

# NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

March 1998

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



**Passover  
then, again,  
and forever**

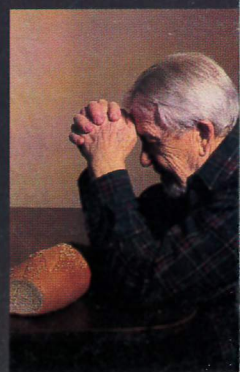
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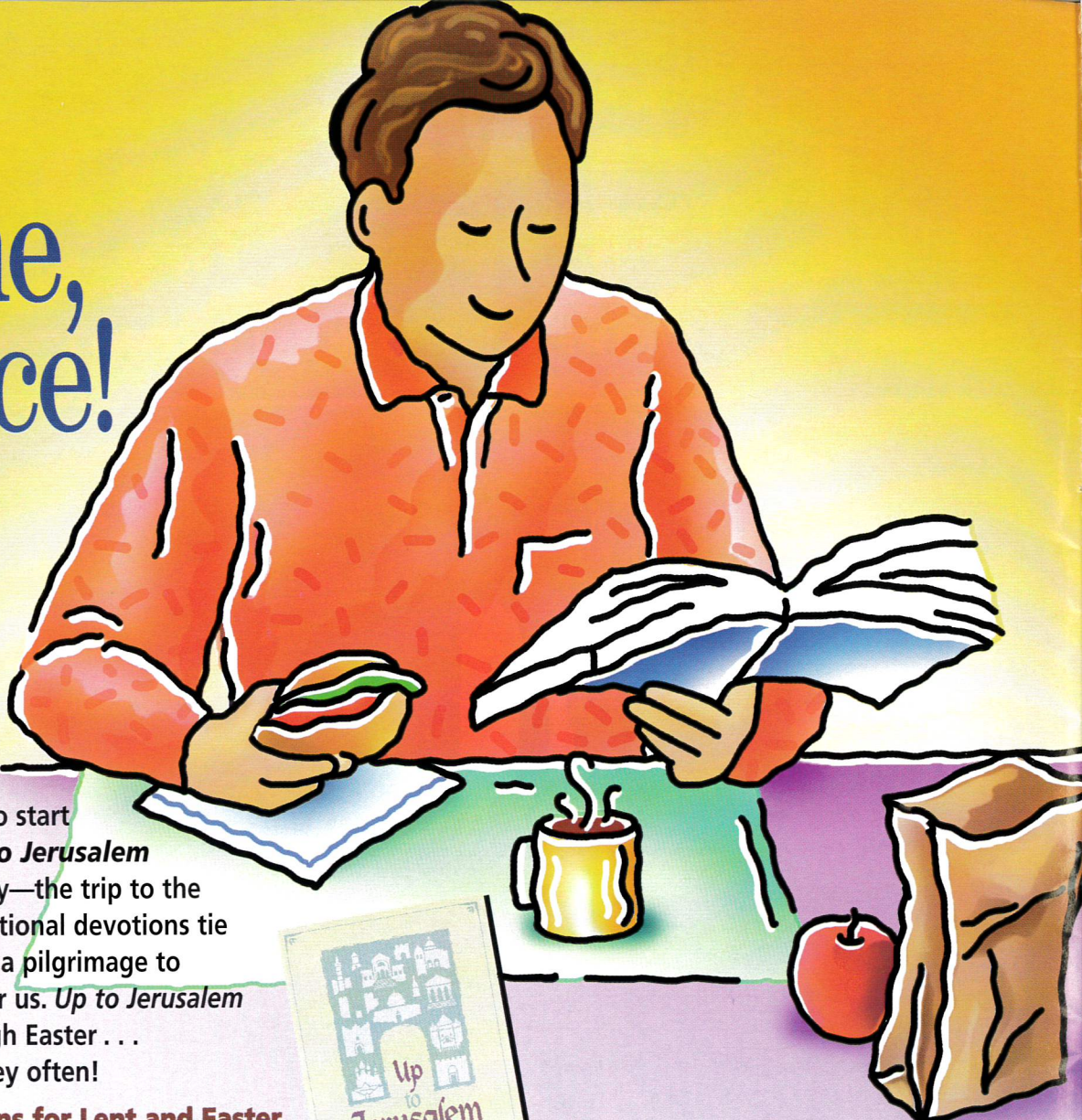


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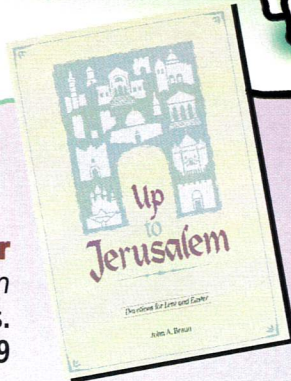


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# No place like home

*Like a bird that strays from its nest  
is a man who strays from his home. Proverbs 27:8*

Eric S. Hartzell

When little birds stray from the nest they are doomed to prowling cats or playing boys. Their nest is their home. Even adult birds leave their nests only to take care of necessary things before they wing back again. In their bird brains, home is the most important thing. They labor to make it. They migrate long miles to it.

Homing pigeons always come home. Unerringly. Wherever someone throws them into the air, they fly for home and either get there or die trying. It surprises us that they do this, maybe because we haven't recognized yet that there really is no place like home, a consuming belief of all homing pigeons.

## Coming home

Our heavenly Father wants us to come home to him. He has made a place for us, a home for us. He has made our hearts yearn to have this home, weaving into the fabric of our being the sentiment of the Psalmist, "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young . . ." (Psalm 84:1-3). Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God."

The greatest curse of unbelief is



to live life without the hope of ever going home, to be one of the "forever homeless," to be cursed to eternally push our cart of pathetic possessions around heaven's parking lot. God's final words, "Depart from me" are words that close and lock the door of his home. For the uninterested and the unbelieving there comes that awful day when it is too late to ever go home.

## Drifting away

Life goes astray when we lose our orientation toward our home. When we start thinking that our homes in this world are home, we lose our way. Our homes here change. Home here goes away after a while. We go back "home," and things aren't the same anymore. It

leaves us empty and sad.

We are in danger when things get too familiar and too comfortable. When this world's hearth looks good and inviting and lasting we need to remember, "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home."

When we despair of our work and see just one long ceaseless grind all the way to the horizon, we think about home—heaven!—as the place of rest.

*Peace and rest at length  
have come,*

*All the day's long toil is past,  
And each heart is whispering,  
"Home, Home at last. "*

*(Thomas Hood)*

Can anyone truly rest who can't come dragging home when

the work is done and strength is spent? We want to go home when our work is done. Heaven is our home. Heaven is our rest.

We have difficulty describing what heaven is like. But you and I already know. It's home! God made you with the feeling for it. Home is not only where your heart is. It is also where your head is. And your hope.

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





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- Lent prepares modern day Christians for Easter. Passover prepared Old Testament believers for "Easter." On page 6, learn how the two are related, and how Passover relates to you.
- Also at Lent, our thoughts are on forgiveness. But it isn't only about Jesus offering forgiveness to us. It's also about what we do with that forgiveness. Read "The forgiven forgive" on page 10.
- With this issue we welcome Armin Panning's return as a contributing editor. You'll find his first editorial comment on page 31. Panning is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, where he has served since 1974.
- We start a three-part series this month, written by missionary Joel Spaude. You'll get glimpses of his experiences in Malawi. The first article is on page 12.
- Have you used our interactive Bible study yet? This new format can be used for personal devotion. Or consider using it with your family, your church group, or your friends. You can find this month's study on page 29.
- Don't forget to visit the WELS website. You will find devotions, prayers, services offered by areas of ministry, and links to other sites. As an added bonus, you can also find previous NL articles. Surf on over and see how much there is for you at <www.wels.net>.

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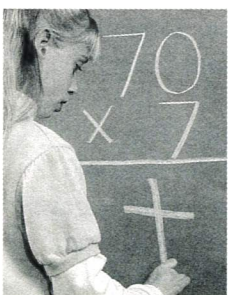
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# Passover then, again, and forever

Passover finally found its full meaning. The torn temple veil proclaimed it.

John C. Lawrenz

Spring comes. Christians celebrate Easter. Hallelujah! Jesus lives! And because he lives, we too shall live.

## Passover then

As the first full moon of spring approached, God's Old Testament people began their preparation for "Easter." The fathers and their boys were in the fields. The barley, which had soaked up the winter rains nicely, was ready for the sickle. Vegetables were green. So were the wheat fields. They would turn harvest white in 50 days.

The women were inside, giving each house a thorough cleaning. Brooms were applied to every corner. The Lord banished yeast for seven days once a year. When the cleaning was over, there would be no loaves, no crusts. Not even a crumb escaped the women's zeal to honor the commandment. But there would be bread. The mothers had saved just enough flour from last year's harvest to make the matzah cakes. They were crackers really: flat and tasteless, the food of slaves.

No Hebrew thought of slavery in spring. Years earlier the LORD's strong arm had struck down the first-born of the Egyptian slave masters in spring. It happened with a full moon overhead. Death swept thousands away, but not a one in the hovels of the Israelite slaves. Blood smeared on the doorposts and lintels made sure of that. God had promised.

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The first fruits of the harvest  
were waved heavenward  
with thanks and perfect joy.

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Four nights remained. A procession of fathers walked single file to the house of the Levite. Behind each man a yearling lamb or kid trotted. Some bleated as they awaited their turn. One by one the Levite greeted his visitors. He spoke of the harvest as he ran his hands over the small animals. He checked each head, pinched the shanks, pressed the belly, and stroked each coat against the grain. None were rejected. The fathers had chosen well.

Dusk was only hours away. It was 14 days since the ram's horns had announced the new moon. With great difficulty the fathers pried the lambs and kids from the children. The chosen ones had shared the children's play since the visit to the Levite.

Silently, solemnly the deed was done. A swift jerk of the knife severed an artery on the side of each woolly neck. No bones were broken. Death followed the blood. The boys helped the fathers skin, wash, and skewer the carcasses on long wooden poles, and place them over beds of red hot coals.

Mother set a low table. Pillows were set for each member of the family and two extra for the widow and

her son next door. Father took his place at the head. Before him were the matzah crackers, a skin of wine, the roasted lamb, and a plate of bitter herbs from the garden. As darkness fell, mother lit the lamp. Its light lit up the scrubbed faces of the little ones. Together they asked the question asked every year, "Why does this night differ from all other nights?"

"Yes, father," the eldest asked, "why bitter herbs?"

"Because slavery is bitter, my son, as it once was in Egypt and as it still is when men fail to honor the Almighty with their lives."

"Why a roasted lamb?" asked the second, "Why served with blood-red wine?"

"Because the Almighty broke Egypt's iron grip when he sent death into the homes of our tormentors. Yet a sacrifice saved us. A lamb's blood caused death to pass over the dwelling places of our forefathers."

"Why bread without yeast?" asked the third.

"Bread for us is life. The Almighty preserved the lives of those who left Egypt when he gave them manna. He gives us manna free of yeast as he gives us lives free from sin."

On a typical Passover night, many questions followed. The fathers taught their children. Songs were sung and psalms chanted. The feast lasted until dawn, and nothing remained to eat or say. For the next



week, matzah was the only bread allowed. Once every seven years the Sabbath fell on the day after the Passover. But every year on the day after the Sabbath, no matter on which day of the feast the Sabbath fell, the fathers and sons would walk to the fields and cut a huge handful of barley with a swoosh of their sickles. These first fruits of the harvest were waved heavenward with thanks and perfect joy.

### Passover again

Jesus kept the Passover. He did so when he became a son of the commandment at age 12. He did again the night before he died. Four days earlier he rode a donkey to the temple, the place where the Levites inspected the Passover lambs. He asked that an upper room be prepared. There Jesus sat down with his "family" of 12 at dusk on Maundy Thursday. Before him were the bitter herbs, the roasted lamb served with wine, and unleavened bread.

"Who will be the greatest in the kingdom?" asked one.

Jesus answered by washing feet. "Is it I?" asked another.

Jesus dipped bitter herbs and matzah in the lamb's gravy and handed its ancient message as a plea to wayward Judas. He didn't listen. As many like him, he left Jesus.

Jesus broke bread to answer the deep, eternal questions that all people ask. He took the cup and blessed both.

"This is my body," Jesus taught.

"This is my blood," Jesus instructed.

"Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," Jesus promised.

That night was like no other night. The Jewish day that began

Thursday at sunset ended on Good Friday at dusk. An innocent Lamb, without spot or blemish, was led to the slaughter. Your sins and mine skewered him to a wooden cross. No bones were broken.

"It is finished," Jesus said.

Passover finally found its full meaning. The torn temple veil proclaimed it. But not until the Sabbath passed, and early on the first day of the week, the third day by Hebrew reckoning, death passed over. Jesus of Nazareth stirred in his tomb. In that instant he became the first life harvested forever from the curse of death. Jesus became the "first fruit," as the Apostle Paul would later write, "of all of those who have fallen asleep."

