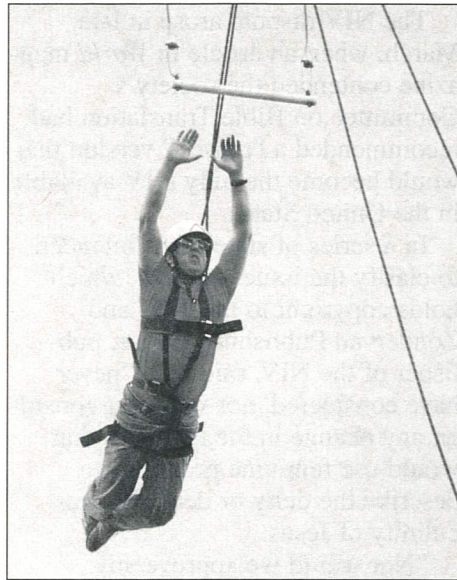
The participants represented 12 WELS camps from around the nation. All wanted to learn more about reaching out to families with outdoor ministry—from Bible camps to retreats to workshops.

Sponsored by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship and with assistance from AAL, the conference offered tips to promote camps, materials for family ministry and devotions, and activities for nature study.

Camp Christos in Omak, Wash., got more help than they ever expected—one counselor from Camp Phillip will spend a week in Washington helping with the camp. "This is giving us someone who has a lot of experience with camps. We will also be critiqued to see what we could do better," says Doug Scherschel, pastor at St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash.

Scherschel especially appreciated all the ideas about camp administration and camp devotions. "I learned about what things we should focus on," he says. "It was very valuable."

This conference is held every four years. Start planning now to attend.



Michael Brenner from Camp Lor-Ray, Wyoming, Mich., tested his physical and mental endurance on the high ropes course at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Brenner was one of 42 attendees at an outdoor ministry conference designed to help strengthen WELS camps throughout the country.



Christ-Light™ FAQ

Christ-Light™, the synod's new coordinated religion curriculum for cradle roll through grade 12, will be phased into congregations over four years, starting in 1998. Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator, answers frequently asked questions (FAQ) about Christ-Light.

Does the success of the curriculum depend upon the involvement of parents?

Children in Christian education agencies will be taught God's Word as they always have been. Through the use of *Christ-Light*, we have an opportunity to involve parents. The activities, structure, and components are designed to encourage and assist the home. The *Christ-Light* effort will be stronger if parents become involved, but its use is not contingent upon parental commitment.

Will the student packet promote waste if teachers become selective?

There are 13 A lessons and 13 B lessons for every set. One set of A and/or B lessons will cover 13 weeks of the school year or Sunday school term. Teachers will have to be somewhat selective as there are more lessons than a school can use in a 36 week school year. If teachers become too selective, there will be waste. There will also be coordination difficulties among other agencies and grades within the Lutheran elementary school and Sunday school.

Obituaries

Eldor Albert Henry Keibel 1918-1997

Eldor Keibel was born Sept. 7, 1918 in West Allis, Wis. He died April 20, 1997, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1942 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he taught at Friedens, Kenosha, Wis. He served on the faculty of the original Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, and continued teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

He is survived by his brother and sister-in-law, a niece, a nephew, and cousins.

Gertrude Paula Schmidt 1907-1997

Gertrude Paula Schmidt was born Feb. 27, 1907, in New Haven, Mo. She died April 14, 1997, in Portland, Ore.

A 1927 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she taught at Zion, Winthrop, Minn., and St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.

She is survived by three sisters.



Most news reported in this section is derived from Religion News Service. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or *Northwestern Lutheran*.

Gallup: Americans' faith lacks depth



A Gallup report shows Americans say they are as religious today as they were 50 years ago, despite widespread belief that society has become more secular.

Based on several surveys, 96 percent of Americans today say they believe in God, 71 percent profess belief in an afterlife, 90 percent say they pray, and 41 percent say they attend religious services frequently ("almost every week" or "at least once a week"). These numbers match almost exactly to the percentages given in 1947.

However, the report also points out that while Americans may profess broad belief in religious ideas, their faith appears to lack depth.

George Gallup Jr. identified three "gaps" that point to a lack of religious depth.

Americans, he said, do not generally live up to the ethical standards of their faith (the ethics gap), nor are they generally aware of their faith's basic teachings (the knowledge gap). The third gap, said Gallup, is "between believers and belonging," which contrasts the number of Americans who profess belief in God with the number who frequently attend religious services.

The margin of error was ± 3 percent.

One giant step for mankind

The International Bible Society (IBS) announced in May that it would "serve the church ahead of market concerns" by scrapping a proposed New International Version (NIV) that would substitute gender-accurate words, such as people, for gender-specific words, such as mankind.

The NIV dispute arose in late March, when an article in *World* magazine contended the society's Committee on Bible Translation had recommended a "unisex" version that would become the only NIV available in the United States.

In a series of statements intended to clarify the issue, the IBS, which holds copyright to the NIV, and Zondervan Publishing House, publisher of the NIV, said they "never have considered, nor will ever consider, any change in the NIV text that would use feminine pronouns to describe the deity or deny the masculinity of Jesus.