### Passover forever

Because he lives, I too will live. This Easter I will wave my hands heavenward with thanks and perfect joy. I will wave them just like my Hebrew brothers did long, long ago.

NL

*John Lawrenz is the administrator of the synod's Board for Ministerial Education.*

### PREPARATIONS FOR PASSOVER

- Clean the house—no yeast for the seven days of the feast.
- Choose a perfect lamb for slaughter.
- Have lamb approved by Levite.
- Kill the lamb by slitting its throat—no broken bones.
- Skin, wash, and skewer the carcasses on poles and roast.
- Prepare the feast including matzah crackers (no yeast), wine, roasted lamb, and bitter herbs.
- Set the table; set a place for each family member.
- Passover night: father teaches the children, songs are sung, psalms are chanted, feasting lasts until dawn.
- Day after the Sabbath: cut a handful of barley and wave its first fruits heavenward.



# Making the honeymoon last

Faith in Christ and the love that springs from it is a new cause of delight and mutual enjoyment between a Christian husband and wife.

Mark A. Paustian



**H**ow do we make the honeymoon last?" Couples ask this question when, by all accounts, the honeymoon is over. Long walks and sweet words gave way to bland routine and irritability. They want to know, "How do we get back that magic—the way we once looked at each other, how alive we felt in each

other's presence?"

The unique pleasure of romantic love has been called "the joy of being enjoyed." One of the most sought after human experiences is to be the cause of eye-sparkling delight in another person. Knowing our sinful selves as we do, this hardly seems possible.

## The joy in romantic love

Living, as we do, outside the Garden of Eden, all human beings must face their own profound unacceptability. We were, by nature, not objects of delight but "objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). We brought joy to no one, especially not to God. We may deny it or let the feeling wash over us, but it remains true, haunting our fallen personality in a thousand wretched ways. We are not okay, and we know it.

But then it happens. A wonderful person looks upon us with delight. We come alive. Some would label romantic love as necessarily selfish. Of course, how we pursue it can be both selfish and destructive. Yet, King Solomon spoke of it this way under divine inspiration: "How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride" (Song of Songs 4:10).

When was the last time your spouse saw that in your eyes?

What happens to that delight? Solomon also wrote, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting" (Proverbs 31:30). If we found nothing more significant than looks or personality to enjoy in our partner, it's no wonder the relationship falters. Marriage brings out our true colors. When the prize of a spouse was yet to be won, we showed them "the best of us." Now they have seen "the rest of us."

And there have been times, maybe a lot of them, when disapproval and rejection have shown up on the face



of our beloved. Mere human love failed. The false hope that we had found someone to meet all our needs turned to disappointment. "How do we make the honeymoon last?" can really mean, "Why did you change?" The honeymoon is over.

Now, rather than trying to recreate "that lovin' feeling" from the early days and straining to recover the old ground, realize that there is new territory yet to be captured. The couple that wants a happy healthy marriage must make something else more important. The Apostle Paul said, "I want to know Christ . . ." (Philippians 3:10). His prayer for all the people he loved was that they would "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18).

### **The joy that replaces romantic love**

We need to relate to our spouse in a new way, not out of emptiness, need, or romantic expectation. We move toward our spouse out of the fullness of Christ's love, which, undeserving, we have received and which we are now compelled and empowered to express. In a Christian marriage, both the man and the woman must be continually broken, brought to repentance over their failures to love. Through Word and Sacrament, each must remain under the influence of Christ who loved us and died for us. Husband and wife must both turn to God in their innermost being, to find in him the love they thirst for.

The grace we find at the cross of Christ goes far beyond bland acceptance. Are you ready? "For the Lord will take delight in you . . . as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:4,5). By pure grace and in Christ, you create delight on your

Father's face. In Christ, God enjoys you and the fact that you are his. The joy of being enjoyed is in him. Once dead in sin, this delightful grace has made you and your spouse come alive. You are alive to God in Christ.

And here lies that "new territory" to which a Christian couple must aspire. Faith in Christ and the love that springs from it is a new cause of delight and mutual enjoyment between a Christian husband and wife. It is truer and deeper than "She laughs at my jokes" and "He likes me in this outfit." This is the delight Jesus could not conceal whenever he found sincere faith and genuine love: "Woman, you have great faith!" (Matthew 15:28).

The Apostle Paul opened nine of his 13 epistles with this generous thought, "I thank God for you!" Search out those glowing paragraphs for yourself. "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you I always pray with joy" (Philippians 1:3,4). He recognized and deeply enjoyed the work of God in their lives. He saw it, took pleasure in it, and his influence began with his delight. "Your love has given me great joy" (Philemon 7).

There is something wonderfully alive within our Christian spouse. There is something within that is there for us to delight in, a thing of beauty for us to recognize and deeply enjoy. Our spouse is in Christ, and Christ is in our spouse. We owe it to our spouse to believe the love of Christ is within even when it is not apparent, to diligently search for it beneath the remnants of the Fall, and to let our spouse experience our delight when we find it. "Woman, you have great faith!"

To express your love and commitment, give your spouse more than "sweet nothings."

To my own wife: Connie, you make my life rich with your lovely emotion. I don't deserve you, so gently broken by sin and so joyful in the gospel. I watch you with our girls, talking quietly about Jesus, and it is to me almost unbearably sweet. Words cannot express how deeply I enjoy you. Yours is the unfading beauty of a spirit quiet in Christ. It is clear to me, every day, that you love me with the love that is from him. "How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!"

NL

*Mark Paustian is pastor at New Life, Rockford, Illinois.*

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# The forgiven forgive

A Christian forgives the hundredth offense or the thousandth just as readily and graciously as the first—because that is the way he is forgiven by God.

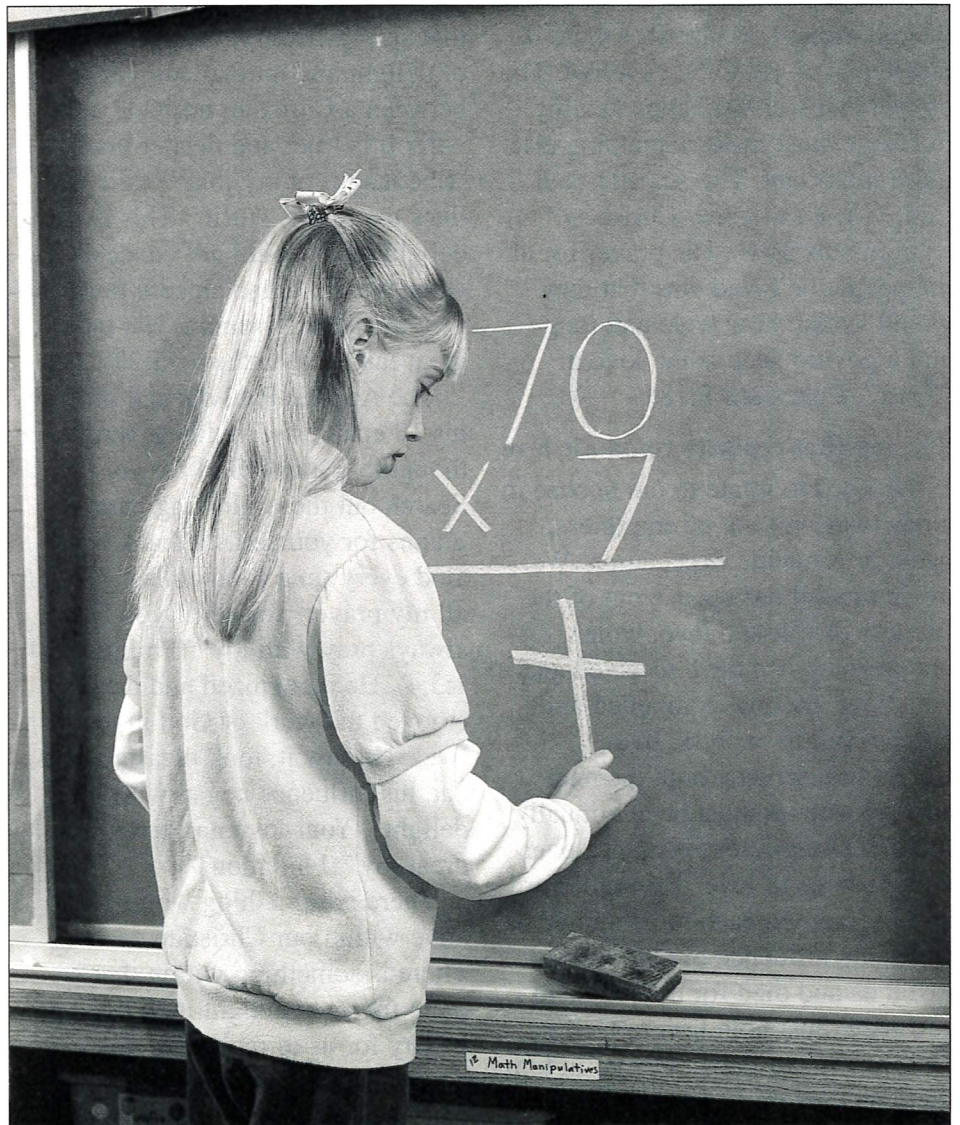
John M. Parlow

Just about everyone enjoys playing computer games. One of the best is Microsoft's "Flight Simulator." In most versions, you choose a plane and one of 180 airports around the country where you can take off or land. It's very realistic. You can crash into the Empire State Building in New York City, the Sears Tower in Chicago, or the Space Needle in Seattle. Your plane can break apart in midair. You can nose-dive into Lake Michigan going 500 miles per hour.

The greatest thing is that the game always restores you. When you crash and burn, fall apart, or splash into the ocean, the game puts you together and places you on the runway ready to take off again.

That's how it is with the Lord. He forgives and restores us when we mess up and gets us back into action, hopefully a little wiser after our failures and bad decisions. That is an important truth to know, share, and practice.

Because forgiveness is foreign to our sinful human nature, we find it difficult to forgive others. King Louie XII of France said: "Nothing smells so sweet as the dead body of your enemy." It is easier to seek revenge than to offer forgiveness. It is easier to exact a pound of flesh than to give an ounce of forgiveness. That is why Jesus gives a powerful lesson on the need for his children to be forgiving. Jesus con-



cludes the section on disciplining sinners and follows it up with a section on forgiving them.

## Peter's inquiry

We start with Peter's inquiry in Matthew 18:21. Peter understood

the human tendency to commit a sin, be forgiven, and then commit the same sin or another equally as bad. Peter is saying, "You know, Lord, we are going to restore and forgive people, and then they are going to go out and do it again. Or



they are going to do something worse. I mean, how many times do we keep forgiving them? Does forgiveness have a limit? Can you look at someone and say, 'Sorry, but you have gone too far!'

Peter suggests an answer, "Seven times?"

Perhaps Peter wanted congratulations. Perhaps he expected Jesus to say, "Wonderful, Peter, you are so generous!" Because Jewish tradition taught that you forgive a person only three times, when Peter suggested seven he was being generous. He had doubled the Jewish limit of forgiveness and added one for good measure.

### The extent of forgiveness

That leads us to think about the extent of forgiveness. Read verse 22. "Seventy times seven!" Jesus says. That must have taken Peter's breath away. But the Lord was not extending the legal limit of forgiveness. He was not speaking of law or limits at all. He simply picked up on Peter's number and multiplied it to point out there is no limit to forgiveness. By 70 times seven Jesus did not mean 490. A Christian with a forgiving heart forgives the hundredth offense or the thousandth just as readily and graciously as the first—because that is the way he is forgiven by God. There is no limit and no boundary for forgiveness.

Jesus makes that point clearer by giving an example of that limitless forgiveness (vs. 23-34). A king decided to settle accounts with his servants. The first man called in owed the king a huge debt—10,000 talents\*—that the man could never possibly repay. So the king ordered that everything the man had, including his wife and children, should be sold to pay a portion of that debt.

When the servant begged for mercy and promised to repay all, the king had pity on him, canceled the entire debt, and let the man go. On his way out, the man met a fellow servant who owed him a relatively small debt. It would seem natural that he would forgive that debt. Instead, he demanded immediate payment in full. He turned a deaf ear to the man's promises to pay the debt as soon as possible. He had him thrown into debtor's prison.

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## There is no limit and no boundary for forgiveness.

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When the king heard, he immediately threw the ungrateful servant into debtor's prison. The servant probably spent the rest of his life in jail because there was no way he could pay his huge debt.

Jesus' point is this: Those who have been totally forgiven by God are to act like his divine children by reflecting the forgiveness and compassion of their heavenly Father.

### The effect of forgiveness

That leads us to the effect of forgiveness where Jesus tells us, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (v. 35). The example of the unmerciful servant answered Peter's question about how often to forgive a brother who sinned against him.

It is our answer too. As we look at the servant with the impossible debt, we see ourselves—our sin debt is far greater. Like the unmerciful servant, we cannot pay our sin debt that we owe God. Often we act as if we can, "Well, at least I was

pretty good today!" Any efforts we may make about paying that sin debt are meaningless. The debt only gets larger. Our only hope is in the mercy of our gracious God.

Now what about the sins people commit against you? Should you forgive those sins? And what if those sins continue seven or 70 times seven or even more? What about that neighbor who keeps sending his dog over to your lawn? What about that co-worker who always badmouths you at work? What about that parent who continually belittles you? Do you have to forgive that person?

That person's pile of sins heaped up against you could be large, but it cannot even begin to compare with the pile of sins you've heaped against Jesus—and he has forgiven all of them! If you refuse to forgive someone who sins against you, you are acting like that unmerciful servant.

As we fly through this game of life we all crash and burn, we fail, we experience engine failure, we plunge in the great lake of sin every day. With Christ we are never out of the game. Jesus restores and forgives us every day. And we do the same for our repentant brothers.

NL

*John Parlow is pastor at St. Mark, Green Bay, Wisconsin.*

*\* A talent is 750 ounces of silver. The total debt was equal to several million dollars.*



# The walk of faith

In America, you may not have the opportunity to show your faith by walking two miles through the mud. But opportunities for you to live your faith abound no matter where you are.

Joel Spaude

Scattered villages surround this rural African setting. Chickens, ducks, dogs, and cornfields fill your view as you look out of a church window. The 100-plus members of this congregation farm corn and cotton and raise chickens and goats. Sawasawa Lutheran Church\* is typical of our Lutheran churches in Malawi.

## Turned back by the water

I had visited this church many times. The journey required me to leave the paved road and travel on a dirt road that eventually turned into a narrow track winding between cornfields and villages.

But nothing in those previous trips prepared me for the rainy season of 1997. Heavy rains washing off the escarpment 20 miles away brought flash floods through this low area. Much to my dismay, my first trip in January found me staring at what was left of the road to the church. The rains had created a river—right through the middle of the road. No vehicle could cross the gap in the road until the rainy season ended. Disappointed, I returned to Zomba.

I left, troubled that I didn't reach those people who wanted to hear God's Word, troubled that Satan seemed to be getting the upper hand in preventing the gospel from being spread. Under a new resolve, I planned my next trip to Sawasawa.



*During the rainy season in Malawi, Missionary Joel Spaude and members of Sawasawa walked two miles through the mud to get to church. These walks strengthened their faith as well as allowed them to share the gospel with people from area villages.*

Equipped with rubber boots, a knapsack, and umbrella, I was determined to drive as far as possible on the road and walk the remaining two miles to the church.

## Helped through the water and mud

Next Sunday I parked where the road abruptly ended. As I began to walk, suddenly my briefcase and communion ware were snatched

from my hands. Startled, I turned around, only to see a member from Sawasawa congregation. She insisted that she would help her pastor carry his provisions.

So began the "walk of faith." Every time after that when I came to my parking spot, members of Sawasawa were patiently waiting to walk with me. As we walked, we saw God revealed before our eyes in



his wonderful gift of nature. The warming sun and the rain-filled clouds reminded us of his providence. The tasseling corn assured us that God would provide food for yet another year. As we walked, we talked about what was happening in the church. We talked about their lives and my life, about their problems and mine. We talked of how Jesus is the answer to all our problems. During that walk we shared our faith and grew in our faith.

### Given a new way to witness

But the “walk of faith” touched many more people than just me and those members. At every house we passed, the customary *Mwadzaka bwanji?* (Good morning) greeting was exchanged, and we found an opening to share our faith with others. Soon everyone from area villages became accustomed to seeing the members of the Lutheran church walking down the path in the bush to their church. What an excellent opportunity God had given us to grow in our faith and reach out to others who didn’t know Jesus.

In many ways I was glad when the rains ended, and I could travel all the way to Sawasawa by road. Wrestling with mud and becoming stuck in it are hurdles that every missionary in Africa finds frustrating.

But in one way I am sad the rains are over. Now I don’t have the opportunity to take this “walk of faith” with my members. That walk was more than just a walk down a muddy path. It was and is part of our lives as Christians.

Faith in Christ cries out to express itself. When we comprehend through faith the incredible sacrifice Jesus made to forgive our sins, we are filled with peace and joy. Every day our sins remind us of

how much we need forgiveness. Every day our Savior gently reassures us that the sacrifice he made on the cross has forgiven the sins of that day as well. Every day we see the love of Jesus stamped on our lives with the firm declaration “Paid in full.” We cannot help but show our thankfulness and appreciation in our lives. The love Jesus showed when he died on the cross compels us to do so.

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### The members of Sawasawa showed their thankfulness to Jesus as they trudged every week through the mud to worship him.

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The members of Sawasawa showed their thankfulness to Jesus as they trudged every week through the mud to worship him. They showed their love for Jesus by “giving an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). They relied on the strength Jesus gives, and they continued to meet in spite of hardships. They put their faith into action by loving and serving others. And their faith grew and was strengthened by God.

In America, you may not have the opportunity to show your faith by walking two miles through the mud. But opportunities for you to live your faith abound no matter where you are. The people in your life are opportunities for you to share Jesus. The good deeds you do and the holy life you live are opportunities to show Jesus. The trials in your life are opportunities to trust in Jesus.

I don’t know whether God will

allow us to take that same walk of faith next year. Perhaps he will have some other walk of faith. Regardless, I expect another joyful journey.

NL

*Joel Spaude is a missionary in Malawi.*

*\* The name of the church “Sawasawa” means “to be watery” in the local dialect. A fitting name indeed.*





# Battling “graduation syndrome”

## Should we change our practices of confirmation and first Communion?

John M. Brenner

Concerned about children’s spiritual welfare, churches have been studying the practice of confirmation and first Communion. They ask: When are children ready to be confirmed? Is there a proper age for confirmation? Can children commune before they are confirmed? Can a change in confirmation practice keep young people from straying after confirmation?

### The church custom

Because the Bible does not command confirmation, it says nothing about the appropriate age for confirmation. Nor first Communion. The age has been set by church custom.

Reformation practices differed from ours today. Luther did not practice confirmation. He admitted children to the Lord’s Supper when they had received sufficient instruction in God’s Word and demonstrated an understanding of Christianity’s basic truths. According to one source, one of Luther’s colleagues admitted children as young as eight to Communion.

Our practice of confirming after eighth grade at about age 14 seems to have developed in Germany in the 18th century. People in those days rarely went to school beyond age 14. The confirmation age corresponded to the end of formal schooling and marked the entrance into the adult world.

This practice continued among many Lutherans in America for practical reasons. When a child completed the eighth grade, he left

the parish school and entered public or Lutheran high school. It was easy for a pastor to conduct confirmation classes in the parish school. When students went to high school, it was more difficult to schedule classes.

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**God lets us decide many things in Christian freedom.**

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Should we continue to confirm children at the end of eighth grade? Some think we should change. They fear that confirmation has become a graduation from formal religious training. This “graduation syndrome” keeps many away from Bible class and from growing in God’s truth. Concerned Christians are also distressed because young people seem to disappear from church after confirmation. Some wonder if confirming at a later age might help, or communing children earlier so they receive the benefits during difficult pre- and early teen years.

### The purpose

Although Scripture does not tell us at what age to give someone the Lord’s Supper, it tells us how to receive it. Following apostolic practice, we invite only those who have become children of God through Holy Baptism (Acts 2:41). The Bible also tells us that those who commune must understand what they are receiving. Paul writes, “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an

unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

What does it mean to eat and drink in a worthy manner? We need to recognize the Lord’s body, understand that in and with the bread and wine we are receiving Christ’s true body and blood, and be able to examine ourselves. This includes recognizing three things: we are sinners, Jesus died to save us from our sins, and in the Lord’s Supper God offers the forgiveness Jesus won for us. Both call for instruction and a level of spiritual maturity.

The Bible also tells us that when we participate in the Lord’s Supper we express unity in faith. Paul writes, “Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:17). We invite to commune only those who declare that they believe as we do and demonstrate that confession by being a member of a congregation in our fellowship. Instruction in God’s Word is necessary for someone to make this confession with understanding.

### The alternatives

Can children before age 14 be mature enough to receive the Lord’s Supper? It is possible for some but may not be for others. Experience





has shown that nearly every child has reached sufficient maturity by the end of eighth grade.

Can we change our practice? Yes. When God's Word is silent we are not bound.

As members of a synod, however, we want to keep our practice as uniform as possible. It could cause confusion and even offense if children receive the Lord's Supper at age 10 in one congregation and must wait until age 14 in another. The transfers of our members from one congregation to another make uniformity and consistency important.

Still, we recognize that congregations (particularly missions and congregations without schools) find it necessary to be flexible in the age at which children are confirmed and the length of instruction required. Different circumstances may require different practices. In Christian freedom a congregation can change human customs to serve the best interests of God's people.

Can we commune children before they are confirmed? Scripture does not answer this question. However, it seems fitting

that a public rite like confirmation declares to God's people that young people have received instruction and demonstrated understanding to receive the sacrament. If first Communion takes place before confirmation, it seems advisable to have another rite to serve this purpose.

Will admitting children to Communion at an earlier age and/or confirming at a later age help keep young people in church? It may or may not. Studies show that this often only postpones graduation syndrome to later adolescence. Studies have found that confirming at a later age does not reduce the number of young people who fall away after confirmation.

### **The continuing challenge**

Are there other solutions to graduation syndrome? Our youth face so many temptations. How can we help?

We can stay in touch with them during these difficult years. Youth groups and teen Bible classes are important. Personal contact is essential. Taking a personal interest in young people goes a long way in

encouraging them to remain faithful in using the means of grace.

We continue caring for the spiritual welfare of members. We encourage the weak. We seek the straying. We take up our responsibility to call the wandering.

God lets us decide many things in Christian freedom. He does not tell us at what age a person may commune or be confirmed. We can change our practice if conditions warrant and no offense is given.

However, when it comes to recalling the straying or helping the spiritually needy, we have no choice. God declares, "If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Galatians 6:1). As we accept our responsibility toward each other and encourage each other to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, perhaps graduation syndrome will become less of a problem.

**NL**

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



# A better way to define family

When we define a Christian home by the things it says and does, we can better understand the church's challenge.

Kenneth Kremer

I'm embarrassed to admit this, but occasionally my mind wanders in church. Last Sunday, for example, I was thinking about the diversity of families in our church.

In front of us sat an elderly couple who had never been blessed with children. At the end of our pew, a single mom and her adopted 10-year-old son.

Across the aisle eight members of a new family—a blended family—filled a pew. Two children were from Todd's first marriage. Three were from Maria's first. The oldest was born out of wedlock.

Two older women, not related, sat near the front. They live in a duplex—one upstairs, the other in the lower flat. They do everything together. One of them told me the only family she had in this world was Marge—the woman who lived downstairs. I like her definition of family. We should recognize the variety of ways God brings people together as “family.”

On the flip side, the secular world has been twisting the concept of family since the Fall. The gay/lesbian rights movement is earnest about redefining marriage. Similarly, the Mafia, cult families, and street gangs pervert God's plan for family. The Bible makes a clear distinction between *diversity* and *perversity*. To acknowledge the former in a God-pleasing way, we need to denounce the latter.

## Defining family by faith

Even the Bible describes godly families that don't fit the traditional mold. Ruth and Naomi were bound in a family-style commitment. A godly spirit stitched David and Jonathan in brotherhood. In his dying hour, Jesus used the language of family to fuse a relationship between his most beloved disciple and his own mother. The origin and structure of these families were God-pleasing because of faith.

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**Where faith is threatened,  
Christian compassion  
assumes some risks.**

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Among Christians it makes sense to let faith define a family. Families that exercise their faith in Jesus are *godly*; those that do not are *godless*.

It's a bold distinction. We cannot see faith, but we can see the evidence of faith. Things a Christian family says and does set it apart from secular families.

Christian families worship together. They grow in God's grace. They remind each other of their Baptism. They hear and study his Word together. They pray together. They know Jesus is always with them. They laugh, cry, work, and play together in the Savior's name. His cross draws them back together at the end of a long day and sends

them on their way the next. The gospel is played out daily in their godly interaction.

But sometimes godly families act in ungodly ways. When they despise God's Word and the sacraments, they begin to look like a godless family. The signs of spiritual neglect are observable evidence that all is not right in a family's faith-life.

All is not right either when the members of a Christian household ignore God's family roles (husband, wife, father, mother, child). The symptoms—chaos and upheaval—are relatively easy to detect.

Sometimes one member's sins obstruct a family's faith-life. Addiction, violence, abuse, self-centeredness, jealousy, or pettiness can lead to dysfunction. So can crippling fear, mind-numbing loneliness, paralyzing indecision, or unbridled grief.

But far worse, family disorders frequently undermine faith, even when they are not the direct result of a particular sin. They distract us from our heavenly goal. Satan uses decaying relationships and unrelenting tensions to cultivate the seeds of doubt. Faith, not family, is his real target. His mission is to steal heaven from God's people.