"Nor would we approve any changes that would diminish or eliminate the divinely ordained uniqueness of men and women. No changes will be approved that are contrary to the original biblical text in any way."

Steven Johnson, spokesman for IBS, said the changes that had been proposed focused on the translation of words that in the original Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic are grammatically neutral, such as the Greek "anthropos." That word, used in 1 Corinthians 11:28, is a "third person, all inclusive" word. "The singular inclusive pronouns [sic] don't exist in English, and they do in Greek, so they don't translate straight across."

But Johnson said the decision to scrap the new translation is irrevocable.

"We have shelved all plans to ever discuss this," he said. "If the North American evangelical church ever wanted to discuss gender accuracy, I don't know if we'd be willing again. But in any case, that would be well down the road, probably after you and I are long gone."

Overall Bible sales in the United States are estimated at \$500 million annually. The NIV holds a 45 percent market share, and since its introduction in 1978 and subsequent revision in 1983, more than 100 million copies have been sold.

Volunteers protected from lawsuits

Congress overwhelmingly passed and sent to President Clinton a bill to protect volunteers from lawsuits that could stem from charitable work.

The bill would protect a volunteer from liability for harm caused while properly engaged in volunteer work. The volunteer would be liable if harm was caused by willful or criminal misconduct or conscious, flagrant indifference, or resulted from a crime of violence, international terrorism, a sexual offense, or a violation of civil rights law.

Rep. Bob Inglis, R-S.C., co-sponsor of the bill, said volunteering in America is in danger because of "frivolous lawsuits." He cited a poll indicating that one in six potential volunteers withholds services because they fear lawsuits.

Porter said the issue is not so much that volunteers have been made to pay large judgments in suits, but that they have been forced to bear the burden of hiring lawyers and going to court.

Contributions rise, membership declines

Contributions to Protestant churches in the United States continue to grow, even though membership in many of the denominations is declining, notes *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. It also pointed out that WELS saw substantial increases in contributions: WELS members gave 11.5 percent more in 1995 than in 1994. Here are statistics from a few of the many Protestant denominations in the United States.

Contributions to U.S. Protestant Churches

	Members		Contributions		
	Confirmed member	Total	Total	per confirmed member	per member
Church of the Lutheran Brethren in America	8,114	24,906	\$9,157,364	\$1,128.59	\$367.68
Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC)	6,474	8,783	3,975,789	614.12	452.67
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)	3,854,063	5,190,489	1,739,949,531	452.52	335.22
Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)	16,543	22,371	14,196,621	858.16	634.60
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)	1,943,281	2,594,555	963,212,668	495.66	371.24
Presbyterian Church in America	210,758	267,764	306,597,758	1,454.74	1,145.03
Presbyterian Church (USA)	2,665,276	3,669,489	2,165,662,943	812.55	590.18
Reformed Church in American (RCA)	183,255	306,312	194,245,692	1,059.97	634.14
Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)	15,663,296	15,663,296	6,068,383,938	387.43	387.43
United Methodist Church	8,538,662	8,538,662	3,568,540,217	417.93	417.93
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)	314,169	412,478	186,030,430	592.13	451.01
U.S. Totals	43,104,555	48,115,704	\$21,433,517,908	\$497.24	\$445.46

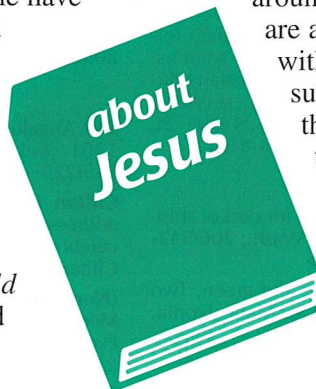
[The Chronicle of Philanthropy, May 15, 1997. Statistics from the 1997 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches]

Books about Jesus abound

More than 65,000 books about Jesus or with Jesus as a main theme have been written worldwide, and an average of four more are published each day, according to missionary researcher David Barrett.

In 1996, some 1,500 new books about Jesus appeared in print, Barrett said.

Barrett, editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, said



information from libraries around the world show there are a total of 65,571 books with Jesus as their main subject, and 53,094 have the word Jesus in the title. Of these books, a large proportion—25,077—have been published since 1970.

rē·li·giōn

Defining religion

clarity of Scripture: The truth that the teachings of Scripture are accessible to every reader or hearer of average intelligence. Although there are some things in the Bible that are difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16), the basic message of Scripture is clear enough to make the simple wise (Psalm 19:7) and to enlighten our sinful minds (2 Peter 1:19).