## Sharing a common agenda

The Christian home and God's family of believers (the church) share the same agenda. They work in tandem. Heaven is the goal.





equipped for such work. Family leaders need the church's encouragement to provide spiritual grounding for their households. Church calendars could make more provisions for family time and family issues. Perhaps programs should be organized more around family groupings and less around peer groups. All members should know that they belong to a family, especially those who do not fit traditional molds.

To achieve this we encourage intergenerational dialog. The mix involving the idealism of youth, the realism of middle age, and the wisdom of old age is integral to God's concept of family. We need to learn how to express our faith at home. And we must discard the notion that troubled homes and broken people are somebody else's business.

NL

*Kenneth Kremer, editor of Lutheran Parent magazine, serves Northwestern Publishing House as family editor.*

The names of the church members are fictional, and the photos of families are not the ones mentioned.

Faith—its genesis by Baptism, its nurture through instruction and encouragement—is the common objective. They operate with the same tools: law and gospel.

When we define family by faith, our lives take on a compelling sense of purpose. The deterioration of the American family magnifies the urgency for the gospel. The future seems bleakest to those who have experienced the bitter disappointment of a disintegrating family. We stand at the crossroads for those who have forgotten (or for those who have never known) that what they need more than anything else is Jesus.

Where faith is threatened, Christian compassion assumes risks. Admonishing a fellow sinner is never easy—especially when it's a family member. It demands patience and commitment. But, spoken with humility and grace, intervention can lead to repentance.

At other times we deal with the mayhem that sin leaves in its wake. We listen and help people pick up the pieces.

### Organizing to equip God's people

Recently we have been too willing to abdicate this concern for families and let others take over. But this is our territory—spiritual territory. The Christian home and the church need to reclaim ministry to at-risk individuals and dysfunctional homes. It is every Christian's turf. We can do all things well—we can preach and teach to our heart's content—but if we do not show love, bearing one another's burdens, we are nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

As individual Christians, our love in action is often connected to the programs and support of the organized church.

Congregations should organize so that God's people are well-

The Commission on Adult Discipleship is renewing its focus on family ministry. Besides promoting materials on families and encouraging congregations to conduct marriage and parenting seminars, it wants to reach out to inactive families in the congregations by having trained laypeople visit families in their homes.

For more information about the Commission on Adult Discipleship, call 414/256-3278 or visit its web page on the WELS website at <[www.wels.net/sab/frame5.html](http://www.wels.net/sab/frame5.html)> You can also read about family ministry in the WELS news section of the February *Northwestern Lutheran*.



# His name determines what we pray for

**Prayers offered in God's name ask first and most for spiritual things, trusting God will provide everything else.**

Wayne D. Mueller

**B**e careful what you pray for; you might get it.

That old adage hints at more than a little Bible truth. Behind our unfulfilled prayers is a problem on our end. Paul lays it out: "We do not know what we ought to pray for" (Romans 8:26).

Of course, we think we do. We pour out our griefs to God and hand him our itemized list of needs. Then we dutifully add, ". . . in Jesus' name I pray," before we say "Amen" and fall asleep.

But is this really prayer in Jesus' name? Thank God he does not give us all we pray for. The spiritual frustration of not getting what we want forces us to look deeply into what it means to ask in the Savior's name.

## What we learn from God's name

In catechism class we learned that God's name is more than a personal I.D. tag. In the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Hallowed be your name." God's name is his reputation, everything we know about him. How we live and talk about God either maintains his holy reputation or drags his name through the mud.

Our catechism reminds us how God gets his reputation. God's name is "everything he has revealed to us about himself in his Word." Praying in Jesus' name, then, means that we

allow what we learn about God in the Bible to influence what we ask for. Like everything we do, the content of our prayers either hallows God's name or hurts his reputation.

Jesus provided a perfect example of how to pray in his name. The first three petitions—and six out of seven—of the Lord's Prayer are pleas for spiritual needs. Our prayers in Jesus' name will reflect the same concern for our souls and the souls of others.

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## Approaching God in Jesus' name generates unselfish prayers.

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In a money-grubbing world, we need God's Word to keep Jesus' reputation before us. Our Lord's concern for us helps us avoid selfish motives and worldly desires in our prayers. Luther wrote, "In the Lord's Prayer we pray for the hallowing of the name of the Lord, for the coming of God's kingdom, and for the fulfilling of his will before the necessities of this life, that in such matters God may do not what *seems* good to us, but what *is* good" (*What Luther Says II*, p. 1,096).

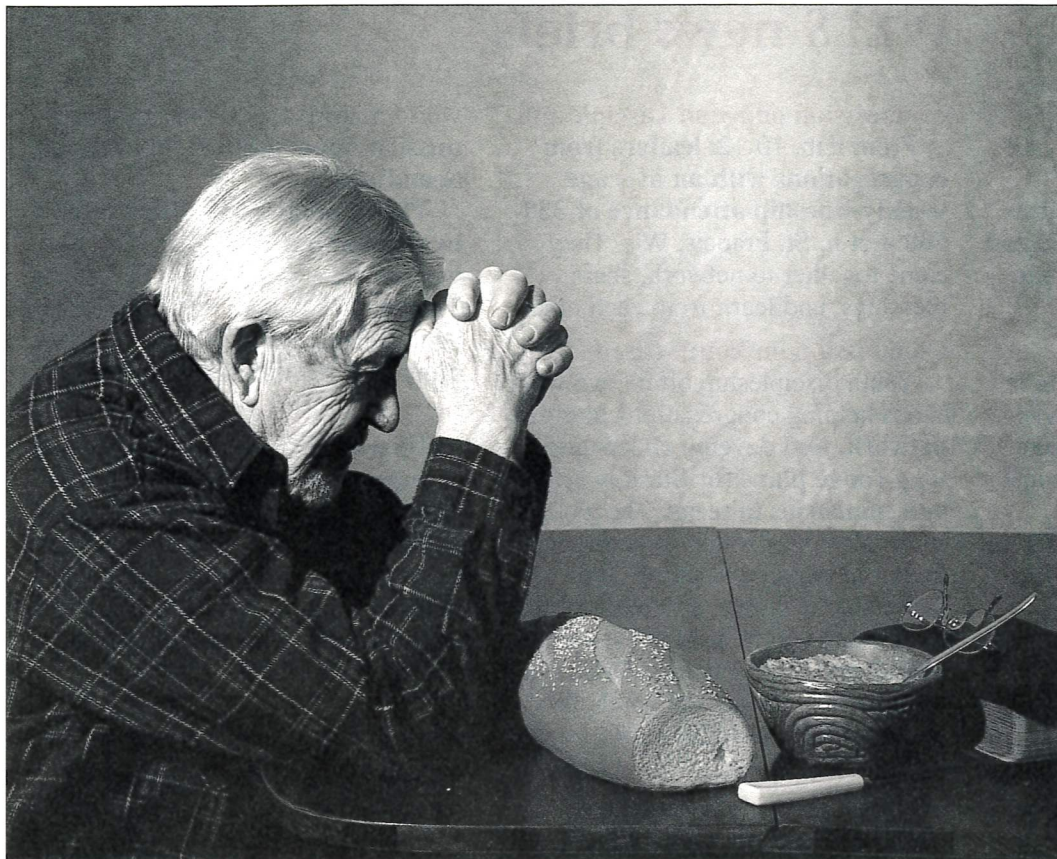
Jesus fed the 5,000 and taught us to pray for daily bread. We are sure

he wants us to pray for our physical needs. But if health, wealth, and social relationships is all we ask for, we are no longer praying in his name. No matter how much we think we need these things, our greed often blocks God's response. James explains: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:3).

The Sermon on the Mount shows us how Jesus wants us to pray for material things. In Matthew 6 he said that trust in God will dispel our preoccupation with worldly needs. He told us not to pray like faithless pagans. "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8). Luther wrote, "Faith prays in such a manner that it commits everything to the gracious will of God; it lets him determine whether it is conducive to his honor and to our benefit" (WLS II, 1,098).

In that same sermon, Jesus stated the prayer principle that guided his composition of the Lord's Prayer: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Prayers offered in his name ask first and most for spiritual things, trusting God will provide everything else.





ever” (Revelation 5:13). But already now, we enjoy a taste of heaven when our prayers are full of praise.

Consider interweaving all your requests in Jesus’ name with joy and praise. Paul encouraged the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! . . . Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:4-6).

Eventually, the joy in our talks with God spills over into our conversations with each other. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,

always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19,20).

“In the name of Jesus” is more than a trite formula we insert before we say amen. Faith in the Savior’s name not only grants us access to the throne of heaven, but also actively chooses the words we use when speaking to the Father. Jesus’ name leads us to be more spiritual, unselfish, and joyous in our praise. Yes, thank God for unfulfilled prayers. They lead us to search Scripture for the meaning of “Your will be done.”

*Wayne Mueller is the administrator of the synod’s Board for Parish Services.*

### What we learn of our own spirituality

The content of our prayer reflects our level of spirituality. Do we pray for more money, or for a heart to be more generous with what we have? Do we pray to God to restore us to his grace before we ask him to mend broken human relationships? Do we pray for a winning lottery ticket to pay off our credit cards, or do we plead for self-control at the shopping mall?

Approaching God in Jesus’ name generates unselfish prayers. “A man who prays for himself only does not offer a good prayer,” Luther said (WLS II, 1,099). Jesus demonstrated his unselfishness when he prayed for missionaries, his disciples, the whole church, even his enemies.

Above all, our talks with God reflect the joy Jesus’ name brings us. Most missing from my

prayers—and maybe from yours too—is praise and thanksgiving. Too often we neglect our prayers because we can’t think of anything to ask for. You’d expect good times to elicit just the opposite response. When God gives us health, daily bread, and peace in the church, thankful hearts erupt with praise to the throne.

Jesus gave thanks for the fishes and bread before he fed the 5,000 and before he distributed the Last Supper. He thanked God for listening to his prayer at the resurrection of Lazarus. He praised God for revealing the truths of Scripture to those with childlike faith.

In a perfect world, the world to come, all of our prayers will be praise. Every creature in heaven will sing, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and





## WELS news briefs

### Commission on Communication for Financial Support

At the end of November, congregation mission offerings were ahead nearly two percent from last year.

### Telecommunications and Technology Task Force

The use of the WELS website is growing. In December website visitors set a record number of average hits per day—15,615. That is almost 3,000 above the previous record. Those visitors came from 47 different countries. Be sure to visit the WELS website at <www.wels.net>.

### Commission on Parish Schools

Consultants will help WELS teachers develop a technology plan. Teachers will be trained in computer technology and in how to use it in the classroom. This is made possible by an AAL grant.

### Commission on Evangelism

Church in Action seminars focus on personal witnessing and mission volunteer opportunities through WELS Kingdom Workers. These seminars were held in San Jose, Calif., in January and in Nashville in February. One is scheduled for March in Oconomowoc, Wis., and another is slated in October for Green Bay, Wis.

Schools of Outreach continue to be popular. At the schools, congregations analyze their work of sharing the gospel and plan future programs of outreach. These schools are scheduled for the fall of 1998.

August—Aberdeen, S.D.

September—Iron Mountain, Mich.

October—San Antonio, Tex.

November—Antigua and Columbus, Ohio

### Finance and Accounting

Randy Matter resigned as Director of Finance effective January 23. He started his service with WELS in February 1984.

### Commission on Adult Discipleship

From Feb. 10-12, leaders from congregations with an average weekly worship attendance of 350-500 met in St. Francis, Wis. They came together to network, share blessings, and learn from each other.

### Commission on Youth Discipleship

Youth discipleship offers two workshops helping congregations analyze, network, and develop short- and long-range plans for Sunday schools and ministries to teens. The workshops also offer follow-up consultations and parish assistance. The September, October, and November workshops will be held in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Ohio. For information, contact the youth discipleship office, 414/256-3224.

### Commission on Special Ministries

New Jesus Cares schools were established last fall. These schools offer part-time spiritual training for people of all ages who have learning disabilities. Currently, 24 Jesus Cares schools are operating around the country. Also, 85 Bible classes are available for those with learning disabilities.

Twenty WELS parishes have their worship interpreted for those who are deaf. Yet more help is needed. For information, contact the WELS Resource Center, 414/259-0292; <hrgimp@aol.com>.

### Commission on Worship

Summer music camps will be held in partnership with Martin Luther College, New Ulm. These camps are for children ages 12-14 to help them focus on keyboard experiences.

### Board for World Missions

Missions in Africa continue to grow. Six members of the mission staff were commissioned within five months. Two more have since been commissioned, and two more positions are waiting to be filled.

In Sweden, the state church has been disestablished. Because of this,

world missions will look for new mission opportunities throughout Scandinavia.

The mission in Thailand celebrated its first five baptisms. Two women are serving as lay volunteers. They will first study the language and then spearhead English as a Second Language training at the mission.

### Board for Home Missions

District mission boards presently support 65 exploratory fields. The mission boards help evaluate whether God is giving the exploratory an opportunity to become a permanent congregation. During 1997, new manpower was authorized for 27 outreach efforts.



Sometime during our 3 hour and 20 minute Good Friday service, our scattered

(due to choirs) family members noticed that one family member, Scott, was gone. A search by our daughter Emily found Scott.

It turned out that during a five-minute interlude in the service (at the two hour mark) Scott figured that was enough church, so he went out to the car, where he enjoyed a 20-minute picnic lunch of all the goodies my wife, Lynne, packed for the kids. When asked later "What did you think when nobody else came out and no one else from our family came to the car?", he simply shrugged and said, "I figured they weren't hungry."

Thankfully, the rest of the congregation stayed in church.

Mark Henrich



## YOUTH NEWS

### Singing praises

Teenagers enjoy going to concerts. But they also enjoy giving them.

Each year students from Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., and Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., travel to congregations across the country on major choir tours. This year 42 members of the MLS Concert Choir will travel to Florida, and 35 LPS Prep Singers will go to Utah.

But why spend time and money to travel across the country on a bus?

"The synodical schools belong to each and every congregation in the synod," said Randy Bode, professor of music at LPS and director of the

Prep Singers. "One of the great benefits is that for the hundreds of people who will hear a concert, LPS will become more than just a name and place in Wisconsin."

Besides hearing God's Word in song, concert attendees hear presentations about the ministerial education schools and get a chance to meet and talk to the students.

"It's positive PR for youth in the church," said Leonard Proeber, professor of music at MLS and director of the Concert Choir. "The congregations can see that youth are concerned about ministry, involved in ministry, and interested in joining the ministry."

The students giving the concerts also benefit.

"The students are able to get out there and see a variety of ministries in different parts of the country," said Proeber.

Because students stay in homes of congregation members, they develop friendships with people across the country.

"Comments from those families provide encouragement that many of our prep students need to continue their preparation for the ministry," said Bode.

And don't forget the abundant food and the chance to tour the country with peers.

Touring doesn't stop at the high school level. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon; and Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, also have touring choruses.

*For more information about the MLS Concert Choir, contact Leonard Proeber, 517/793-1041. For the Prep Singers, contact Randy Bode, 920/261-4352.*

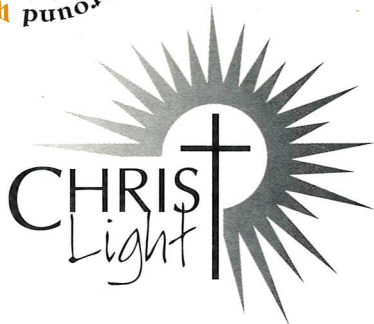
### LPS 1998 Prep Singers tour

- March 25—Christ, Zumbrota, Minn., 7 PM
- March 26—Christ, Grand Island, Neb., 7 PM
- March 27—Fount of Life, Colorado Springs, Colo., 7 PM
- March 28—Abiding Word, Highlands Ranch, Colo., 7 PM
- March 29—Zion, Denver, 8 AM
  - Living Savior, Littleton, Colo., 10 AM
  - Peace, Boulder, Colo., 7 PM
- March 30—Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah, 7 PM
- April 1—St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo., 7 PM
- April 2—St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb., 7 PM
- April 3—Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb., 10 AM
  - St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb., 7:30 PM
- April 4—Mt. Olive, Lincoln, Neb., 4 PM
- April 5—Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb., 8 AM
  - Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb., 10:30 AM

### MLS 1998 Concert Choir tour

- April 8—Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio, 7:30 PM
- April 9—Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, Tenn., 7:30 PM
- April 10—Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Fla., 7:30 PM
- April 11—Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla., 6:30 PM
- April 12—Crown of Glory, Orlando, Fla., 7 AM
  - King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., 10:30 AM
  - New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla., 6:30 PM
- April 14—Bethany, North Fort Myers, Fla., 7 PM
- April 15—Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., 7 PM
- April 16—Zion, Gainesville, Fla., 7:30 PM
- April 17—Prince of Peace, Martinez, Ga., 7 PM
- April 19—Gethsemane, Raleigh, N.C., 10:30 AM
  - Crown of Life, Marietta, Ohio, 7:30 PM
- April 20—St. John, Westland, Mich., 7 PM





## Christ-Light® FAQ

Christ-Light®, the synod's new coordinated religion curriculum for cradle roll through grade 12, is being phased into congregations over four years, starting this year. Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator, answers frequently asked questions (FAQ).

### How will the lessons be packaged and sold?

The curriculum is organized thematically and chronologically. A and B lessons for each set will be packaged separately. There will be 13 lessons in each booklet.

### Wouldn't it be better to have some permanently bound materials, especially as the children grow older?

One of the goals of the take-home sheets is to get the material into the hands of parents. Hardcover books won't encourage the type of parental involvement that take-home lessons do. The junior high school and high school lessons will be bound and saddle-stitched. Similar to the elementary Bible story lessons, the materials are consumable.

### What will the cost be?

The one year, per child cost for a pre-k to grade 6 Sunday school student is \$12. Lutheran elementary school children will pay \$24. Prices for grades 7-8 will be somewhat higher. The Teacher's Guides will be \$25 each. Copy masters will be \$20.

**DON'T  
KEEP THIS  
MAGAZINE!**

## Parish Assistance gets boost

Paul Kelm's first love has always been helping congregations.

He served as director of the Spiritual Renewal Project in the late 1980s, which studied how to build up congregations spiritually as well as how to address practical congregational concerns or opportunities.

And now he is the parish consultant in Parish Assistance.

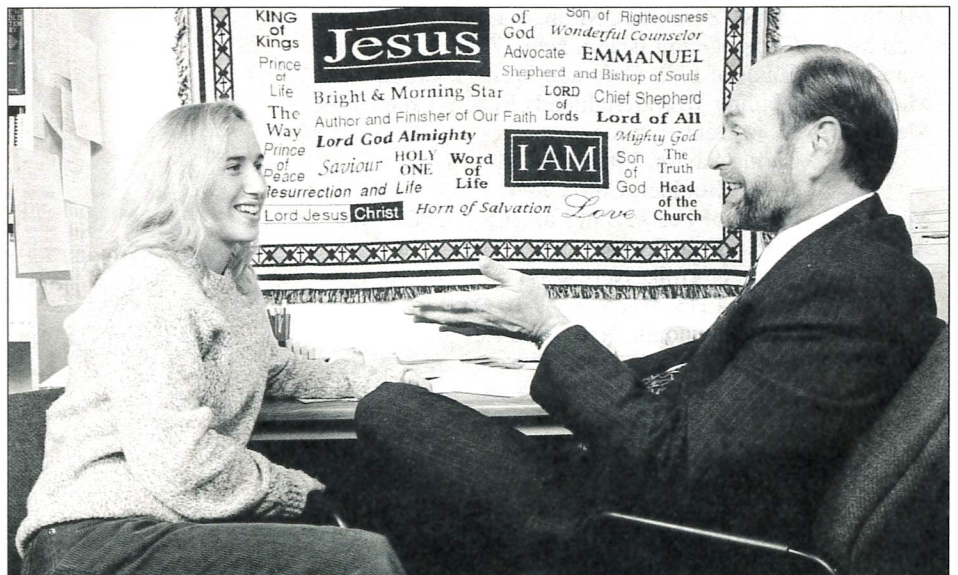
"My heart has always been in what makes churches tick," said Kelm. "I am fascinated by how churches respond to cultural changes. That's a huge issue facing churches today. We need to see how we can all help each other."

The goal of Parish Assistance is to help congregations carry out their ministry. Pastor Ron Heins, parish planner, works with congregations in analyzing the current state of the congregation, finding special opportunities and directions, developing strategies to accomplish these opportunities, and following through on these strategies.

But Heins has been inundated with congregations requesting this service, making it necessary to enlarge the department.

A 1970 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Kelm served as pastor at Faith, Pittsfield, Mass.; campus pastor at the Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel and Student Center, UW-Madison; and Dean of Students at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. He served at the Synod Administration Building for nine years in three different positions: administrator for evangelism, director of the Spiritual Renewal Project, and administrator for the Commission on Adult Discipleship, before returning to WLC as its campus pastor. He also has served on various boards and commissions.

He and his wife Lynne, a teacher at Woodlawn, Milwaukee, have three children: Andrew, 27; Peter, 25; and Laura, 16.



Paul Kelm was campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, before he accepted the call as parish consultant. "I will miss the students tremendously," he said. "Spending time with the students there gives me optimism for the future of our church."

### Give it away!

Leave your copy of *Northwestern Lutheran*—

- ➔ on a plane ➔ at a truck stop
- ➔ at a laundromat

How have you shared your NL? Let us know and we'll send you another—free. *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 52333-4398; 414/256-3232; <nl@sab.wels.net>



## District news

### Minnesota

**St. John, Dafur, Minn.**, celebrated its 90th anniversary on Sept. 14, 1996.

### South Atlantic

On Jan. 18, **St. John's, Antigua, West Indies**, celebrated its 25th anniversary. A bell tower was built as a memorial and dedicated for the anniversary.

### Southeastern Wisconsin

**Bethlehem, Carmel, Ind.**, dedicated its parsonage and four acres of land on Oct. 25. The three-year-old mission holds worship in an elementary school auditorium.

### Western Wisconsin

**St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.**, celebrated Christmas 1997 in three languages. Forty people came to the congregation's inaugural Spanish service—part of St. Mark's outreach to Watertown's Hispanic community. More than 100 people attended the semi-annual German service. The congregation also celebrated Christmas with English services, incorporating the Sunday school, parochial school, teens, choir, and congregation.



*Residents at Heritage Homes, Watertown, Wis. Heritage Homes is a seniors' living complex, dreamed of by WELS members at St. Mark, Watertown.*

## Retirement complex completed

A seniors' living complex operated by WELS members in south central Wisconsin was completed in September 1997. Heritage Homes, Watertown, Wis., is owned and operated by Watertown Lutheran Senior Housing, Inc. (WLSH).

In July 1994 a group of members of St. Mark, Watertown, formed a committee to investigate constructing an independent living facility for seniors. In 1996, the committee, along with St. Mark's congregation, purchased 20 acres of land. Ten acres are used for Heritage Homes, and 10 acres are reserved for a future daughter congregation.

The complex has 52 units. Also included are a chapel, library, fitness room, craft room, workshop, meeting

and lounge rooms, a small store, and kitchenette. The entire building is wheelchair accessible.

A number of services will be available for residents including devotional opportunities and planned activities. WLSH also has an agreement with a large senior housing facility (independent living, special needs, and nursing home care) that allows residents priority access to their facilities should that need arise.

*For more information about Heritage Homes, contact Terry Frey, Heritage Homes, 700 N Welsh Rd, Watertown WI 53098-4266; 920/206-9448.*

*Harold Peckham*



*Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., celebrated the 40th anniversary in the ministry of Prof. Leland Dahlberg (right) and the 25th anniversaries (from left) of professors Roger Kobleske, Paul Bertolus, Robert Bock, and Robert Krueger.*

## rē·li·giōn

### Defining religion

**Social gospel:** The false teaching that the church's mission is to change society through mass or group action rather than to win souls for eternity. The social gospel involves the attempt to reform the economic, political, and social structures of the world rather than proclaiming the forgiveness of sins purchased by the redemptive work of our Savior.





# Martin Luther College

New Ulm, Minn.

## 1997 Graduates

### German church broadcasts to world

People from around the world were able to hear a New Year's Day church service broadcast from St. Johanneskirchen, an Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) congregation in Zwickau-Planitz, Germany.

Since the fall of communism, the ELFK occasionally may broadcast church services on a popular radio station in Saxony. It was St. Johanneskirchen's turn on New Year's Day.

In addition to being broadcast in Saxony, two other German radio programs—one national and one worldwide—picked up on the service. This allowed the service to be broadcast throughout Germany and in many countries around the world.

The ELFK is a WELS sister synod in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

### In the news

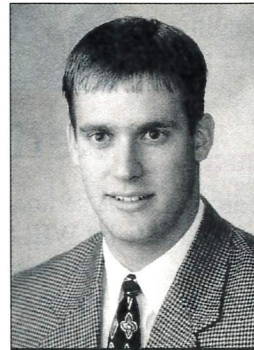
**Len Luedtke**, a member at St. Peter, Marshfield, Wis., was named State High School Football Coach of the Year and led the Marshfield Tigers to win the Wisconsin Division 1 State football championship. The last conference title the Tigers won was in the '30s and the last back to back winning seasons were in the '50s.

Someone mentioned that everything came together for Luedtke and the Tigers because "they were just lucky." The coach's response: "We're not lucky. We were blessed."

At St. Peter, Coach Luedtke serves as an elder and sings in the choir.



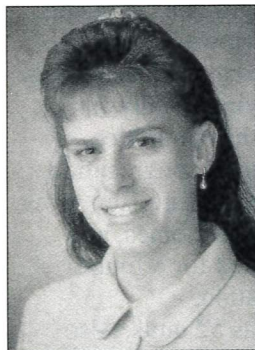
Andrea L. Charron  
Omaha, Neb.



Kevin J. Hayes  
Watertown, S.D.