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

CHANGE OF MINISTRY

Pastors

Huth, Paul H., from St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis., to retirement
Johnston, Robert, from St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla., to retirement
Koelpin, Daniel H., from Trinity, Waukesha, Wis., to administrator, Board for World Missions, Milwaukee
Krueger, Robert J., from Grace, Pueblo, Colo., to Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa
Lehmann, Richard W., from Grace, Weston, Ohio, to Faith, Oregon, Wis. (ELS)
Pautz, Larry L., from Bethany, Antioch, Calif., to exploratory, Wind Lake, Wis.
Reich, Daniel K., from Redeemer, Pierre, S.D., to Grace, Spring Hill, Fla.
Schoch, Wayne D., from National, Calumet, Mich., to Cross of Glory, Washington, Mich.
Schone, Jeffrey L., from St. Paul, Arlington, Minn., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Schroeder, John A., from Zion, Olivia, Minn., to Christ Our Redeemer, Gillette, Wyo.
Silfies, David P., from St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., to Zion, Morgan, Minn.
Spevacek, Kirby A., from Albania, to Open Bible, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Stahlecker, Gregory D., from Grace, Kenton, Ohio, to Trinity, Coleman, Wis.
Wagner, Mark C., from St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.
Wahl, Roger D., to Zion, Cambria, Wis.
Wenzel, Kenneth L., from St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis., to Madison Institutional Ministries, Jefferson, Wis.
Werre, Jonathan D., from Christ, Cambrige, Minn., to Mighty Fortress, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

Teachers

Alsch, Patricia, to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Bowe, Keith R., from Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
Braun, James A., from Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, to Zion, S. Milwaukee, Wis.
Brenn, Heather A., from St. John, Monello, Wis., to Bloomington, Bloomington, Minn.
Conklin, Rachel J., from Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich., to Zion, Chesaning, Mich.
Greanya, Charmaine I., from Gloria Dei, Grand Blanc, Mich., to Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.
Greening, Terrance J., to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.
Hermanson, James E., from Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn., to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Hirsch, Gwendolyn B., from LPS, Watertown, Wis., to retirement
Hussman, James E., from Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., to Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis.
Kramer, Kurk K., from St. John, Fox Lake, Wis., to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.
Kronebusch, Jacquelin, to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
LaGrow, Martin P., from Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis., to Our Savior, Longmont, Colo.
Lake, Constance S., from Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D., to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
Makinen, Robert R., from Living Word, Mission Viejo, Calif., to Gloria Dei-Bethesda, Milwaukee, Wis.
Neumann, Jessica J., from Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, to St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb.
Pautz, Joyce O., from Zion, Rhinelander, Wis., to retirement

Bulletin BOARD

& NOTICES

Railling, Joel F., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
Remmele, SueAnn, to St. John, Wood Lake, Minn.
Richgruber, Ruth M., from Zion, Rhinelander, Wis., to retirement
Ristow, Timothy A., from St. John, Manitowoc, Wis., to Holton, Holton, Mich.
Treuden, Rachel B., from St. Paul, Appleton, Wis., to Trinity, El Paso, Tex.
Tullberg, Donna, to St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.
Unke, James M., from Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Unke, Ronald G., from Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement
Wallace, Elizabeth D., from Gloria Dei, Belmont, Calif., to Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.
West, Sheri, to Shepherd of the Hills, Inver Grove Heights, Minn.
Yarbrough, Kristine, from St. Paul First, North Hollywood, Calif., to Gloria Dei-Bethesda, Milwaukee/Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Ridgeland, Wis.—St. Paul in Dallas Township and St. Paul in Prairie Farm Township (125). Aug. 3—catered meal, noon; joint congregation service, 2 PM at Prairie Farm Township church. Aug. 17—potluck, noon; service for St. Paul in Prairie Farm Township, 2 PM. 715/949-1650.
Milwaukee, Wis.—St. Lucas (125). Aug. 24, Sept. 21, Sept. 28, Oct. 4, and Oct. 12. Services at 8 AM, 9:30 AM, and 11 AM. Church picnic at Humboldt Park follows June 22 services. Oct. 19—Anniversary Celebration Sunday at WLC. Service, 10 AM; dinner follows. St. Lucas, 2605 Kinnickinnic Ave, Milwaukee WI 53207; 414/483-9122.
Thousand Oaks, Calif.—Prince of Peace (30). Sept. 14. service, 10 AM, dinner following. 3415 Erbes Rd, Thousand Oaks CA 91362; 805/492-8943.
Rock Springs, Wis.—St. John (125). Sept. 14 and Sept. 21—10 AM; Sept. 28—10 AM, potluck follows. 299 W Broadway, Rock Springs WI 53961; 608/524-5289.
Oconomowoc, Wis.—St. Matthew (75). Aug. 3—God's grace in feeding his lambs (former teachers and students invited) potluck follows; Nov. 2—God's grace in proclaiming his pure Word, noon dinner. Call ahead to attend Nov. 2 dinner. 414/567-2418.
Muskego, Wis.—St. Paul (140). Aug. 17—out-reach Sunday. Sept. 21—mission Sunday; potluck, noon. Sunday services, 7:45 AM and 10:30 AM; Monday, 7 PM. S66 W14325 Janesville Rd, Muskego WI 53150; 414/422-0320.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Salem (150). Aug. 10—confirmation reunion; ice cream social/light lunch following services. Sept. 14—St. Marcus, Milwaukee, gospel choir. Oct. 12—Christian education Sunday; potluck following services. Services at 8 and 10:30 AM. 6814 N 107 St, Milwaukee WI 53224-4306; 414/353-8141.