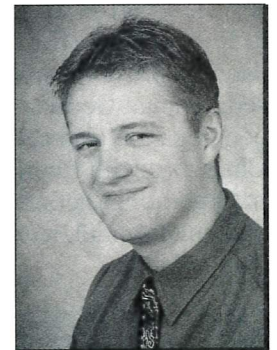
Theresa J. Kramer  
Saginaw, Mich.



Rachel C. Langhoff  
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



Luba V. Rohrback  
Milwaukee, Wis.



David J. Zank  
New Ulm, Minn.



Michelle K. Zank  
New Ulm, Minn.

On Dec. 18, 1997, nine graduates of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., received Bachelor of Science in Education degrees in elementary education.

Not pictured:

- Audra E. Bolduan, New Ulm, Minn.
- Melissa R. Draeger, Watertown, S.D.





## A **LARGE** development

*Northwestern Lutheran* will now be offered in large print.

WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI), a committee of the Commission on Special Ministries, will produce and distribute the large-print NL.

MVI also distributes other Christian materials in Braille,

large print, and audiocassettes. Most materials are free. MVI, which is run on individual contributions, has about 65 volunteers from the St. Paul, Minn., area.

To receive *Northwestern Lutheran* in large print or on audiocassette, contact the WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Ave, St. Paul MN 55107; 612/291-1536; FAX, 612/291-1324; <WELSvisimp@aol.com>. A catalog of other materials available from MVI is on the Special Ministries page of the WELS website <www.wels.net>.

## Obituaries

### Alfred K. Hertler 1916-1997

Alfred Hertler was born May 10, 1916, in Temvik, N.D. He died Nov. 10, 1997, in Appleton, Wis.

A 1944 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served Our Savior, Longmont, Colo.; St. John, Kaukauna and St. Paul, North Freedom, both in Wis.; St. Paul, Naper, and Zion, David City, both in Neb.; and St. Paul, Montrose, Minn.

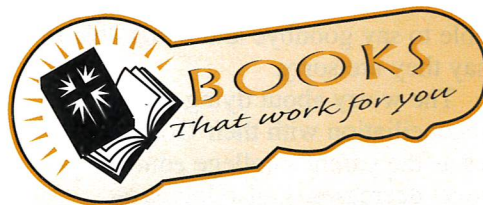
He is survived by wife, Vera; one daughter; one son; and four grandchildren.

### LeRoy G. Ristow 1908-1997

LeRoy Ristow was born March 25, 1908, in Fond du Lac, Wis. He died Nov. 23, 1997, in Newport News, Va.

A 1936 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served Emanuel, New London, Wis.; Crandon/Argonne/Hiles, in northern Wisconsin; and St. Paul, New Ulm, St. John, Hastings, and St. John, St. Claire, all in Minn. He also taught at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.

He is survived by wife, Ruth; one son; two daughters; 11 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and a brother.



Have you seen the books Northwestern Publishing House has published for you recently? ***Come, Take a Seat: A Start for Your Own Personal or Family Devotions***, John A. Braun. Do you mean it when you say you want to start daily devotions? This book has 30 devotions in it designed to help you do just that. 38 pp., \$5, 06N0710.

***Second Timothy***, Irwin Habeck. Here is one more professional commentary in the growing series from WELS theologians. The text reflects the wisdom drawn from God's Word and applied to the future pastors Habeck was teaching. hardcover, 110 pp., \$19.99, 15N0591.

## SYMBOLS *for your life*



### Monograms: Chi Rho

**Background and meaning:** The Chi Rho is not a "P" and "X" but the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). The Greek word for Christ is "Xpictoc" pronounced Kristos. Thus the Chi Rho is a very old monogram for Christ. The Chi Rho is often found on communion wafers and altar cloths.

**Bible gems:** Matthew 1:21 "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Philippians 2:9-11 "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

**A symbol for your life:** Xmas—Is this a worldly way to leave Christ out of Christmas? Does it have to be? How can it still be a proper way to write Christmas? What does "Jesus" mean? "Christ?" Why are these symbols fitting on altar or pulpit cloths? How must we use these names? Not use them?





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

## Churches get wired for free

The American Bible Society is committing \$5 million to offer a free Web page for each of North America's 300,000 churches and congregations.

At <[www.housesofworship.net](http://www.housesofworship.net)> churches are listed by name, city and state, or zip code.

The sites are offered free of charge, said Michael Maus, director of ABS Communications. The only requirement is that churches keep the sites up-to-date.

The service is available to churches in the United States and Canada and will be extended worldwide by 2000. But Maus stressed the sites are "not a vehicle for asking for money."

## Few choose clergy for spiritual support in facing death

Many Americans long for spiritual support as they reach the end of their lives, but few would choose clergy to provide it, a Gallup survey shows.

The survey found 50 percent of Americans consider prayer important at life's end, and 44 percent said they would like to receive counseling to reach spiritual peace in their dying days.

But only 36 percent said a member of the clergy would be the most comforting person to them at that time. Family and friends were far more likely to be cited as the most trusted comforters. Eighty-one percent of respondents chose family, and 61 percent chose close friends.

Gallup said it is "not terribly surprising" people would choose family and friends. "Nevertheless, I think the point remains that clergy are pretty low on the list," he added.

Clergy did not get the lowest ranking, however. Thirty percent of respondents said they would seek comfort from a doctor, and 21 percent said they would trust a nurse. The survey found that respondents' feelings of confidence in a layperson with religious experience fell in between their trust of doctors and nurses—with 27 percent citing such a person as a key source of support.

*The survey was commissioned by the Nathan Cummings Foundation. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus three percent.*

## A key fear of teens: Not being at peace with God

When they think about dying, teens are most concerned with saying goodbye and making amends with loved ones and with God.

Half or more of teens worry "a great deal" about not having the chance to say goodbye (56 percent), not having the chance to say they are sorry (49 percent), or dying when they are not at peace with God or a higher power (48 percent). Girls are more likely than boys to report that they worry "a great deal" about being

able to say goodbye and being able to say they are sorry.

The worry about dying without reconciliation with their God increases as the parent's college education level decreases. It also increases among those who attended church the previous week.

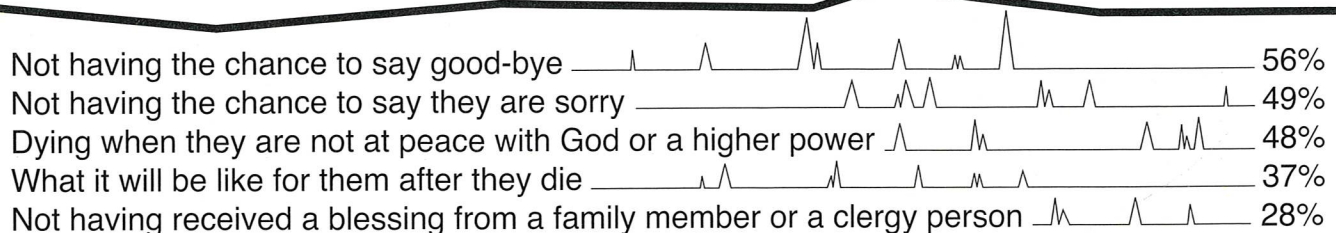
Despite the concerns, most teens do not spend much time contemplating their death. A majority of teens surveyed (62 percent) think about their own death "not at all" or "hardly at all."

Teens' beliefs about death are influenced by their parents and friends. According to teens surveyed, their parents are "very important" in the formation of their beliefs about death (88 percent) as are friends (75 percent). Parental influence increases as teens get older.

Also "very important" to the formation of teens' beliefs about death are church, synagogue or mosque (74 percent) and grandparents (72 percent). The importance of grandparents, siblings and church is greater to nonwhite, Hispanic and black teens. Brothers and sisters are "very important" to a smaller majority (62 percent).

### Teens' top five fears about death

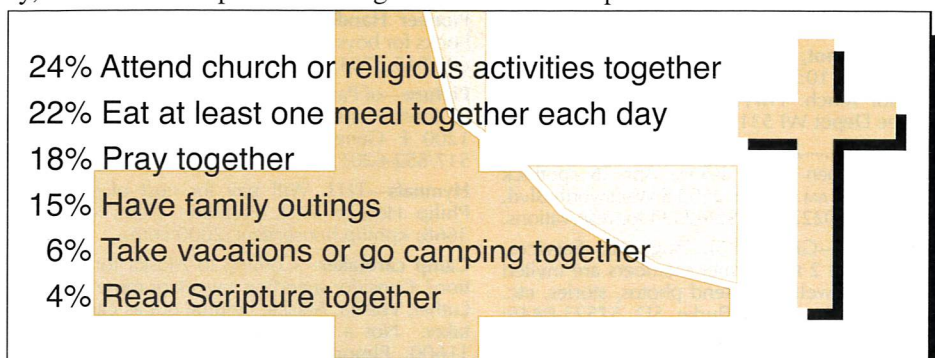
Teens were asked how much each of the following worries them about dying:





## Strengthening families

Asked which activities (from a list) they believed most strengthened the family, a national sample of adults gave these as the top six answers.



The study was based on telephone interviews with 1,008 adults, 18 years or older.  
[*Emerging Trends*, September 1997]

## Germany's Lutherans cancel condemnations of Catholics

The German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation urged German churches to approve a proposed joint statement by the Vatican and Lutheran churches around the world on the sensitive theological doctrine of justification.

Differences in understanding and expressing the doctrine of justification—how and under what circumstances God acts to forgive a person of their sins—was a central cause in the Protestant-Catholic schism of the 16th century, with Lutherans emphasizing that justification was earned by faith alone while Catholics emphasized a central role for works.

In recent decades, Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars at the international level have reached a new consensus in understanding the doctrine.

The official joint declaration, which would be issued through the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation, would also lift the condemnations Catholics and Lutherans imposed on one another at the time of Reformation.

*NL reported on this statement in November. See pages 8 and 30 of that issue for more information about this statement. There you will read about the concerns and cautions the document raises for us. —ed.*

## Study: people giving less to church

A study of church giving patterns found that the overall percentage of income church members give declined slightly between 1994 and 1995 to 2.46—sharply below that of 1968, when church members gave 3.11 percent of their income.

The study, "The State of Church Giving through 1995," by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle of empty tomb, inc., a Christian research organization, looked at giving in 29 denominations.

The average annual contribution per member was \$498.20. If people gave at the 1968 level—3.11 percent—that figure would be \$629.69 per member. This would have totalled \$18.8 billion, rather than the current total of \$14.4 billion given to churches.

## Giving increases, churches are unaffected

As Americans' income and assets increased sharply over the last two years, their charitable giving increased. Overall charitable giving went up 16 percent in the last two years. Yet giving to human services and religious groups went up only slightly.

Wealthy Americans—the top 20 percent of all households—control 49 percent of the country's income. Yet they have a pattern of giving quite different from the majority of Americans. These people tend to give their money to institutions and hospitals; less than one-fifth goes to religious groups.

By contrast, in overall giving at all income levels, about half goes to religious groups.

## Abortion rate drops slightly

The rate at which American women received abortions dropped again in 1995, putting the abortion rate at its lowest level in two decades. Yet the rate is still high.

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 1,210,883 abortions in 1995—the most recent year for which complete figures are available. This is a 4.5 percent decrease from 1994 and a 15 percent drop from 1990.

The abortion rate—the number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44—was 20 in 1995, down from 21 in 1994 and 25 in 1980. Abortion has been legal in the U.S. for 25 years.

Since the Jan. 22, 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* ruling, it is estimated the 1.2 to 1.5 million babies are killed by abortion each year. That number equals roughly 33 million abortions—approximately the populations of Florida and Texas combined.



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

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY

### Pastors:

**Bare, James A.**, to Salem, Owosso, Mich.

**Hahn, Martin R.**, from Messiah, Los Alamos, N.M., to East Fork/Canyon Day, Whiteriver-5SE, Ariz.

**Hanneman, Bruce W.**, from Redeemer, Hastings, Neb., to St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.

**Heyer, Philip J.**, from Peace, Otsego, Mich., to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

**Hintz, Michael L.**, from Elkhart exp., Elkhart, Ind., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.

**Kelm, Paul E.**, from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, to parish consultant, Milwaukee.

**Kuske, John D.**, from Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz., to Apostles of Christ, Wauwatosa, Wis.

**Rosenow, David D.**, from Grace, Hutchinson, Minn., to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.

**Stelter, Edward F.**, from St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., to retirement

**Strobel, Richard W.**, from MLC, New Ulm, Minn., to Grace, Mosinee-12SW/St. Paul, Stratford, Wis.

**Uhlhorn, Ronald W.**, from St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., to Malawi

**Ulrich, Ross W.**, from Hope, St. Charles, Mich., to Zion, Denver, Colo.

**Warnke, Richard E.**, from Trinity, Kiel, Wis., to Lilongwe, Malawi

Correction: In taking a call to Trinity, Temple, Texas, Pastor Robert Green left Bethany, Antioch, Calif., not Good Shepherd, Livermore, Calif., as was reported in January.

### Teachers:

**Gerner, Deborah L.**, from Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.

**Hahnke, Steven M.**, to East Twin, Mishicot, Wis.

**Hussman, Renee A.**, to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.

**Johnson, Jennifer K.**, to Wisconsin, Racine, Wis.

**Langhoff, Rachel**, to Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis.

**Lober, Marlene E.**, from St. John, Newburg, Wis., to retirement

**Marquardt, Lois E.**, to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.

**Moldenhauer, Martin**, from LPS, Watertown, Wis., to WLC, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Randall, Virginia K.**, from North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis., to Redemption, Milwaukee

**Schenk, Otto H.**, from MLC, New Ulm, Minn., to retirement

**Schulz, Dawn E.**, from St. Luke, Vassar, Mich., to MLS, Saginaw, Mich.

**Sielaff, Ann L.**, from Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich., to Grace, Durand, Mich.

**Sprengeler, Marie A.**, from Salem, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement

NPH Christian Books and Gifts (its retail store) will be closed all day on March 17-18 for inventory.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Bradenton, Fla.**—Peace (40). March 1. Service, 4 PM; dinner and program follow. 1161 30 Ave W, Bradenton FL 34205; 914/747-2373

**Greenfield, Wis.**—St. Jacobi (125). Mar. 29-30, and April 19-20. Sunday services, 8:15 and 10:45

# Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

AM, Monday, 7 PM. 8605 W Forest Home Ave, Greenfield WI 53228; 414/425-3030.

**Genesee Depot, Wis.**—Reformation (20). April 19. Service, 10:30 AM; catered lunch follows. RSVP for lunch. Hwys D & E, PO Box 316, Genesee Depot WI 53127; 414/392-9745.

**Denver, Colo.**—Zion school (30). Apr. 25—service, 3 PM; open house, 4-6 PM. Apr. 26—potluck follows 10:30 AM service. 2600 S Wadsworth Blvd, Denver CO 80227; 303/985-2334 for reservations.

**Burke, S.D.**—Grace (75). Aug. 16. Services, 10:30 AM and 2 PM. Former members are invited to attend, as well as to send photos, stories, etc. Grace, PO Box 448, Burke SD 57523-0448; 605/775-2462.

## COMING EVENTS

**Regional campus rallies**—Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279 or Dan Heins, 507/437-6948.

**Minneapolis**—Mar. 27-29, **Philadelphia**—Apr. 17-19, **Phoenix**—Apr. 17-19, **Atlanta**—Apr. 24-26.

**Ladies' Time Out**—Salem (107th), Milwaukee. 8:30 AM - 4 PM, March 21. Bible studies, crafts, workshops on family and social issues. \$12 (includes lunch). Lynn Heinrich, 414/796-1814.

**Focus on Ministry weekend**—Martin Luther College. Mar. 19-21. For 10th-12th graders interested in learning about studying to be a pastor, teacher, or staff minister. MLC, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 507/354-8221; fax, 507/354-8225; <mlcadmit@mlc-wels.edu>

**Women's retreat**—Christian Women Today retreat. Mar. 20-22. Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Jan Kneser, 414/781-1955.

**Women's retreat**—March 20-22. Holiday Inn, Manitowoc, Wis. Hosted by Eternal Love, Appleton, Wis. Karen McVey, 920/749-2823.

**Women's retreat**—Today's Christian Women's retreat. Mar. 27-29. Lansing Sheraton Hotel, Lansing, Mich. Laurie, 248/391-1133.

**WELS-CLO meeting**—for church librarians. April 4. Trinity, Watertown, Wis. Registration, 8:30 AM. Fee: \$7 (includes lunch). 414/256-3222; <jweber@sab.wels.net>

**Women's retreat**—Spiritual renewal weekend for women. Apr. 17-19. Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866.

**Handbell festivals**—Northeast region—Apr. 18-19 at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.; concert, 2 PM, Apr. 19. Southeast region—Apr. 18-19 at Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.; concert, 2 PM, Apr. 19. Western region—Mar. 28-29 at West LHS, Plymouth, Minn.; concert, 2 PM, Mar. 29. Cheryl Diener, 223 W Badger St, Waupaca WI 54981; 715/258-7203.

**Alcoholic awareness retreat**—15th annual retreat for recovering alcoholics and family members. Apr. 24-26. Wonderland Camp and Conference Center—about 30 miles south of Milwaukee. John Cook, Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, 6800 N 76 St, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5005; <wlcfs@execpc.com>

**Concert**—40th anniversary concert of the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee. 4 PM, April 26 at St. John, Watertown, Wis.; 3 PM, May 3, St. Marcus, Milwaukee; 7 PM, May 3, St. Lucas, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

**Banquet**—40th anniversary banquet of the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee. All former members invited. 6 PM, May 8, place tba. Jeannine Hirschmann, 414/871-1461.

## NEEDED

**Pioneer Handbooks**—older gray Pioneer handbooks for boys. Zion, Mobridge, S.D. Phil Sievert, 605/845-3704; <psievert@hotmail.com>

**Picture**—of Pastor Karl Schlieff, vacancy pastor for St. John, Frankenmuth, Mich., in 1893. St. John, 1200 E Genesee St, Frankenmuth MI 48734; 517/652-6201; <STJF@juno.com>

**Hymnals**—TLH. Will pay for cost of shipping. Philip Houser, First, Papillion Neb.; 402/339-3668; <philip.houser@mci2000.com>

**Camp caretaker**—Coming to Alaska for a vacation? Consider spending a week or more at Camp Luther, Wasila, Alaska, helping out as camp caretaker. Not a salary position. Pastor Fred Voss, 11600 Elmwood Rd, Anchorage AK 99516; 907/345-6129; <fvoss@juno.com>

**Choir robes**—25 to 30. Will pay for cost of shipping. Zion, Chesaning, Mich. Beth, 517/845-2661 (evenings).

**Books**—12-volume set of R.C.H. Lenski's *Commentary on the New Testament*. Wendy Hellwig, 1027 W Medina Rd, Marshall, WI 53559; 608-655-4249; <hellwig@biochem.wisc.edu>

## AVAILABLE

**Organ**—Lowery. Model GAK25H. Free for cost of shipping. DeeAnn, 517/695-5834 (day); 517/695-9234 (evening).

## NAMES WANTED

**WELS/ELS homeschoolers**—Send name of mother and father, ages of children, name of home-school, curriculum used, family hobbies, and suggestions for helpful items and aids. Kelly Salzwedel, 6102-G Sunflake Cir, GFAB ND 58204, <kellyjo@thequest.net> or Patty Kapler, 511 Sierra, Mountain Home AR 72653, <hubkap@centuryinter.net>

**Newark (Christiana), Del.**—Names and addresses of former members of St. John for 25th anniversary celebration on July 19. Dale Schulz, 135 S Old Baltimore Pike, Newark DE 19702; 302/368-7394; <daleschulz@juno.com>

**Augusta County/Staunton/Waynesboro/Charlottesville/Harrisonburg, Va.**—Names, addresses, and phone numbers of people in the area interested in starting a mission. Pat and Fred Boehling, 540/941-8412.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**Area administrator/therapist**—in the Milwaukee office of the Christian Counseling division of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service.

Qualifications: Member of a WELS/ELS congregation, masters degree in counseling (MSW preferred), supervisory skills, at least three years experience, a male for gender balance, and the ability to provide Christ-centered, Scripture-based counseling. Frederick Matzke, division administrator, 6800 N 76 St, PO Box 23980, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5005 ext. 44.

**Director**—of the retreat/conference center of Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn. Send resume by April 1 to Paul Tweit, Administrative Vice President, 734 Marsh St, Mankato MN 56001; 507/386-5312.



# INTER-ACT

Randy K. Hunter

"The word of God is living and active." Hebrews 4:12

## Introduction

"It was the biggest challenge of my life."

The teacher was talking about a difficult year. The manager was referring to a unique assignment. The athlete said it about a tough opponent. When *you* said it, what were you talking about?

## Text

### Read Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. <sup>2</sup> Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

## Application

These verses describe two kinds of challenges. The greater challenge belonged to Jesus. He met the challenge and completed his race when he ascended to heaven. Our challenge remains. We're running our race. It's easy to grow weary and lose heart. So God gives us the knowledge of Jesus and the example of others.

- What about Jesus encourages you to "run your race"?
- Consider a fellow Christian who has encouraged you to "run your race." Pray for him or her. Write a note of thanks and explain how he or she has helped you run your race.

## Questions

1. When you read the word "therefore" in the Bible, ask yourself "What's the 'therefore' there for?" Why is "therefore" in v. 1?
2. The cloud of witnesses (vs. 1) is made up of the heroes of faith in chapter 11. If you could interview one of them, who would it be? What would you ask?
3. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to do three things:
  - Throw off everything that hinders.** What actions or attitudes hinder you in your walk with God or fellowship with his people?
  - Run with perseverance the race marked out for us.** In what ways is the race God has "marked out" for you like a sprint? a marathon? the hurdles?
  - Fix our eyes on Jesus.** How can you fix your eyes on Jesus this week?
4. We gladly endure the unpleasant (vaccination, mortgage payment, etc.) in order to enjoy the pleasant (health, home, etc.). What unpleasant things did Jesus put up with when he "endured the cross"? What pleasant things do we enjoy because Jesus endured the unpleasant cross?

## Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, you marked out this course for me, and you alone can give me the strength to finish it. When my race is hard, fill me with your power. Thank you for the Savior who has already won my salvation. Thank you for the men and women who have cheered me on in the race. Help me be an example and a help to anyone who is weary. In Jesus' name, Amen.



# If the Lord is willing

We are not the masters of our destiny. Though we cannot often see it, our Lord's hand is in everything.

Mark E. Braun

Christians face a quandary: we must live as if we'll die tomorrow, as if Judgment Day could intrude at any moment. Yet we may live a long time, and our churches and schools may survive for centuries. How do we balance such conflicting possibilities?

## See the Lord's hand in everything

James' complaint has a modern ring: **"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.'"** Can't you see a paneled board room, charts, and print-outs strewn over the work table, a gaggle of earnest middle-managers plotting the next campaign or trumpeting its third-quarter profits?

Is it wrong to plan for the future? James doesn't condemn savings accounts or long-range planning. God gave us "our mind and all our abilities," and he wants us to use them.

James rebukes the other extreme: we think we'll all live to be 100 and remain the master of our fate. And so we're tempted to spend our energy swinging deals and making

bucks, and put off God and religion and eternity for a long, long time. "Why, you don't even know what will happen tomorrow." Who says we'll live to be 100? Even if we do, what's that to God? "What is your life?" James asks. "You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

*"Deo volente,"* our fathers used to say. We will meet here or go there or do that if the Lord is willing. We are not the masters of our destiny. Though we cannot often see it, our Lord's hand is in everything.

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**Who says we'll live  
to be 100? Even if we do,  
what's that to God?**

---

## Put everything in the Lord's hand

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," Jesus prayed. "Not as I will, but as you will," he said in the Garden.

Here's why we can put everything in our Lord's hand:

### He knows everything.

Abraham Lincoln is believed to have said that the best thing about the future is that it

happens one day at a time. We can't see what's around the corner, but God knows all our tomorrows. He, much more than we, knows what's best for us.

**He is eternal.** We are only "a mist," but "from everlasting to everlasting" he is God. Consider your favorite restaurant, a reliable mechanic, an honorable boss: what happens when the restaurant is sold, or the mechanic moves away, or the boss retires? God doesn't change. Jesus won't blow hot one day and cold the next; he's "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

**He is almighty.** We boast and brag, and our boasting is evil. God designed the cosmos. He points the clouds in their courses. He's big enough to solve our toughest problems, to soothe our biggest heartaches.

Most of all, **he loves us.** We appear a brief moment on this world's stage, and then we are gone. But "because Jesus lives forever . . . he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for us" (Hebrews 7:24,25).

Our yesterdays were all nailed to his cross, and our tomorrows are safe in his hand.

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

real faith for real life  
**james**



# Needed: more Hannahs

Armin J. Panning

How things have changed since biblical times! That's true in countless ways, of course, but probably nowhere more clearly than in the value placed on family.

In our day children have all too often come to be viewed as a burden, as something to be abused and abandoned. Hence it sounds almost quaint and a little out-of-touch to read in 1 Samuel that year after year at the time of the annual sacrifice, Hannah went up to the Lord's house in Shiloh and prayed earnestly that the Lord would take away her reproach of childlessness. So intensely did she seek the blessing of family that she promised, if the Lord gave her a son, to dedicate him to the Lord's service—which is exactly what she did when Samuel was subsequently born to her and her husband, Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:21-28).

In that, too, we see a major change from biblical times. A mother today cannot arbitrarily decide that her son will be a pastor—nor should she try. The statistics are not encouraging regarding students at our ministerial education schools who are there only to please Mother. But that said, it remains true that no one is a better or more influential recruiter of church workers than Mother.

It is usually she who teaches her child his first prayers. She is the one most likely to read Bible stories to her child. She contributes greatly to the practice of having family devotions and of setting the family's routine of regular church and Bible class attendance. Her high esteem of the work done by the called workers of the congregation sets a tone that makes full-time ministry a desirable occupation, a preferred option, as she quietly contributes to her children's deliberations about

choosing a life's vocation.