AVAILABLE

Bibles—50 KJV, pew edition. Free for cost of shipping. James Humann, Edmonds, Wash.; 206/542-3003; <JHumann383@aol.com>
Altar/lecturn paraments—White and green. Two sizes: 29 x 7" and 20 x 4.25"; St. Mark, Ixonia, Wis. Evelyn Mack, 414/474-7432.

COMING EVENTS

Workshop—Training on bloodborne pathogens and workshop presented by Professor John Freese from WLC, Milwaukee, on the topic of "habits of highly effective people." 8:30 AM-3 PM, Aug. 4 at Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. \$50 per school. Hosted by the La Crosse area Lutheran grade schools principals' conference. David Niemi, 608/784-1050 or 608/782-1110.

Dedication—of the Family Life Center, King of Kings, Maitland, Fla. Sept. 6—carnival/open house, noon to 6 PM. Sept. 7—service, 4 PM; catered meal to follow. 1101 N Wymore Rd, Maitland FL 32751. Kurt Rosenbaum, 407/628-5696 or 407/830-5496.

Anniversary—of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxillary (25). Oct. 4 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. Registration, 8 AM; Service, 9 AM; \$7.50 (includes lunch). Send reservations to Barb Bergquist, 8023 Red Arrow Ct, Wauwatosa WI 53213; 414/476-2384 (home) or 414/961-3765 (work).

Anniversary—St. Michael's Lutheran Home, Cochrane, Wis. (50). Sept. 19—employee day; picnic, 3 PM; Sept. 20—family/resident/community day; picnic, noon. Sept. 21—anniversary day; service, 10:30 AM; dinner at Cochrane VFW, noon. To order dinner tickets or for information, call 1-800-858-8781.

European choral/history tour—Sing the music of Renaissance and Baroque masters at the places where they lived and worked in England, Holland, and Germany. June 10-28, 1998. Credit available for music or history through Martin Luther College. Roger Hermanson <hermanra-fac@mlc-wels.edu> or Mark Lenz <lenzmj-fac@mlc-wels.edu>, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm, MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142.

Student Holy Land tour—A 12 to 14 day tour of Israel and Jordan designed for high school students in WELS. Parents and grandparents welcome. Early June 1998. \$2,000 to \$2,300 from Chicago. Hosted by Rev. James Aderman, Rev. David Putz, and Mr. Tom Niedfeldt. Registration deadline: Jan. 1, 1998. Tom Niedfeldt, 252 E Cotton St, Fond du Lac WI 54935; 1-800-656-7745; FAX, 414/921-3036.

NEEDED

Preacher—Stay in Ft. Myers, Fla., parsonage in exchange for preaching Aug. 10 and 17. David Rothe, 941/482-7595.

Altar paraments and lecturn—Beautiful Savior, Fayetteville, N.C. Lori Penha, 910/867-8467; <LPenha@aol.com>

Pews—Old wooden pews. St. Mark, Watertown, Wis. 414/262-8500.

The Children's Hymnal (CPH)—for Sunday school. Please indicate quantity and copyright year. J. Fellers, 2719 Adobe Dr, Fort Collins CO 80525; 970/226-3433; <kkt525@aol.com>

NAMES WANTED

San Angelo, Tex.—Bob Sawall, Our Redeemer, 1201 Koberlin St, San Angelo TX 76903; 915/223-1269; <rlsawall@gte.net>

Clifton Park, N.Y.—King of Kings. Names addresses of former members for 25th anniversary celebration in November. 1593 Crescent Rd, Clifton Park NY 12065; 518/371-9544.

(Northwest Richmond) Short Pump/Ashland/Mechanicsville, Va.—Joel D. Albrecht, Living Water Exploratory, 13005 Chancery Ct, Richmond VA 23233; 804/360-9431; <jalveh20@aol.com>

Fort Hood, Tex.—Kevin Mau, Abiding Savior exploratory, 817/628-8399.

Abba Father

Karl R. Gurgel

It's the phone call you've been dreading, the phone call every parent or grandparent fears. It usually comes in the night. You know right away, just by the excited voice on the other end of the line, something is seriously wrong.

In a voice quivering with emotion, the words spill out. A little girl, your granddaughter, is in an ambulance, rushing to a hospital, alone, without her parents. She wouldn't have known them even if they were present. Her mind has been dulled by a powerful, unexpected brain seizure.

She's miles away from you. A phone call makes you feel even farther away. You feel so helpless, so powerless to do anything except pray. And so pray you do. The words winged heavenward never seem to stop, appealing to a Father's boundless grace and greatness.

The words are heard, as they always are, but this time in just the way you prayed them. A little child's life is spared, her senses return, completely. A few days later you know they are when you pick up the phone and hear her tiny, tender voice say, "Papa."

"Abba Father," my dearest Father, Jesus taught us to pray. "Our Father who art in heaven," we also pray and sometimes are overwhelmed to realize the powerful, privileged promise we are unleashing.