Let no mother ever feel that she lacks influence, or that she is not important in urging her children to consider full-time kingdom work. In fact, her role in this matter is increasingly important at a time when candidates for the ministry are coming into short supply. What has reached crisis proportions in other church bodies seems likely to be headed also in the direction of our synod.

A working number often used in our circles is that WELS needs to place 55 seminary graduates annually to sustain our synodical ministry program. The sobering fact is that none of the next seven classes to graduate from the seminary at the present stage of their preparation number higher than in the 40s. In fact, the four classes currently enrolled in the seminary average 38 students per class. The chance of adding class members at the seminary level is remote; modest attrition is more likely.

An increasing number of congregational vacancies seems inevitable. That calls for earnest prayer to the Lord that he send workers into his harvest. Along with that, however, we all need to encourage qualified young men to prepare themselves for full-time parish ministry. It is an obligation that falls to all of us: parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. All of us need to support those who are in the program and encourage others to enroll in it. All of us need to work at it. But experience shows that mothers still do it best. Hannahs still need to recruit Samuels.

*Armin Panning is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.*

*It remains true  
that no one is a  
better or more  
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than Mother.*



# Questions of timing

John F. Brug

***Why do Jews sometimes celebrate the Passover after Easter? If Maundy Thursday was a Passover, Easter should come after Passover.***

The Jewish religious calendar is a lunisolar calendar. Its months are true lunar months based on lunar cycles of approximately 29 1/2 days, but its year is a solar year of approximately 365 days. Since 12 lunar months are only 354 days, the months would soon drift through the seasons of the year unless adjustments were made. The seasons are kept in line by adding a thirteenth month to the year in seven out of 19 years. This "slack" in the calendar allows Passover to come after Easter sometimes.

Passover is always celebrated on the 15th of the lunar month of Nisan (with the preparation of the lamb on the afternoon of the 14th). As the midpoint of a lunar month, the Passover is always at a full moon. The early church celebrated Easter on the Sunday after the Passover. (Some Eastern Christians celebrated it the same date each year, regardless of the day of the week on which it fell.)

The Western church, which always celebrated Easter on Sunday, eventually began to make its own calculation of Easter, independent of the Jewish calendar, according to the rule: Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring. Because of the drift in the Jewish calendar, the first full moon of spring can occasionally be the full moon before the full moon of Nisan. Under these circumstances Passover will come after Easter.

There has often been disagreement

among different Christian churches about the formula used to calculate the date of Easter. For example, the date of "Russian Easter" may be different than the date of "Western Easter" because the Russian church uses the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar as the basis for its calculations.

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**It is wise to consecrate the new supply to avoid doubt or offense on the part of any recipients.**

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***What should be done if the pastor runs out of bread and wine during the Lord's Supper?***

The Formula of Concord, one of the chief confessions of the Lutheran Church, states: "In the administration of the Holy Supper the words of institution are to be publicly spoken or sung before the congregation distinctly and clearly, and should in no way be omitted . . . in order that . . . the elements of bread and wine may be consecrated or blessed for this holy use, in order that the body and blood of Christ may therewith be administered to us to be eaten and to be drunk" (SD VII, 79).

Neither Scripture nor the Confessions specifically say whether a second consecration is necessary for elements that were not on the altar during the first consecration. But in *The Shepherd under Christ*, the pastoral theology text-

book used at our seminary, pastors-to-be are taught, "Should the supply of either element be exhausted and replenishment be provided, consecrating the new supply will avoid any doubts about the continuing validity of the sacrament" (p. 93). It is wise to consecrate the new supply to avoid doubt or offense on the part of any recipients. Better yet is to provide sufficient bread and wine so that you do not run out.

*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](http://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.

*Send questions to Your question, please, Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <[nl@sab.wels.net](mailto:nl@sab.wels.net)>*





**“Armchair Christianity” by John Eich [Nov. ’97].** While the writer is correct that “Christianity is not a spectator sport—we won’t receive the winner’s prize just because we sat in the stands and watched others compete,” the article seems to fit the dominant theme of our age that man can do his own thing even in the area of his salvation.

Perhaps it is not the intent of the writer but the words, “God went to extremes when he created man and woman and gave them the freedom to choose or reject a relationship with him” seem to fly in the face of those clear words of Scripture such as “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14) and also “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

*Delroy Aswege  
Loveland, Colorado*

*ed’s note: The reference to the freedom to choose or reject a relationship with God was to Adam and Eve as they were created, and the encouragement to be active Christians is made to those who have the Holy Spirit. But your warning is important so no one thinks we have the freedom in our sinful natures to choose God.*

**The editorial, “Blessed Mary or mother of myths?” [Dec. ’97]** brought two points to mind. The first is that Mary, while mentioned several times in the Gospels and once in Acts, is not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament. It is obvious by this complete silence that she had no role as a mediatrix between God and man.

Idolatry of Mary is already widespread. The Catholic church in

Hallstatt, Austria, is built with a double nave—two altars, two sets of pews. Above one altar is a crucifix; above the other is a statue of Mary. Anyone in that church will be struck by the fact that the appointments on Mary’s side are much higher quality than those on Jesus’ side. These people have already elevated Mary to be above Jesus.

*Richard H. Engelmann  
Cincinnati, Ohio*

**Thanks for “The Orthodox attraction” [Jan.].** The move of many evangelicals to orthodoxy confirms what many of us have long suspected. An approach to church life that is willing to sacrifice just about anything to “give the people what they want” is not only unscriptural—it’s wrongheaded. At least some potential converts are not impressed by the “openness” and “flexibility” of such an approach. They’re distressed by its obvious lack of integrity, and they look elsewhere.

Gerlach asks, “Is there any message here for WELS Lutherans?” To me, it’s this: As we reach out with the gospel, by all means—let’s “meet people where they are.” But let’s never forget who we are. I wouldn’t join a church that went around apologizing for its history and traditions. Would you?

*Kenneth Cherney Jr.  
Mandeville, Louisiana*

**Thank you for “The relevant church” [Jan.].** It is what people in our mission congregations need to hear. I only wish you could have made it more flashy. With color and maybe a centerfold picture! The law and gospel in that article is so simple and plain that no one could miss it. I wish it could have been moved to the front and given more coverage. I hope

many get a chance to read it and learn to trust more in God’s power.

*Christopher Goelzer  
Alexandria, Louisiana*

**A big thank you to John Eich for writing on Santa Claus [Dec. ’97].**

It was refreshing to see someone take a public stand on the issue. Often, individuals voice opinions that seem to argue the preservation of family traditions. This is not about preserving family traditions. This is about preserving the precious gospel for our children and grandchildren.

*Colleen Oldenburg*

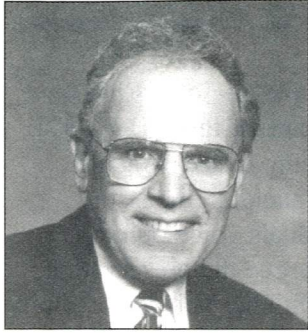
## Through my Bible in 3 years

### April 1998

1. Luke 17:1-19
2. Lk. 17:20-37
3. Lk. 18:1-17
4. Lk. 18:18-34
5. Lk. 18:35—19:10
6. Lk. 19:11-28
7. Genesis 27:1-45
8. Gen. 27:46—28:22
9. Gen. 29:1-30
10. Gen. 29:31—30:43
11. Gen. 31:1—32:2
12. Gen. 32:3-32
13. Gen. 33
14. Gen. 34
15. Gen. 35
16. Gen. 36
17. Gen. 37
18. Gen. 38, 39
19. Gen. 40:1—41:13
20. Gen. 41:14-57
21. Gen. 42
22. Gen. 43
23. Gen. 44
24. Gen. 45
25. Gen. 46:1—47:12
26. Gen. 47:13—48:22
27. Gen. 49
28. Gen. 50
29. Luke 19:29-46
30. Lk. 19:47—20:47



## Don't sue the league



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

When all the blame is passed around, it still belongs where it started, with the sinner.

Did you hear about the professional athlete who sued his league because they didn't stop him from using steroids? He admits responsibility for using them in the first place. But when he became the strongest man in his sport, others should have realized his problem and stopped him. They didn't. He fell from grace. Now, they should pay.

The case raises a number of issues that I'm not here to judge. I know only what I heard in a radio report of the incident, so the particulars are beyond me. But, knowing only the above leads me to ask, "Who is responsible here?"

Imagine applying the athlete's reasoning as follows: You gave in to a temptation, and you sinned. You struggled with your choice, even felt guilty, but it gave you some pleasure. In time you repeated the sin. It grew easier, happened more frequently, became habitual—led to your ruin.

All the while, someone knew you were sinning. God knew. But he didn't stop you.

Are you going to say, "Yes, I know I was wrong to have sinned in the beginning. That's my responsibility. But when it continued, you should have stopped me, God. Because you didn't, you owe me."?

Is there a pattern here? Remember how Adam never denied that he, he—by his choice, ate the forbidden fruit. BUT, "the woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." It's really your fault, God.

It's not as if the athlete didn't know he was breaking the league's rules and that his steroid use, so rewarding at first, could lead to his ruin. It's not as if we don't know God's rules and the consequences of breaking them.

Who's responsible? Is there really any question? As a society, we seem to be good at clouding the issue. We might even think the athlete had a case. We often feel we can blame bad genes, bad government, bad home life, bad neighborhood, bad friends, bad thinking (hmmm!), bad luck. Yet, when all the blame is passed around, it still belongs where it started, with the sinner. No one put a gun to the athlete's head and made him take steroids. Similarly with us in our sins.

Saying otherwise doesn't change the reality. We are responsible for what we do, and no one else is obligated to shoulder or even lighten our blame. We deserve whatever our sins bring on us.

God doesn't owe us anything. Not a thing. That's what makes him so wonderful, so grace-full. He owes us nothing. He gave us everything. Never is what he gave more evident than during Lent. He sacrificed his own Son and gave us heaven.

Still, if we insist "God, you owe us," we get nothing. That attitude reveals a lack of repentance. That attitude refuses to accept the responsibility for the sin and so must still suffer the full consequences of it, even if it wins a lawsuit.

When, instead, we are crushed by our sin, acknowledging full responsibility and turning in faith to our God through Christ, we find someone has shouldered our blame without our deserving, without our asking. The Savior has.

So let's not sue the league or blame society. Let's rejoice in God's grace and let it show in our lives.

*Gary P. Baumler*



# Teaming Up for Youth and Family Ministry

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# Achieving closure

Everybody wants closure. But few problems can be solved in 15 minutes.

Kenneth A. Cherney

**H**ave you had your closure today? I sincerely hope so. Everybody wants “closure.” We can endure awful tragedies, deal with infuriating people, and calmly watch the devastation of everything we hold dear—as long as we experience “closure” afterward. But without it, every little irritation becomes a potential crisis. Seek closure, psycho-gurus say. Without it, we’re doomed.

What they mean is that we need satisfying conclusions to the crises in our lives. Trouble is much more bearable when we know it’s going to end, and that when it ends we’re sure it won’t recur. We want closure, and that’s understandable.

I’m just not sure it’s realistic.

## Temporary closure

Frankly, I’m sure it reflects the worldview of a generation raised on too much TV. You know what I mean. When I was a kid, *Leave it to Beaver* came on at 4:30. By 4:40 every day, Beaver was in trouble. By 4:50, he’d be in Ward’s den for a talk. By 4:55 Ward’s hand would be on the Beave’s shoulder, and the Beave would be saying “I’ll never do it again.” Commercial break. Closure. If only life was like that.

Of course, it isn’t. Few problems can be solved in 15 minutes. Even fewer disappear from our screens in a small burst of blue light, never to return.

And when the same problem we thought we handled yesterday does return, it exasperates us. If there’s repeated conflict in our marriage, we think we’re in the wrong marriage. If a difficult person at work continues to be difficult, we think we aren’t handling him correctly—or he’d have stopped being difficult by now. All these loose ends. No closure. What’s wrong with us?

Probably nothing—other than that we’re sinful human beings living in a sinful world. Yet even that isn’t an intractable problem.

In fact, it’s been solved already.

## Real closure

The real problem is a world that long ago ceased to be the perfect place its Maker designed. The real problem in the world, and in our lives, is sin, guilt, and alienation from God and each other.

And that guilt has been erased, that alienation ended—by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. “The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,” the Bible says. Jesus bore the punishment our “iniquity” required, and when he had earned complete forgiveness for every man, woman, and child on earth, when he had put the world right with God once and for all, he cried out, “It is finished!”

That’s closure. Our real problem is solved. It will not return. And all the loose ends—the daily griefs and woes that sin brings along with it—are in the process of being taken care of, too. By God. In his good time.

Meanwhile, don’t be alarmed if some of your problems seem to defy solution.

Trust the God who went to the cross for you to make your problem his.

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