He's our Father. His Son, Jesus, has taught us to trust him. Thanks to Jesus' death for us, the Father promised us forgiveness and eternal life in heaven. And, while still here upon the earth, he

promises every good thing in keeping with his good and perfect will for us.

This is the promise, God's promise, we have to share with everyone.

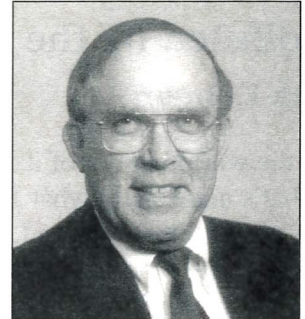
"Share the Promise" has been our synodical theme these past two years. It now will give way to a new theme, "We are Family Under God." It is not a new theme so much as it is an extension of the old. By way of the promise, through faith in it, also God's gift to us, we are all members of his family.

"Papa," she said. How close I felt to her that night, my own flesh and blood. But how much closer I feel to her because, by baptism, through water and the Word, she and I—you and I—are forever linked to the grace and greatness of God. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are all family under God.

How many children, how many parents and grandparents, don't know how loved they are. They don't even know where they fit in when it comes to this life let alone the life that is to come.

Someone once, perhaps our mother or father, shared the promise with us. By God's amazing grace we became children of God. And now, as we share his promise with others, by God's amazing grace, they may come to realize they are part of a family too—God's family.

"Papa," she said. It was wonderful to hear her say it. Wouldn't it be even more wonderful to hear someone with whom we have shared God's promise say, "Abba Father"?



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

**Through faith in
Jesus Christ we
are all family
under God.**

In the world but not of it

Real religion concerns what we do in the world, not just what we say and sing in church. But it also means keeping oneself from being “polluted by the world.”

Mark E. Braun

In the world but not of it. That’s not exactly what Jesus said, but it’s close. He said, “They are not of the world even as I am not of it” (John 17:16), yet he was very much in the world. He had compassion on the crowds (Matthew 9:36), and his heart went out to the scared and lonesome (Luke 7:13). When the Pharisees scoffed, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them,” they meant it sarcastically (Luke 15:2). Jesus took it as a tender portrayal of his ministry.

In the world

Real religion concerns what we do in the world, not just what we say and sing in church. James all but agrees with the skeptic who says he’s never been much for organized religion but believes in doing good: **“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after widows and orphans in their distress” (1:27).**

In Jesus’ world (and throughout biblical times) a widow could seldom return to her career or make a new home for herself. At worst, she had to beg; more often she was forced to rely on her brother or her

husband’s family to provide for her. Jesus’ story about the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8) and his complaint that the teachers of the law “devour widow’s houses” (Luke 20:47) suggest that even a woman of means was vulnerable to unscrupulous men. Some considered it God’s judgment on a secret sin if a man died before he was old, and his disgrace could also fall on his widow.

It’s possible to become so “not of the world” that we’re barely in it.

A fatherless child was at the mercy of the community. (This was the benevolent part about Joseph’s willingness to take Mary as his wife. By doing so he gave her Son the dignity and security of a legal father.)

God was the defender of the fatherless and the widow (Deuteronomy 10:18), and he called on the Israelites to display similar concern. Paul’s guidelines for the “widow’s list” in 1 Timothy 5 reveals how seriously early churches took that obligation. James urged his readers to do the same. Such concern would move others to say, “Now there’s real religion.”

Not of the world

God so loved the world, and in Christ he reconciled the world to himself. Yet Bible writers often use “world” to refer to the ungodly values and corrupted desires of fallen humanity. Real religion also means keeping oneself from being “polluted by the world.” God’s children are in constant danger of having those ungodly values and corrupted desires “rub off” on them. James later warned, **“Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (4:4).**

It’s possible to become so “not of the world” that we’re barely in it. Our churches become insular religious ghettos, cocoons we create, our lives antiseptically isolated from real people’s problems. And the salt remains in the shaker. But it’s also possible to be so comfortably “in the world” that we become imperceptibly a part of that world, and it becomes part of us. If the salt loses its saltiness, what good is it?

The only sure guide is to keep our eyes on Jesus. He alone was holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners. Yet he came to seek and to save what was lost.

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

real faith for real life
james

Our synod

Walter F. Beckmann

Possibly, at the same time you're holding this periodical in your hands, delegates to our synod convention in Watertown, Wis., are holding in their hands copies of floor committee reports they received for their consideration and action.

Notice I called it, *our* synod convention; not *the* synod or *their* synod. It's *our* synod that is meeting at Luther Prep School in Watertown, Wis., this last week in July. The voting delegates are delegates we elected. The issues before them have to do with the great commission the Lord has given to us all. Even the word "synod" means, "We're on this road together." This is *our* synod.

Working together as a synod is probably the most efficient way you and I have of facing up to our God-given responsibilities to preach the gospel in all the world; to train pastors, teachers, and missionaries for his church; and to encourage each other to remain scripturally sound in our beliefs and practices. This is our synod.

It amazes me how many it actually takes to put together a synod convention. Most reports and proposals on the agenda have been assembled by boards and committees that have been meeting since the last convention. They're made up of pastors, teachers, and lay representatives who come from every district of our synod. In most instances their time and services are all freely given.

In addition to the proposals of our boards and committees, the convention also considers requests called memorials that come directly from the churches and members of our synod.

To ensure a broad participation in the decision-making process, at least half the voting delegates are lay representatives chosen by fellow members of their congregations. The rest are pastors and teach-

ers whom we have trained and called to serve us. This is *our* synod. This is *our* synod convention.

Some agenda items also reflect this. One proposal calls for restructuring our synod administration by forming a synodical council that will establish priorities and oversee implementing all the projects approved at our convention. The majority of this council will be 12 lay representatives, one from each district of our synod. One other proposal seeks to involve every area of our ministry in helping to seek our neighbor for Christ in our increasingly multicultural society. Still another is for a celebration of our synod's 150th anniversary, a celebration that will seek the input and involvement of every WELS member.

Because this is our synod, we also want to keep informed about the resolutions coming out of our convention. Our delegates will soon be available for presentations to our congregations and circuits. Let's invite them and listen to their reports. Let's read the convention *Herald*, which will give us the flavor of our convention. Future issues of *Northwestern Lutheran* and WELS Connection video tapes will bring us further information about resolutions our delegates have adopted on our behalf. Those who have on-line capabilities can receive a daily report by logging in at <www.wels.net>.

With all this information, let's work together, pool our resources, and pray for the Lord's blessings on the work we plan to carry on together as fellow members of our synod. This is *our* synod. We're in this together, in the Lord.

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

*This is our
synod.*

*This is our
synod
convention.*



Patiently discussing issues

John F. Brug

Does a pastor have a right to cancel Sunday school if there are people willing to teach, and parents want Sunday school?

The voters' assembly and the designated boards of the congregation have authority to decide what services and programs a congregation will have. A pastor should not unilaterally disregard their wishes.

Your pastor may have had valid reasons not to have Sunday school and may have taken this action with the approval of the congregation. If you disagree with the decision, you should talk to the pastor to try to understand his reasons for this action. If this fails to resolve the disagreement, those who are concerned about the issue can present their case to the congregation's church council and voters' assembly for their decision. Patiently discussing the issue, first with the pastor, then through the proper channels of the congregation's government, is the way to address the problem.

A bisexual friend I met at college labels me as narrow-minded. She sees herself as open to many possibilities for relationships and insists this cannot be wrong because God made her this way. How do I respond?

The Bible makes it clear that homosexual practices and desires, including those between women, are a sin that is contrary to God's intention in creating man and woman (Romans 1:26,27). We must warn the impeni-

tent that homosexuality, like all sins, excludes people from eternal life (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

**We can never say that
God made us sinful.**

Many factors may contribute to individual acts of sin. The sinful nature we are born with, the weaknesses of our bodies, evil influences in our environment, temptations and encouragement from other sinners, and our own sinful choices join together to lead us into sin. All of these factors contribute to homosexual sin. The proportionate role of these various factors may vary from case to case.

We can never say that God made us sinful. The nature with which we are born into this world is not the good nature with which God created Adam and Eve. Our bodies and our souls have been corrupted by sin. Homosexuality, like all other sins that involve our body, is not due to God's creation, but to our sinful nature, our sinful choices, and the evil in our environment.

Although we must warn against this and other sins, we are happy to

Send questions to Your question, please, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net.>

assure the repentant who are struggling against this sin that they have complete forgiveness through the blood of Christ. When Christ died for the sins of the whole world, he gained forgiveness for homosexual deeds, for homosexual desires, and for the inborn sinful nature that produces these sins (1 Corinthians 6:11). We deal patiently with all who are struggling against this sin, remembering that we too have "pet sins" that have a strong hold on us.

After the Fall, God cursed the ground and said it would bring forth thorns and thistles. Had thorns and thistles been part of creation, but now are changed for the worse, or did they first come into existence because of man's sin?

The Bible gives no specific answer to this question. Since the work of creation was finished on the sixth day, your first suggestion seems to be most probable.

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

Have you seen the Questions & Answers section on our WELS website? You can find it at <www.wels.net>. Go there for answers to questions regarding doctrine, current issues, news items, or where to go for help.

Your e-mailed question will be forwarded to the appropriate person. Most answers are posted within two to three days.



I'm writing in response to the May article in the singles series.

While I thought it had good points, there were a few statements that undermined the life of the single person. "Being single is neither good nor bad." Not true, being single is very good. I know that this is what God has planned for me.

I was unclear about the statement: "It's neutral—a stage of life. We all go through it. . . ." Does that mean neutral, like in a car? If so, I am not "in neutral." I am going full speed ahead with the life God has planned for me.

Being single is not a stage I am "going through." This is my life. I do not need someone else to make me happy. I lead a very full life, in a manner I hope is in accordance with God's will.

Furthermore, the author did not need to invent a purpose for being single. The obligation of a single person to serve God is equal to that of a married person, no more, no less. (Nor do singles have extra hours in a day.) Also, singles are not just unmarried individuals. Many are parents raising children, caring for elderly parents, etc., just like married people.

I am sure there are single people who wish to be married, and that's fine. They will find a mate if God has so planned for them. But, please remember, being single is great.

*Katie Mendoza
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

o clarify the statement: "It's neutral—a state of life." It's a way of saying that everyone is single for part of life, and remaining single is not necessarily to be promoted for every person or discouraged.

Also, it's important to note that the Apostle Paul set forth the idea that singles have some advantage in serving the Lord (1Corinthians 7:32,33).—ed.

As I read Cherney's "speaking his mind," [June] I wondered if there wasn't a bit of hyper-focus on justification to the exclusion of sanctification. Couldn't an op/ed piece such as Cherney's at least have mentioned sanctification?



*David Schroeder
Citrus Heights, California*

I found the cover of the June issue objectionable for the same reason I object to beauty contests for little girls—we are forcing our children to grow up too fast with a skewed sense of values: that being beautiful and being married are assurances of living happily ever after. It's one thing, of course, for children to play dress up and make believe, but this cover was structured by adults, and they are sending the wrong message here.

Unlike Linda Baacke, "Seeking the ideal spouse," I did not spend my childhood dreaming of my wedding, and I was a good little girl. My life was filled with home and family, church, school, music, books, friends, and travel. I dreamed of college.

Except for the opening, Baacke's article makes good sense. To reinforce the story, the cover could have shown an adult married couple and/or three or four adult single people, all of them happily serving God, doing whatever he has called them to do.

*Lyda Lanier
Tomah, Wisconsin*

The cover was meant to picture children playing dress up and making believe. It had to be structured because we didn't

have a candid photo that fit. Sorry it appeared otherwise. I share the sentiment about forcing our children to grow up too fast.—ed.

Through my Bible in 3 years

September 1997

1. James 1:19-27
2. Jas. 2:1-13
3. Jas. 2:14-26
4. Jas. 3
5. Jas. 4
6. Jas. 5
7. 1 Chronicles 1-9
8. 1 Chron. 10, 11
9. 1 Chron. 12
10. 1 Chron. 13, 14
11. 1 Chron. 15:1—16:6
12. 1 Chron. 16:7-43
13. 1 Chron. 17
14. 1 Chron. 18-20
15. 1 Chron. 21:1—22:1
16. 1 Chron. 22:2-19
17. 1 Chron. 23, 24
18. 1 Chron. 25-27
19. 1 Chron. 28
20. 1 Chron. 29
21. Psalm 107:1-32
22. Ps. 107:33-43
23. Ps. 108
24. Ps. 109
25. Ps. 110
26. Ps. 111, 112
27. Ps. 113, 114
28. Ps. 115
29. Ps. 116
30. Ps. 117, 118

Peter the Barber once asked Martin Luther how he, an ordinary kind of guy could read the Bible and benefit. Luther answered:

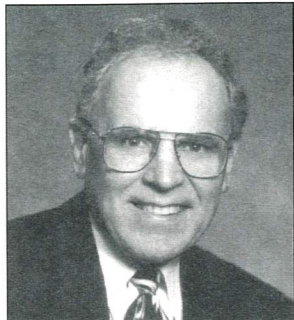
Ask yourself:

1. What does God tell me here?
2. What makes me glad?
3. What makes me sad?
4. What do I want to pray for?

Try it in your Bible reading.



“Angel” gives devilish advice



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

The problem is that the writers used their “angel” instead of God’s Word to inform the man.

NL applauds programs like *Touched by an Angel* and The WB Television Network’s *7th Heaven* for championing family values and promoting “old-fashioned” morality in a medium more often hostile to such values. Still, we caution viewers to be discerning about spiritual messages that may not be true to Scripture.

Finally, we sigh, a TV show that portrays religion and faith positively. Although it has little company, NBC’s *Touched by an Angel* is one program where good matters and God gets credit. However, it is also an example of what happens when public TV programmers put their spin on religion.

All that glitters is not heavenly gold.

One episode illustrates the point. An unbelieving and conniving man continually disappointed people around him. But then he nearly died, twice. His near-death experiences and the angels sent to help him led the man to realize he was headed for a dark afterlife (hell?) if something didn’t change. But there was light with God.

He decided to change and immediately started doing and recording a series of good deeds, to the delight of his friends. Still, he learned, that wasn’t enough to make up for the bad he’d done.

One of the angels explained that the good things he was doing now were like tiny steps in the right direction. Think of going up a ladder toward God. No matter how many steps we take, we still come up short. The ladder doesn’t reach. We can’t get to God by our accumulated good deeds.

“Wow!” I thought. “Am I hearing this right? We can’t get to God and his heaven by our own deeds.” The Bible says that, but you don’t expect to hear it in a network series.

The man wanted to know, in that case, what he could do. He didn’t have an inkling. Another biblical reflection: “What must I do to be saved?”

The angel told him. The man finally realized what the angel meant, applied it,

and got on the right track.

The angel’s advice? When you are at the limit where you’ve gone as far as you can toward God, pray to him to close the gap and reach you. When your prayer is right (right spirit?), God will make the connection.

That advice sounds deceptively good. When all else fails, depend on God. But it’s time to ask, “Who is this God?”

Understand, I want to say good things about this program. It can have a positive impact on our society. It promotes what we call “civic righteousness.” But it misses the one thing needed.


A man asks how to get to heaven, and we hear nothing about God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who alone is the way. The man didn’t have to pray that God would close the gap between him and God. He had to learn that Jesus already closed the gap.


He had to learn that Jesus did for him the good and perfect things God demands of him and died for him to remove the penalty for the bad things he did. He had to learn that Jesus rose from the dead to give him the full assurance of eternal life with God. He had to learn that, as one saved by Christ, he would in his faith look to do God-pleasing things.


The problem is that the writers used their “angel” instead of God’s Word to inform the man. You see, they created the angel and the message. Although they came close at times to God’s message, they fell as short as the man on the ladder. Prayer won’t change that, but the Word will.

Gary P. Baumler

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Remember to forget

No matter how scarlet our sins, God will forgive—and he will forget.

Eric S. Hartzell

I wish my mind was better. I wish it was more forgetful.

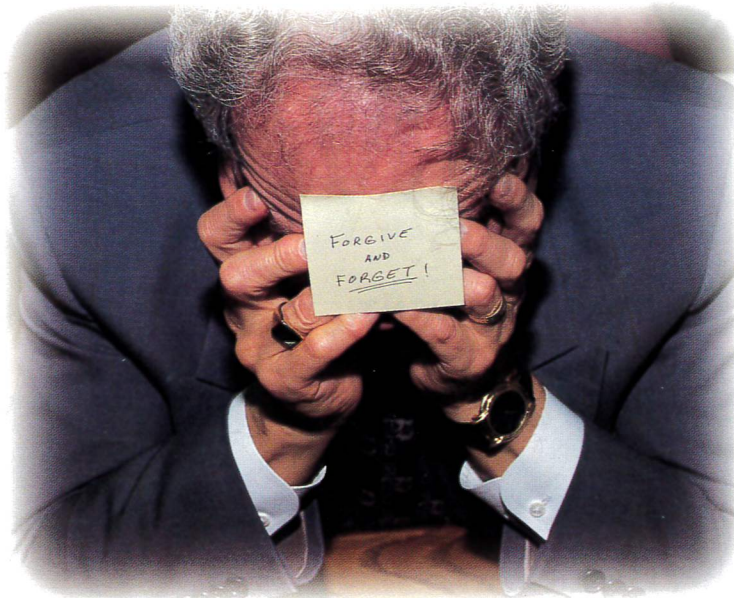
Think of the joy of life if we could forget things. If we could forget what we can't change anyway. If we could forget what others have done to hurt us. If we could forget past mistakes and errors that God has forgiven. If we could forget grudges and gripes. If we could forget how to complain. If we could forget how we managed to say wrong, do wrong, and think wrong.

We should forgive and forget

True forgiveness is really true forgetfulness. Forgiving someone is being able to look at him and not see his transgression. No marks on the forehead that our anger and pride put there. No billing for a not-paid-for transgression. True forgiveness is both forgiving and forgetting. It isn't what you hear: "I can forgive you, but I can't ever forget."

It is easy, in an abstract way, to suppose we can forgive and forget. But if someone really hurts you, how do you simply forget it? How do you erase the crease that transgression has made on the brain? How do you not look at that person forever differently?

There must be some miracle that would have to take place for us to forget a sin. But this kind of miraculous amnesia is something the



Lord wants, and something he can work. He did it for Joseph. Remember, Joseph was sold as a slave by his own brothers, who watched as he was shackled and led away from his home. Because of Joseph's integrity, years of imprisonment in Egypt followed—something his brothers were also indirectly responsible for.

It would be hard to forget that. But God worked his miracle, and Joseph did forget. We know this because "Joseph named his first-born Manasseh and said, 'It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household'" (Genesis 41:51).

God has forgiven and forgotten

In a perfect way, God forgets completely our wrong against him. It isn't that the wrong is ignored or overlooked. He paid for our wrong, settled the account, and closed the

books forever. His perfect mind and his complete love for us make it possible for him to say, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). We count on this. The sins God forgives are so completely gone that they can never be recovered. They are buried in the depths of the sea. They are as far as the east is from the west. When Jesus died, he got at his Father's

mind. He was given access there to completely take from remembrance what we had done.

We trust this to be true. We know this to be true. God is truth. He doesn't lie to us. No matter how scarlet our sins, he forgives—and he forgets. And when he looks at us some day—we who believe in his Son and what his Son did for us—he will see us as ones who did no sin. All our wrongs will be completely forgiven . . . gone forever from his remembrance. He gives for us. He for-gives us. In Jesus, he gives up all remembrance of our wrongs.

The measure of a mind is its ability to remember. Not quite. The complete measure of a mind is also its ability to forget.

Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas.