

NORTHWESTERN

LUTHERAN

August 1998

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



When
someone
says, "I'm
homosexual"

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Many Sunday
schools—one
resounding
message

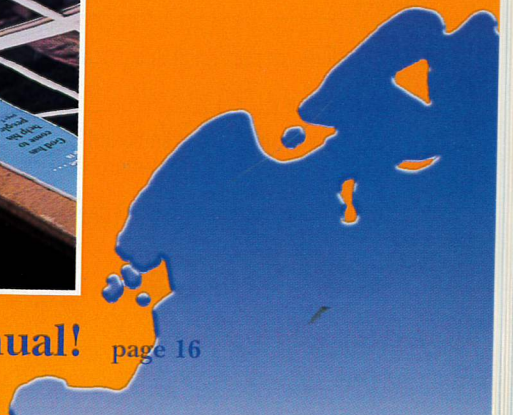
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We protect
one another

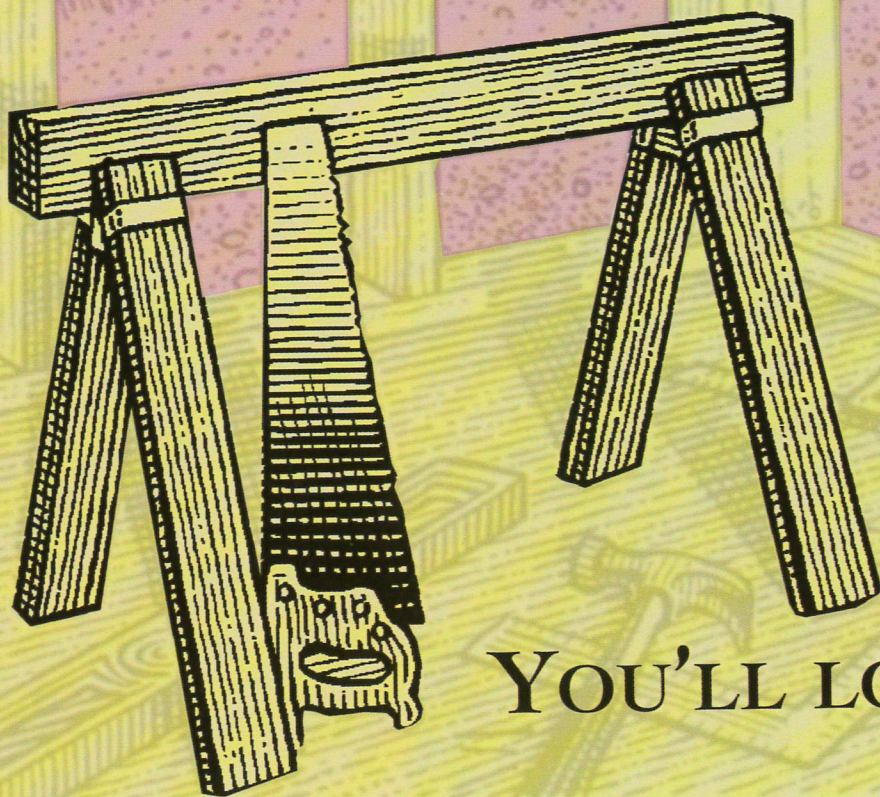
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Read the manual!

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The Lord will not forget you

**But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the LORD has forgotten me."
"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion
for the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever
before me." (Isaiah 49:14-16)**

Paul M. Janke



ning, we had separated ourselves from God, but he refused to forget us. On the basis of the excellent sacrifice Jesus offered at the cross, God declared us not guilty. He called us out of the darkness to his wonderful light. The Lord hasn't forsaken us. He remembers us. The Lord remembers us as he promised to remember the dying thief and graciously promises to bring us to paradise.

The Lord's tattoo

Tattoos are the rage these days. It's becoming difficult to find an athlete who isn't sporting some engraving on an arm or leg. In Old Testament times God prohibited his people from tattooing themselves. Here, however, the Lord tells us that he has something engraved on his hands. Etched indelibly on the Lord's palms are the walls of Zion—the symbol of his people.

Tattoos are not easily undone. The tattoo artist's needle leaves a mark that cannot be washed off or worn off. And that's just the point of the Lord's promise. We may feel forsaken by God, but through faith in Jesus that feeling is never the reality. We are always before him.

The Lord will not forget us.

NL

Paul Janke is pastor at St. Peter, Modesto, California.

desolation, we may complain, "The Lord has forgotten me."

The Lord's memory

The Lord's answer to Zion's complaint is an unqualified assertion: "I will not forget you." The warmest, most tender love that exists between humans is the love of a mother for her newborn child. Forget her child? A mother feeds and cherishes and loves her little child from the depths of her heart. And yet there are baffling, wrenching exceptions: mothers who abandon their children.

Not with the Lord, however. "Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" It would be difficult to find a more beautiful expression of God's love for us. Through our sin-

Just forget about it. Try to put it out of your mind."

Isn't that what we advise someone who's having a hard time getting over an unhappy experience? True: it's not helpful to dwell on negative.

But what if the Lord adopted that policy? What if he purged from his memory every source of unhappiness? Then he would have to forget because our sin and rebellion have certainly brought anguish to the Father's heart.

our feelings

Zion, the city of Jerusalem, ruined and desolate. The Babylonians laid waste to the city and devoured its inhabitants. In the midst of her desolation, Zion complains, "The LORD has forsaken me, the LORD has forgotten me." If that had been the case, no one could have charged God with unfairness. All day long he had held out his hands to an obstinate people. What he got in return was the severest provocation: willful sinning, idolatry, and the scorn of people he had formed for himself.

We experience our desolate times, too. Illness or grief or broken relations with a family member can cause us to wonder whether God remembers us. Especially when our sins are the source of our feelings of



- ❑ Last month you saw the newest Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates. This month, we've added four pages to bring you the grads from Martin Luther College. While you're looking at all the faces, thank God for giving us willing public ministers. But don't forget that WELS still faces pastor and principal shortages. Pray that more people, like the ones you see here, will enter the public ministry.
- ❑ Please don't miss our back page article. You can't hear this message often enough—the simple, amazing gospel message that God has declared us “Not guilty.” Ken Cherney's writing is always clear and his messages pointed, but this time—from our perspective—he's outdone himself.
- ❑ This month, Tom Trapp ends his series on homosexuality. We thank him for presenting a clear message, one that called for speaking God's truth, loving unconditionally, and always remembering that we need a Savior too.
- ❑ Two series start this month. Laurie Biedenbender will take a two-part look at Sunday schools and Fred Piepenbrink will lead us through a seven-part Bible study on Philemon.
- ❑ With this issue, we welcome Paul Janke who begins his service as a contributing editor. He will be bringing us the “Thought for today” four times a year.

—LRB

Cover photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

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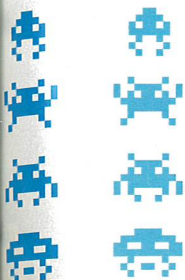
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When someone says, "I'm homosexual"

To witness to the truth, we must love unconditionally while we share God's Word.

Thomas H. Trapp

How do you respond to a close friend or family member who is struggling with homosexuality? Or how do you answer a militant homosexual who calls you "homophobic" and a "bigot?"

Reply the same way you would reply to anyone who is struggling with any sin or defending it. Tell the truth—God's truth.

Tell the truth

First tell yourself the truth. You are not spiritually superior if your past sins have not included homosexual desires or behavior. There is no room for arrogance. One sin makes us guilty of breaking all of God's commands. "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye," Jesus teaches us in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:5).

If your friend or family member knows that homosexuality is against God's will and he or she is struggling with such temptation, then let that person know you also struggle with temptations. Our temptations may be different—bitterness, pride, worry, lust, unbelief—but our battle against sin and Satan is the same. Tell the truth about yourself and tell it to yourself.

Finally, tell God's truth to your friends, even if it hurts their feelings. An ex-gay I know said his relatives warned him that he was in danger of

God's judgment if he did not change his homosexual ways, which he knew from the Bible were wrong. He, in turn, told his relatives to go to the place they warned him about. Sometime later, by God's grace, he repented and returned to Jesus.

In a world that says "you can't change," God's Word says we can.

The ex-gay gave me this advice: "Always tell the truth to your friends or enemies. Always speak God's Word. Those words of warning changed my life."

He continued, "I was angry at my relatives at the time for telling me God's truth. But the Holy Spirit used those words—along with words of Jesus' love—to turn me away from sin and back to him."

Actively love

Truth is vital. So is love. Treat all people "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15,16)—even the militant gay who calls you evil names. Jesus died for him too. Actively love the person with whom you are sharing God's Word. Words can be empty. Demonstrate your love in Christ by carefully listening and even using appropriate physical gestures—hugs, an arm around a shoulder. "Homosexuals need to learn the place of [physical] affection outside



the context of sexual involvement. . . . If your intentions are misunderstood, explain yourself, but don't back away," says Robbi Kenney in *Coming Out of Homosexuality*, a video and booklet by the Family Research Council (1-800-225-4008).

In the same video, William Devlin, the Director of the Philadelphia Family Policy Council, says his council has engaged the homosexual community on social and public policy for several years. He claims to mix love and compassion with public policy. Some question his "love" because Devlin's council opposes domestic partners legislation, the homosexualization of education, and same-sex marriages in Pennsylvania.

At a debate with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance, Devlin was asked: "What would you do if your 15-year-old daughter came to you and said, 'Dad, I'm in love with a woman.' What would you say?"

To a crowd of 150 students and faculty members at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Penn., Devlin responded, "I'd hug my daughter, kiss her, embrace her, and say to her, 'I love you as a father. I always will love you as a father. You're my daughter. That relationship will never be broken. But the relationship you're now involved in is wrong and you must leave it.'"

The debater who represented the Alliance had one minute to rebut. His only response: "I wish Mr. Devlin had been my father."

Point to a loving Father

The good news is that everybody has a loving Father because of Jesus. As we read in the parable of the prodigal son, God the Father waits for us daily to come home. "When our sins bother us, Jesus says, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest . . . for your souls' (Matthew 11:28,29). Jesus says the same to guilt-filled homosexuals.

The ultimate goal is not to turn homosexuals into heterosexuals, but to turn them into repentant sinners who trust in Christ. Only the cleansing life of Jesus, experienced through God's Word and sacraments, can save their souls eternally and change their lives morally.

Accept unconditionally

And when God changes them, accept them unconditionally, as Christ accepts us—sins and all.

The church, however, does not always do a good job accepting ex-homosexuals. Bob Van Domelen, leader of an ex-gay ministry in Wisconsin, wrote about the difficulty ex-gays and ex-lesbians have trying to join a Christian community: "Well intentioned church-goers often turn away from [former homosexuals] in confusion. We need churches willing to reach out, to become informed and loving in that process [of accepting them into God's family] . . . not only to the homosexual but to all who struggle."

Offer hope

"Jesus sinners does receive" we sing in church. We also are to "receive" all kinds of sinners and offer hope, the same hope we have—hope for change. In a world that says "you can't change," God's Word says we can. From bitterness or rebellion or cynicism or sarcasm or sexual immorality or worry, we can all change.

"And that is what some of you were . . ." the apostle Paul wrote. Note the past tense: "were." That is why many converted homosexuals call themselves "ex-homosexual." In fact, all who have faith in Jesus can call themselves "ex-sinner." While we will always be struggling sinners on earth, the Bible also says

all who believe in Jesus are washed, sanctified, and justified in his name (1 Corinthians 6:11).

That's the truth. That's hope. That's life in Christ.

Tell your friends—and foes.

NL

Thomas H. Trapp is the full-time campus pastor for Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Affirm gender

In our culture, people sometimes question if singles are gay or lesbian just because they are single. Some men are mockingly called "gay" because they have a high-pitched voice or are not muscular. Satan uses these evil comments to make people doubt their gender.

We need to affirm each other's gender by what we say and do.

One ex-gay told me, "When some men from my church took me hunting, they made me feel like I was a male and accepted by males." I've counseled young men who were rejected by their fathers. These men were simply looking for male acceptance, not sex. I've known young women who were abused by their fathers and thus saw themselves as dirty and non-female.

Affirm the way God made us, male and female. Make men feel like men and women feel like women. "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them" (Genesis 5:1,2).

It was only a Nintendo game

“Harmless” little things can become big, harmful addictions.

Linda Reed



Since I've been asked to write about addictions, confessing my fondness for rummage sales seems a good place to start. I've been known to go home and unload, or to drive to the nearest TYME machine so I can continue. Sometimes “bargains” result in new and totally unexpected problems.

My night with Nintendo

Such was the case when I found the \$15 Nintendo game. I reasoned that my two young nephews could play with it when they came to visit. They, though, had moved on to Super Nintendo and considered my rummage sale model slow and boring. So, I decided to try it. I could

not shut it off! I stayed up until 2 AM, in the person of Rygar, trying to slay the dragon and find the elusive treasure. I knew it would be difficult to get up and go to work the next day, but I was so close! Surely with just one more try, I could beat my record and move to the next world.

As a therapist, I was trained to recognize the signs of addiction, and they were now staring me in the face. This sounded like the criteria for diagnosis of addiction that says, “. . . activity begins to take precedence over the need for sleep, food, work, and other necessities.” I remembered incidents from my past. Hadn't I turned down a date years ago because I wanted to work on my 1,000-piece puzzle? Social

withdrawal. How about the times I stayed up most of the night to finish a good book? Did I have tendencies toward an addictive personality?

It shouldn't have been a surprise. Ever since Eve's encounter with Satan in the Garden of Eden, one of



his favorite ploys has been to take something that looks harmless—even good—and

use it to destroy us. On the other hand, God promises to work all things for good to those who love him. I'm convinced that God uses my encounters with Satan and my human nature to teach me things I need to understand to help my clients.

I thanked God for the lesson as I reluctantly broke away from the Nintendo game.



From Nintendo to Internet to . . .

I dealt with several cases of Nintendo abuse through the years. One young man annoyed his pastor by humming in confirmation class. We eventually discovered that when he was bored, he played Nintendo in his head and the music inadvertently escaped from his lips. Limiting his Nintendo use to weekends seemed to take care of the problem.

Today's abuses of technology have even more serious effects. The TV show “Extra” highlighted “Pam.” She lost custody of her children to her ex-husband because she spent six hours a night on her computer.



not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will

also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). With God's help, we will flee the temptations that could destroy us, and he will also fill the empty places with his grace and love. He can do it far more effectively than any of the wonders of modern technology.

Meanwhile, if anyone has an instruction book for "Rygar," telling how to slay the dragon . . . don't send it to me!

NL

Linda Reed is a marriage and family counselor at Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, Milwaukee.

A University of Texas study found that **13 percent of the weekly Internet users fit the classification of "Internet-dependent" by reporting three or more symptoms of dependency.** The symptoms are similar to those used to define drug and alcohol addiction and are related to

- 1) excessive Internet use;
- 2) interference with life functioning;
- 3) continued Internet use despite recurrent problems; and
- 4) lack of control, lack of tolerance, or withdrawal symptoms.

These same symptoms can be used to identify problems with gambling, Home Shopping, sex, spending, and even putting together puzzles or reading books.

was skipping school to go to the dog track.

Ever since Eve's encounter with Satan in the Garden of Eden, one of his favorite ploys has been to take something that looks harmless — even good — and use it to destroy us.

How to supply the "missing parts"

Most of these started innocently. The people involved are all Christians. The Internet can be a valuable tool for collecting information. Home Shopping can be a convenient way to pick up a few birthday presents without leaving your home. An afternoon at the casino or the dog track may seem okay if it's handled appropriately.

Unfortunately, these situations are also examples of how Satan uses things that seem harmless to deter us from the work God put us here to do.

A University of Pittsburgh psychologist surmises that Internet junkies are searching for missing parts of their emotional lives: social support, sexual fulfillment, and an opportunity to safely express forbidden aspects of their personalities.



Isn't it a relief that we have a loving God who says, "My grace is sufficient for you,

for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). He also promises, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will

They said this was the second case this year where a mother lost custody of her children due to Internet addiction. Internet abuse and addiction seems to be the "sin of the '90s." A client told me that if her husband had to choose between her and his computer, she feared she'd be left behind. She now feels like a single parent because her husband prefers being online to going to their children's school activities or participating in family functions.

Another couple came in for marital counseling when the husband confessed to his wife that he had met a woman online and the relationship progressed to meeting in a hotel room.

A college student had been frequenting the chat rooms and then meeting men in hotels for sex. She knew the dangers of pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, and violence, but felt powerless to stop.

A mother contemplates leaving her husband and children for a "Bridges of Madison County" fantasy with a man she met online.

Other new addictions are showing up in the counseling office as well. A mother reported an \$800 phone bill run up by her 19-year-old son who was making 900-number sex calls and was unaware of the extent of the charges. He promised to stop, but the next bill was even higher.

A retired man took a withdrawal from his pension fund to pay off his wife's gambling debts. She feels helpless to stay away from bingos and casinos.

A woman worries that her mother no longer goes out of the house but runs up credit card bills on the Home Shopping Network. A high school senior turned 18 and flunked two classes because he

Many Sunday schools

Laurie Biedenbender

On a given Sunday, 5,800 teachers share the gospel with over 40,000 children at about 1,200 WELS Sunday schools. Sixty percent of WELS children receive their Christian education exclusively through the home and Sunday school. Let's take a look inside three of those schools:



Teachers at Our Savior's Sunday school taught the children the liturgical songs last year. "The little ones can't read the hymns, and they don't understand everything in the sermon," says Jensen, "but they've learned the Ordinary, so they still feel part of the service."

East Brunswick, New Jersey: Partnerships in Christian education

With only two WELS churches in New Jersey, some drive an hour every Sunday morning to Our Savior's, East Brunswick. "They're committed," Pastor Michael Jensen says of this 165-soul congregation. And that commitment produces cooperation.

"Our one-room elementary school is committed to the Sunday school. And the parents of the public school children are committed to Christian education too. They work together on the Christmas service. You've got to have that cooperation," says Jensen.

After a joint Sunday school-Bible class devotion, Pastor Jensen sometimes teaches the same lesson in adult class that the children learn in their classrooms next door. "When you're an adult, you see those Bible stories in a whole new light. My idea is that the parents and children talk about the stories during the week."

"At Our Savior's, we emphasize that we serve families and children," says Jensen. "That includes Sunday school."

San Jose, California: An outreach mindset

"We're outreach-minded here," says Pastor Kerry Kronebusch of Apostles, a 1,050-soul congregation, "not through committees or organized programs, but just in a natural, ongoing way. We're always looking for opportunities to spread the gospel."

And here in the wealthy, fast-paced Silicon Valley, fields are ripe. "We have 40 to 50 visitors a Sunday," says Kronebusch. "These people have half-million dollar homes, but they feel they're missing something. We know their real need is for a relationship with their Savior."

Although many new families come through the preschool and elementary school, Sunday school can also be a contact point for them. "Sunday school teachers are often the first to meet a new family," Kronebusch explains. "A child comes with a friend, then his parents drop him off a few Sundays, then they visit a worship service. It starts in that Sunday school room where not only is the teacher telling him about Jesus, but the kid sitting next to him is too."

Twenty teachers on a rotating schedule teach the 100-plus children Sunday mornings. Their building project should ease the current crowded conditions.

"There are many churches out here, but few conservative Lutheran churches," says Kronebusch. "We have the clear message of the gospel to share with children."



Powerful resounding message

Art projects surround Kally Wuenschel and her students, Elizabeth Werth and Kimberly and Kylie Ehlers. "We've been blessed with committed teachers," says Werth. "If a child misses, the teachers send home a postcard. They stay in regular contact with parents."



Fort Worth, Texas: Faith and fellowship

Abiding Faith was established in 1985 in southwest Fort Worth, Tex. In this congregation of 120 souls, Pastor William Werth says Sunday school attendance has grown from three to 27 in the last six years. One class meets in the kitchen and another in the hallway, but the congregation plans to add a sanctuary soon, opening space for more classrooms.

"Because we don't have an elementary school," says Werth, "Sunday school is our congregation's major education program. When I visit parents and send out newsletters, I stress that this is our main way of sharing Christ with kids."

The Sunday school also provides a haven of Christian fellowship and support for the children, who attend public school during the week. "Our kids have neighborhood friends and school friends, but they also have church friends," says Werth. "They like to come not only for the lessons, but to see their church friends too."

NL

Laurie Biedenbender is a member at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

Create a thriving Sunday school:

- **Know your Sunday school mission.**

"Every congregation must start with a vision for its ministry, and the Sunday school should have a well-defined role in that ministry." John Schmoller, Sunday school superintendent, Trinity, Watertown, Wis.

- **Hand-pick, call, and train your teachers.**

"We want our teachers to know this is the public ministry, though limited in scope, and Christ is behind us as we call them. We also rotate the teachers so they can attend Bible class. That way they're not only pouring out, they're filling up too." Pastor Michael Jensen, Our Savior's, East Brunswick, N.J.

- **Supply Sunday schools with good equipment and quality materials.**

"If the elementary school teachers have neat stuff and the Sunday school has nothing, what are we saying?" Pastor Kerry Kronebusch, Apostles, San Jose, Calif.

- **Hold year-round Sunday school.**

"Every Sunday morning is the time for worship and Christian education. We'd like to see the adults in Bible class, their teens at youth Bible class, their children—including Lutheran elementary school students—in Sunday school, and their little ones cared for in a nursery, if they wish." Gerald Kastens, Administrator, Commission on Youth Discipleship

- **Cooperate with parents.**

"God says it's a partnership. Both the parents and the church are to nurture the children. When we're working together, the kids get the message that what the church teaches is the same thing that Mom and Dad believe and live in their lives." Gerald Kastens

- **Think about promotion.**

"Do this intentionally—through pamphlets, newspaper, radio, your answering machine message, and, of course, personal contact." Gerald Kastens

- **Focus on the good news.**

"There are many stories but only one lesson: Jesus Christ died for our sins. The gospel has to be your focus, your centerpiece—because that's where the power is." John Schmoller

Forbidden magic

Witches are not simply characters in fairy tales or ghost stories. Instead, men and women, who look just like you, are actively practicing their magical, dark arts.

John M. Parlow

As the new moon approaches, they will gather. They are bold and beautiful. No warted noses here. They are intelligent and chic. A parking lot with sports cars, no broomsticks. They are popular.

Our society's love affair with the demonic and the occultic can be seen in its renewed interest in witches. The primetime sitcom "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch" and movies like "The Craft" and "Witchboard" exhibit that Hollywood has recognized the popularity of these robed practitioners of the dark arts.

Witchcraft as a religion

Witchcraft, known as the "Old Religion," is an ancient practice dating back to biblical times. Witchcraft can be defined as the performance of magic forbidden by God for non-biblical ends. Others define it as "the original religion of man" by which man magically sought to bring nature under his control.

In fact, the word witchcraft is related to the old English word *wician*, "practice of magical arts." No matter what the definition, it is enough to know that witchcraft is heathenism pure and simple.

The gods generally worshiped in witchcraft include the Mother Goddess and her consort Diana, the so-called "horned god" (whom Christians have usually identified

with the devil), the forces of nature conceived of as personal or impersonal, the devil himself, as well as many others. Consider Roger Hart's description of witchcraft in the Middle Ages:

The people of medieval Europe shared a deep belief in the supernatural. The kingdom of darkness, with its devils and evil spirits, was as real and personal as the kingdom of Heaven: Magic could be as powerful as prayer. The idea of supernatural spirits was universal, and ordinary folk everywhere believed in demons, imps, goblins, hobgoblins, poltergeists, and other spirits, and in legendary creatures such as vampires, werewolves, and unicorns (Roger Hart, *Witchcraft*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971, p. 111).

The Bible also speaks of the folly and the helplessness of witchcraft before the power of God.

Witches practice divination, that is, the attempt to obtain information about secret things that are far removed from us in time or space through occultic methods like astrology, palmistry, channeling (inviting

a spirit to possess your body), tarot cards, mirrors, rock crystals.

Witches attempt to invoke an invisible force for use in influencing, manipulating, or controlling a given situation to accomplish one's own will. Then there is the common practice among witches of "drawing down the moon":

The high priestess of the coven usually stands "sky-clad" (in the nude) with arms outstretched to the sky and calls down the goddess or invites the goddess to possess her. In response, the high priestess will often enter a trance state and become the voice of the goddess. During this time she functions as the goddess incarnate with the "magick" circle. Whatever she says is supposedly directly from the goddess. (David Brown, *The Dark Side of Halloween*, Logos Communications, p. 22.)

Generally, a "coven" or congregation of witches consists of 13 members—a high priest or priestess, plus six men and six women. The word "coven" is said to be related to the word "covenant" and signifies a gathering of people who have assumed an obligation to each other, or a group of people gathered for religious purposes.

Covens hold their secret worship services from midnight to dawn on

the witch's "sabbath." Most agree that the sabbaths are held on the night of the full moon, at the beginning of each season (solstice), and on the nights of Jan. 31, Apr. 30, July 31, and Oct. 31. They engage in nature worship, orgies, and drunkenness. Readings from the *Book of Shadows* or the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* are read, and instruction in magic arts is given. These practices and rituals are often accompanied by alcohol and drug use.

Witchcraft is heathenism pure and simple.

There are a great number of witches and witches' covens active in our day. Searching in the yellow pages of a major city phone book or casually browsing the Internet with your personal computer will tell you that witchcraft is *not* a thing of the past. Also, remember, not all witches are associated with covens. It is, therefore, a problem that we cannot ignore, especially because

Hollywood persists in presenting witches as perfectly normal citizens of the community.

The sinfulness of witchcraft

The practice of witchcraft and sorcery is clearly forbidden in the Bible. The Lord often classified witchcraft with idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder. It is spoken of as one of the sins for which the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed (2 Kings 17:17).

The Apostle Paul speaks of it as one of the acts of the sinful nature that exclude people from the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:20), and in the visions of Revelation, the Apostle John sees witches and sorcerers burning in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8, 22:15).

The Bible also speaks of the folly and the helplessness of witchcraft before the power of God. The magicians of Pharaoh eventually stood helpless before Moses and Aaron (Exodus 8:18,19) and finally were incapacitated by the boils during the time of the sixth plague (Exodus 9:11).

The magicians of Nebuchadnezzar declared that what Nebuchadnezzar asked of them was impossible. Yet, what they considered impossible was done by Daniel (Daniel 2).

In the New Testament, Simon the magician and Elymas the sorcerer were helpless before the apostles (Acts 8:9-24; 13:6-11). Christians, therefore, have nothing to fear from practitioners of this "magical" art.

Christians ought to recognize that witchcraft is no proper area for entertainment or idle curiosity. Does the Christian really want to push the "play" button and be entertained by the glorification of the dark side? Do we really want to spend our time reading the latest scary paperback that results in a restless night with the lights on?

When the people of Ephesus were converted to the Christian faith they burned their books of magic (Acts 19:19), thus signifying a complete break with such practices. In that, they set a good example for all Christians.

NL

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



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We protect one another

Consistent and firm, yet patient and loving, church discipline is one key way we protect family members.

David J. Valleskey

Living together as family, we not only love one another (see July NL), but protect one another. This topic could have been placed under the broad heading of love since family members who love one another naturally seek to protect one another from danger.

But with the attention the Scriptures give to this subject and the present atmosphere of our society, it is appropriate to set it apart for special treatment.

Protecting one another in the church has to do with distinguishing between truth and falsehood and between right and wrong. The spirit of our times has blurred the distinction between these opposites.

It has, in fact, almost obliterated any distinction between them. What is true to me is true, and what is true to you is true—even if what you believe and what I believe are on opposite ends of a spectrum. What is right to me is right and what is right to you is right, again, even if we have diametrically opposed ideas of what constitutes right and wrong. That is the climate in our age of spiritual and moral relativism.

Here's one example of hundreds that could be cited. The religion page of the June 14, 1997,



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported on last summer's proposals by three Reformed bodies (the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, and the United Church of Christ), by the Episcopalian church, and by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). These proposals would bring the majority of Lutherans in the United States, three major Reformed bodies, and the entire Episcopalian church into full communion fellowship. (All but the Episcopal accords were approved. They are being addressed again. —ed.)

Left to run its course, sin will separate people eternally from the family of God and from God himself.

The article stated that these denominations had debated for some time "whether it was proper for Lutherans, who believe they really are receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to commune with Reformed Christians for whom the bread and wine are symbols of Jesus' real presence."

Since they could not agree, they put together a document, ironically titled the Formula of Agreement,

that permits them to disagree about the manner of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper—even while they commune together.

The article quoted Douglas Fromm, Associate for Ecumenical Relations for the Reformed Church in America: "What we came to understand in a recent dialogue was that each side with its own perspective was right. We are holding each other in a tension of completeness"—whatever that means.

Lowell Almen, Secretary of the ELCA, called the different ways of speaking about the Lord's Supper "facets on the one diamond of Christ's presence."

This is a far cry from Luther at the Marburg Colloquy where Luther told Zwingli, "You have a different spirit than we." But such is the spirit, the climate of our times—where everything is true or relatively so.

This spirit of relativism is certainly not the spirit of Scripture. "If your brother sins . . ." says Jesus in Matthew 18. There is such a thing as sin, as deviating from the line of truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Sin is serious. Sin separates people, from their God and from their brothers and sisters in God's family.



Left to run its course, sin will separate people eternally from the family of God and from God himself. That is why we carry out church discipline. We do it to protect one another.

Paul did not hesitate to practice church discipline—always with the purpose of doing everything possible to protect the soul of the brother, so on the last day he would not hear the terrible words, “Depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Paul instructed the congregation at Corinth, which had taken a *laissez-faire* attitude toward a man guilty of incest: “When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan.” But note the purpose: “so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 5:4,5).

He tells Timothy about Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had “shipwrecked their faith,” even denying the resurrection, “I have handed [them] over to Satan.” Why? That they might be “taught not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20).

Consistent and firm, yet patient and loving, church discipline is one key way we protect family members, both individually and collectively. Every pastor has heard these words at his ordination and at each installation: “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Correcting, exposing error and bringing it to light, and rebuking, reproving and warning sternly, and doing this “with great patience and careful instruction”—that’s an important part of a pastor’s calling through which the Lord protects the flock.

Elders and all church members share that responsibility to correct and rebuke. It is often difficult, especially if the one needing rebuke is a prominent member, a generous contributor, or if rebuking this person will upset relatives in the congregation.

Elders and all church members share that responsibility to correct and rebuke.

But what happens, for example, if we turn a blind eye to the growing number of unmarried live-ins in our churches? What happens if we don’t correct or rebuke and, if necessary, excommunicate the person who defies God’s Word by obtaining a non-scriptural divorce? What happens if we fail to discipline those who despise Word and sacraments, or if we simply drop them from the membership roll because of non-attendance?

What care are we bestowing on those souls by acting as though their sin is not a sin? Are we protecting their souls by permitting them to live in unrepentant sin without rebuke?



Consider the message we send to congregation members if we fail to correct and rebuke open sin in the congregation. Are we saying that such behavior is not all that bad? And with that are we inviting, perhaps enticing, others to follow the same path?

Living together as a family means being consumed with concern about one another’s souls. It means risking ridicule for being narrow-minded, risking hostility for declaring God’s truth, risking rejection for standing up for what is right and wrong.

Is it worth it?

Well, how valuable is a soul? If unrepentant sin ultimately condemns a person to hell, is it not worth doing everything to protect a person from that fate so that, as Paul put it, “his spirit [may be] saved on the day of the Lord”?

The answer, I assume, is obvious.

NL

David Valleskey is president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. This series is taken from a paper he presented to the 1997 synod convention.

Practicing church fellowship also is a means of protecting God’s family members. Watch for that subject next month.



Read the manual

What is the manual for Baptism? It is Matthew 28:18-20. Here is where our Lord Jesus Christ instituted Baptism.

Wayne A. Laitinen

Everyone who owns a computer or a VCR knows the phrase, "When all else fails, read the manual." When we first wade through the tangle of cords and maze of buttons, we say, "I can figure out how this thing works." But before long, we've wandered down some strange alley of technology. Next thing we know, we're scanning the index of the owner's manual to find out how it's really supposed to work.

Often people dismiss Baptism because they think they know how it works, or, more precisely, how it doesn't work. "How can a handful of water on the outside of you wash away sin in your heart?" they reason.

They do not look at Baptism as something God does in us, but as something we must do after we've made a commitment to Christ. In this way they make Baptism a New Testament law rather than the gospel it is.

What's even more confusing is that these people may be devout students of the Bible. They may even cite the examples of the Ethiopian eunuch or the jailer at Philippi to help define what Baptism is. However, the context of these passages clearly show that they are not intended to define

Baptism. They show how the Christian faith spread in the

early New Testament Church. They presuppose that the reader understands the foundational truths of Baptism as it is revealed in Jesus' words of institution.

This is an essential point. If the historical accounts often cited to define Baptism are misused in that way, they leave a great deal of room for importing one's own preconceived notions. Such folly will rob us of the very gospel comfort we need so desperately.

Turning to the manual

Here is where we must turn to the manual. What is the manual for Baptism? It is Matthew 28:18-20. Here is where our Lord Jesus Christ instituted Baptism. We call these the words of institution: "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'"

Everything we need to know about Baptism is found in these words.

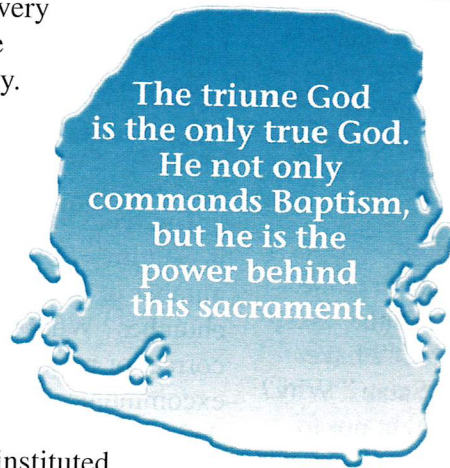
Answering questions

What is Baptism? The word "baptize" simply means to apply water. We think of it as a religious washing, but in Bible times the word was used for everything from washing dishes and household furniture to ceremonial washings and bathing. Depending on the size of these items and the difficulty of

transporting water into ancient homes, these articles could be washed by sprinkling, pouring, or immersing.

Since our Lord Jesus did not restrict the word "baptize" to any particular way of applying water, we must leave that open, too.

What accompanies this applying of water? The manual says, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Although many different faiths have religious washings, this one stands apart from them all. The triune God is the only true God. He not only commands baptism, but he is the power behind this sacrament.



What does Baptism do for us?

In the manual, Jesus clearly answers "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . ." In other words, Baptism is a means through which the Holy Spirit turns unbelievers into disciples of Jesus. In Jesus' day a disciple was a person who chose to follow someone he admired and believed in. The student chose his master. Jesus, on the other hand, chose his disciples by proclaiming to them the forgiveness of sins.

Likewise, in Baptism we do not come to Jesus, but Jesus cleanses our consciences of sin and gives everlasting life together with all of the other benefits that come from being his disciple.

How can water save our souls?

Normally, it can't. In and of itself, the water is no different than the water with which we drink or cook. However, we have the command of the Son of God himself to baptize people in the name of the Trinity. Furthermore, he promised that when we do this, we make disciples of all nations.

Both the command and the promise of almighty God are the operative things in the water. With this Word of God, Baptism gives us the very faith that is necessary to embrace the saving promises of God.

Who is to be baptized?

There are no ambiguities in the manual. God wants "all nations" to be baptized. Jesus did not limit baptism to anyone on the basis of sex, ethnic origin, or age. That newborn infants die is proof enough that they are sinful mortals in need of God's grace. Thank God that his power to make them his disciples is not limited by a person's inability to under-

stand human speech or make a Christian confession.

Who is to do the baptizing? Our Savior spoke these words to his disciples. To this day, Jesus gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven to all who believe in him. Baptism is one of the means of grace with which we open the door of heaven for lost sinners. In our congregations, the members give the authority to baptize to their called pastor. Under normal circumstances, he will perform all the baptisms for the congregation. But any Christian may administer Baptism (*Christian Worship*, p. 14). In the spirit of Christian love and order, those who witnessed the emergency baptism will report to the pastor that it was done in compliance with the words of our Lord.

Is that all there is to it?

Absolutely not! St. Paul calls Baptism the "washing of rebirth" (Titus 3). Through Baptism we are born again. Just as a newborn baby cannot live long without nourishing food, so a newborn faith cannot live long without hearing the wholesome Word of God.

That is why the manual mentions another means of grace: "Make disciples . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." From the time a child begins to understand human communication, simple Bible truths can be spoken and sung into its heart. Children also need to hear the Word in the larger community of believers: the church, the

Sunday school, and, where possible, the Lutheran elementary school.

"Go to the manual." Go to the words of institution. There you will find the full comfort of this vital bridge between a loving God and his fallen creation.

NL

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

For a Bible study on Baptism, go to the "God's Word" section of the WELS Web site at <www.wels.net>.



INTER-ACT

Mark J. Lenz

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

Introduction

- Have you ever wondered why there are gawkers at a traffic accident? Might it be people's morbid fascination with tragedy? What other examples of this fascination can you think of?
- How might people view the crucifixion of Christ in a similar way?

The apostle Paul was totally focused on the cross of Christ in his life and ministry. However, he did not have a morbid fascination with it. Nor was he interested in it merely as a historical event or as a symbol of Christianity.

Text

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

¹When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ²**I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** ³I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. ⁴My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Questions

1. What was the sole subject of Paul's teaching and preaching in Corinth?
2. Paul had not come to the people of Corinth with eloquence or superior wisdom. How instead had he come? (v. 3) What characterized Paul's message to the Corinthians? (v. 4) Why? (v. 5)
3. Paul was not downplaying being scholarly. What evidence is there of Paul's learning and eloquence in his address before the Areopagus in Acts 17:22-31?
4. Why did Paul focus solely on the message of Christ crucified? (1 Corinthians 1:18,21)
5. In what ways is the message of Christ crucified the "power of God" and the "wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:27-30)?

Application

1. How would you answer someone who objects to preaching Christ crucified for sin because it is offensive to modern society?
2. Many people equate Christianity with having faith in God. Why is this insufficient?
3. Agree or disagree: Since there is much more to the Bible than the message of Christ crucified, we should give all topics equal treatment.
4. Is the cross of Christ an object of shame or of glory? Explain your answer.
5. Focusing on the cross does not rob Christianity of its joy. Just the opposite. Explain.
6. List ways in which our corporate worship emphasizes Christ crucified.
7. How can you give evidence in your daily life that you are totally focused on the cross of Christ?

Prayer

Thank you Lord Jesus for suffering and dying for my sins on the cross. Let me never be ashamed of your cross. Let all I think, say, and do reflect that the cross is the focus of my life. Help me willingly bear the cross, always mindful of how you bore the cross for me. When I gather with my fellow believers for worship, keep us focused on your cross. When I am sad, cheer me with the message of the cross. When I am weak, strengthen me by the cross. When I am puffed up with my own knowledge and understanding, humble me with the reminder that the cross is true wisdom. By your cross move me to sacrifice myself in service to the members of my family, my fellow believers, and all with whom I come in contact. Hear me for your mercy's sake. Amen.

Mark Lenz is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

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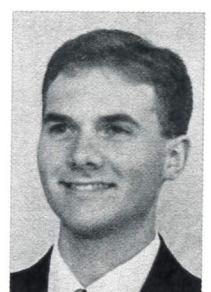
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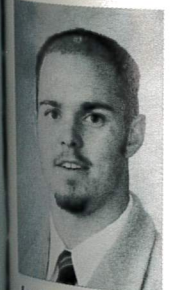
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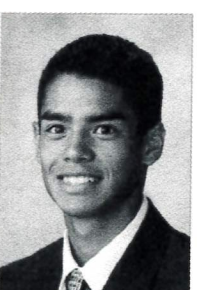
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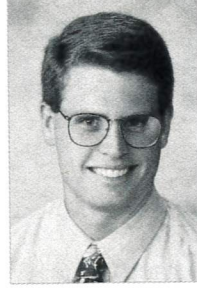
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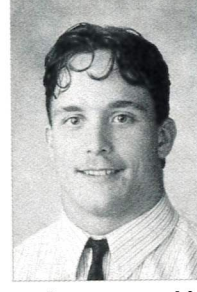
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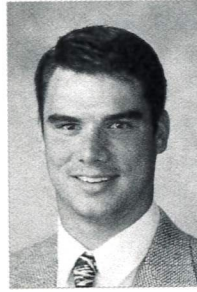
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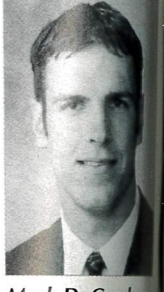
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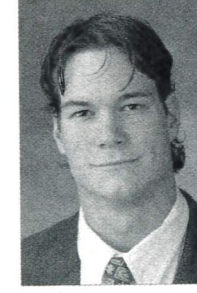
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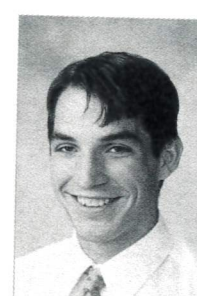
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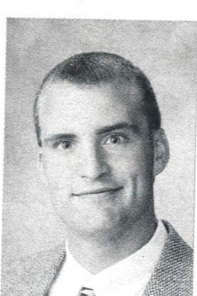
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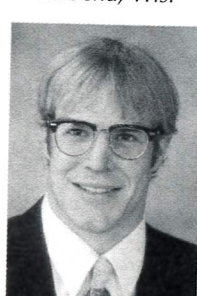
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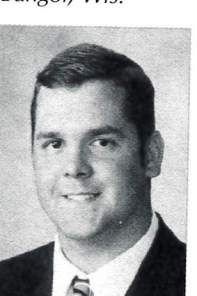
L. Heimann
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Melissa A. Leslie
Saginaw, Mich.



Courtney J. Lien
Burnsville, Minn.



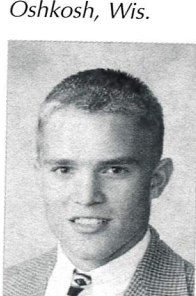
Benjamin C. Lippert
Oshkosh, Wis.



Jenna B. Manske
Muskego, Wis.



Adam R. Mateske
Lake Mills, Wis.



John P. Mattek
Watertown, Wis.



L. Johnson
South St. Paul, Minn.



Lance R. McMorrow
South St. Paul, Minn.



Alan D. Meihak
Kasson, Minn.



Thomas L. Meissner
New Orleans, La.



Barbara H. Miller
Phoenix, Ariz.



Maureen S. Miller
Flint, Mich.



Philip A. Miller
Milwaukee, Wis.



A. Knoff
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



Elizabeth K. Minor
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



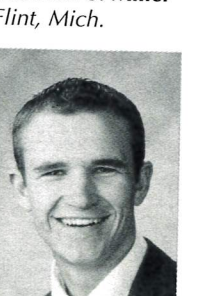
Amy L. Moldenhauer
New Ulm, Minn.



Lucas J. Moldenhauer
Jackson, Wis.



Jared J. Oldenburg
Appleton, Wis.



Benjy E. Pederson
Zumbrota, Minn.



Katherine L. Radsek
Yorkville, Ill.



Christopher L. Raiford
Appleton, Wis.



Deborah L. Richmond
Auburn Hills, Mich.



Diane L. Riedel
Camino, Calif.



Matthew K. Roberts*
New London, Wis.



Matthew C. Rydecki
Stevensville, Mich.



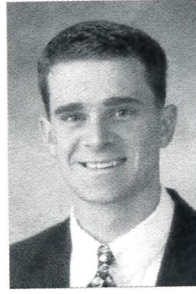
Lori A. Sauer
Lake Mills, Wis.



Kristin K. Schalow
Marshfield, Wis.



Courtney J. Schmidt
Madison, Wis.



Jason L. Schmidt
New Ulm, Minn.



Kathryn T. Seeger
Souix Falls, S.D.



Michael J. Seifert
Midland, Mich.



Angela F. Stephan
Greenville, Wis.



Mary C. Sternhagen
New Orleans, La.



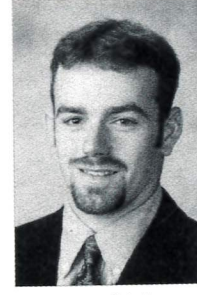
Heather M. Stone
Two Rivers, Wis.



Sherri L. Sukow
Watertown, Wis.



Lisa A. Tauscher
West Salem, Wis.



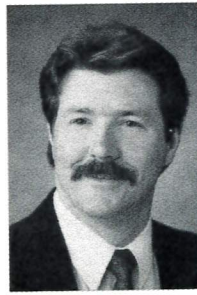
Jason J. Thiel
Oakley, Mich.



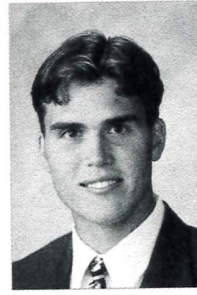
Monica L. Thurow
Watertown, Wis.



Miriam R. Timm
Kewaunee, Wis.



Newton K. Trimmer
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Martin E. Valleskey
Houston, Tex.



Michael J. Vogel
Kennewick, Wash.



Margo J. Wendt
North Tonawanda, N.Y.



Benjamin B. West
Fond du Lac, Wis.



David H. Wietzke
York, Neb.



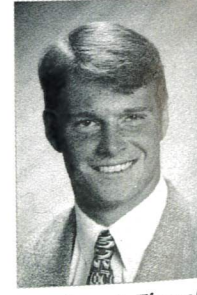
Rhoda S. Wolle
Tempe, Ariz.



Micah K. Zastrow
Hustisford, Wis.



Monica R. Zimmermann
Sanborn, Minn.



Matthew J. Zimpelmann
Eagle River, Wis.

Not pictured: Eric Hagedorn, N. Waukesha; Halldorson, Shawano; Hill, Daniel J., Laramie; Dennis D. Leckwith, Harmon E. Lewis, S. Meitner, David Niederstadt, Christopher Oppermann, Tim Treder, Todd S. W... Ryan D. Wiechmann

*graduated on July...

ASSIGNMENTS

The Conference of Presidents met May 14-15 to issue calls into the teaching ministry to these Martin Luther College graduates. Assignments include graduates from previous years.

A. Sauer
Mills, Wis.



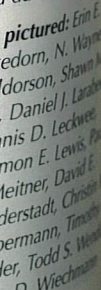
la F. Stephan
nville, Wis.



ica L. Thurow
ertown, Wis.



amin B. Wesel
du Lac, Wis.



derstadt, Christa
er, Todd S. Weismann
n D. Wiechmann

- Adickes, Philip J.**, Faith, Tacoma, Wash.
Bain, Benjamin P., St. John, Red Wing, Minn.
Barron, Heather R., Trinity, Woodbridge, Va.
Berg, Terry A., St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.
Biesterfeld, Monica R., St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Bohme, Shannon R., Good Shepherd, Benton Harbor, Mich.
Chapman, Cara L., St. Matthew, Niles, Ill.
Charron, Andrea L., St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Dobberpuhl, Heath D., Ascension, Escondido, Calif.
Dolan, Sarah E., Christ, Oakley, Mich.
Dus, Jessica J., Emanuel-Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
Eberhardt, Gretchen G., Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.
Eckert, Shannon L., Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.
Engelbrecht, Jon E., Sola Scriptura, Decatur, Ga.
Engelbrecht, Michelle K., Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Ernst, MeLissa M., St. John, Victorville, Calif.
Ewart, Jeanette R., Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.
Pager, Kayla M., Trinity, Bangor, Mich.
Pager, Matthew W., St. Peter-St. Paul, Hopkins, Mich.
Gartner, Danette M., Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Glodowski, Janelle A., St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.
Glowicki, Joshua T., Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.
Gruman, Keri L., Abiding Love, Cape Coral, Fla.
Hagedorn, Erin E., St. John, St. Paul, Minn.
Hahm, James A., Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis.
Hahm, Kristin S., Zion, Clatonia, Neb.
Hahm, Tabitha M., Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Herman, Michelle L., Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Heyn, Nathan C., St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.
Hieber, Emily M., Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Hill, Shawn M., Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Hinds, Lori A., Ascension, Rochester, Minn.
Johnson, Jennifer L., St. John, Baraboo, Wis.
Johnston, Rachel E., Abiding Word, Houston, Texas
Kannas, LaShawn C., Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Kemnitz, Nicole P., St. John, Newark, Del.
Klemp, Michelle K., St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.
Kober, Renee A., Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Koch, Sharon M., Zion, Sanborn, Minn.
Krenek, Quinn E., Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.
Kuckhahn, Susan M., St. John, Dakota, Minn.
Kwasinski, Amy K., Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio
Lange, Kirstie D., Trinity-St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.
Larabee, Daniel J., Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Larsen, Sarah A., St. James, Milwaukee, Wis.

- Larson, Daniel J.**, Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Leckwee, Dennis D., St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.
Lemke, Heidi J., First, Elkhorn, Wis.
Leonard, David D., St. John, Princeton, Wis.
Leslie, Melissa A., Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Lewis, Michelle L., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Lien, Courtney J., St. Paul, Moline, Ill.
Lillo, Johanna M., Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.
Lippert, Benjamin C., Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev.
Manske, Jenna B., St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Meihak, Alan D., St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb.
Miller, Barbara H., Zion, Torrance, Calif.
Miller, Maureen S., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Miller, Philip A., St. John, Fox Lake, Wis.
Moldenhauer, Amy L., Redemption, Milwaukee, Wis.
Proeber, Krista L., California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
Radsek, Katherine L., Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Raiser, Danielle S., Our Savior, Pomona, Calif.
Richmond, Deborah L., Our Savior, Bylas, Ariz.
Riedel, Diane L., St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.
Rohrback, Lyubov V., Salem, Milwaukee, Wis.
Rydecki, Matthew C., California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
Sauer, Lori A., St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Schalow, Kristin K., St. John, Sparta, Wis.
Schmidt, Courtney J., Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Seeger, Kathryn T., St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb.
Shloff, Naomi R., First, La Crosse, Wis.
Sternhagen, Mary C., St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Stone, Heather M., Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.
Strehlow, Jeffrey D., St. Paul, Mt. Calvary, Wis.
Sukow, Sherri L., St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
Tauscher, Lisa A., St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Timm, Miriam R., Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Treder, Timothy S., Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Wiechmann, Ryan D., Northland LHS, Wausau, Wis.
Wolle, Rhoda S., Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Zank, David J., Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.
Zastrow, Micah K., Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Zimmermann, Monica R., Zion, Valentine, Neb.

Staff ministers

- Bitter, Brent R.**, exploratory mission, Jacksonville, Fla.
Hanke, Daniel A., St. John, Sparta, Wis.
Niederstadt, David E., Cross, Rockford, Minn.
Wendorf, Todd S., St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.



TV spots win Telly Awards

Five of the six television spots produced for the Life: You Make the Difference media campaign by the WELS Lutherans for Life media division received 1998 Telly Awards.

"Life Isn't an Old Rerun," "Life Isn't a Movie," "Life Isn't an Amusement Park," and "Life Isn't a Board Game" received silvers, and "Life Isn't a Talk Show" received a bronze.

Over 10,000 entries were judged in the competition. The Life: You Make the Difference spots were judged to be some of the best in the category of Public Service/Issue Oriented Advertising.

The Telly Awards, founded in 1980, showcase and give recognition to outstanding non-network and cable television commercials, film and video productions, and non-network television programming.

The pilot campaign of Life: You Make the Difference ran in April in the Green Bay, Wis., media market. This fall, it will run in several markets across the country.

For a copy of the television and radio commercials or for more information, contact Ann Zuleger, Life Resource Center, 2949 N Mayfair Rd Ste 115, Milwaukee WI 53222-4304; 414/774-1331.

NL wins award

Northwestern Lutheran won an award at the Associated Church Press convention in April. An honorable mention for a news story was given for "We sang hymns. . . bullets were flying." Written by NL's senior communications assistant, Linda Baacke, the article was in the May '97 issue.

Students serving missions

Every Lutheran school collects offerings during the school year. But usually the teachers choose the mission project and promote the mission.

It's not that way at California Lutheran High School (CLHS), Wildomar, where a group of students take responsibility for the whole project.

Students have formed the CLHS Christian Missions Group. In this service program, students choose a mission field to support, then they educate the student body about that field. After teaching their peers more about the mission, the group encourages the student body to pray and to give offerings for the project.

They promote the missions by giving short presentations and distributing flyers on campus. Sometimes they bring in people from the field.

When the mission group sponsored the Medical Mission of Mercy in Bulgaria, one of the nurses visited campus. "We have been able to interact with mission efforts around the world, which makes the work real for the students," says David Bartelt, coordinator.

This may not seem like a big project for a school of slightly over 90

students. But it is—because the lesson they are learning is bigger than supporting current missions. "Our students will be able to take a serious commitment to support mission work back to their own congregations," says Bartelt.

And when they step up and become leaders in their home congregations, that commitment promises a good future for WELS missions.



Students at California Lutheran High School take initiative in deciding where to spend their mission offerings. Once a mission is chosen, the students make presentations to the student body to teach their friends more about the mission field.

**DON'T
KEEP THIS
MAGAZINE!**

One reader, a baker for a university, wrote to tell us:

"After I read my *Northwestern Lutheran*, I leave it in a study hall where employees take breaks, in the hope that someone is reading it."

How have you shared your NL? Let us know and we'll send you another—free. *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3232; <nl@sab.wels.net>

WELS members network at WELS CARES Forum

We're busy people. We go to work, spend time with our families, volunteer at church, serve on committees. We happily go about our business. Sure, we'd love to have help, but who has enough time to slow down and determine what needs to be done?

At the WELS CARES Forum, held Apr. 17-19, in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., members of parasyndical organizations took the time to slow down to see how they can help each other.

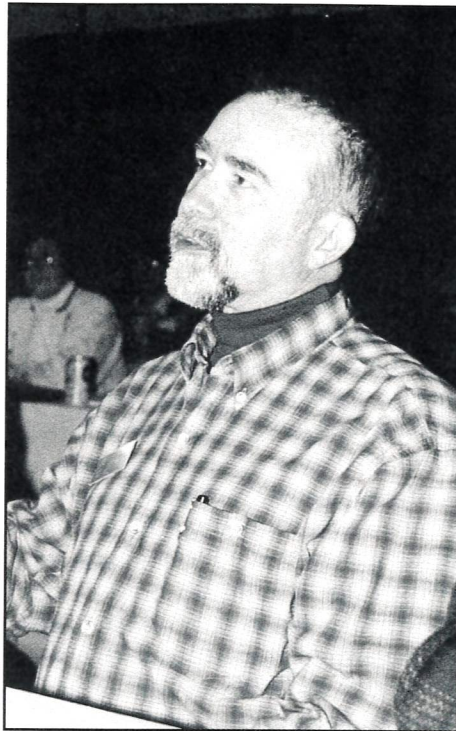
Participants from 27 organizations including WELS Kingdom Workers, OWLS, Jesus Cares, The Lutheran Home, and Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries met to build bridges between their ministries. They learned more about each other's ministries and discovered new ways to work together efficiently.

Attendees also learned more about their own ministries. Workshops covered topics such as recruiting volunteers, fundraising, and technology.

The forum also offered a spiritual rest, a chance for participants to recognize their interdependence. Two hour-long Bible studies focused on how the family of God works and lives together.

Participants left the forum already making plans. Maybe it's a big project such as the members of Lutheran Pioneers volunteering at WELS nursing homes. Or maybe it is something simple. "I can print labels for other groups because I already have a database. This way others don't have to create their own," said Naomi Schmidt, a member of the Twin Cities chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life.

It's ideas like this that demonstrate the success of the forum. It begins with people in congregations and organizations who take the time to slow down. They reach out to each other, offer to help, and show people that WELS really cares.



Paul Boecher, representing Lutheran Pioneers, attended the WELS CARES Forum. The forum gave WELS agencies an opportunity to see how they can work together.

Northwestern Lutheran wants your input

To fill our pages each month, our NL staff tries to anticipate issues we think are important to you today. And when we visit with you, our readers, we ask what topics you want to see addressed. From these ideas, we keep a file for future articles and series.

We want your two cents. Are we addressing things that are important to you? What topics should we cover that would benefit all of our readers? Let us know.

Because we plan some series up to one year in advance, we may not get to all your ideas, but they are important. So keep those story ideas coming. This is your magazine. We want your input.

Send your suggestions to Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <nl@sab.wels.net>. Please include your name and daytime phone number.

Let your light shine

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who put their faith into practice. Maybe they'll give you another idea of how to let your light shine.

Jim Aderman, pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, writes:

With the help of Jim Klein, a WELS gift planning counselor, my dad and mom included a Christian prologue to their wills. While filling out thank-you notes after my father's funeral, we reproduced the prologue and inserted it into the cards. We felt it was a way for Dad to testify to his faith in Jesus and to continue to share his Savior.

This prologue was included in the thank-you cards:

The prologue to the last will and testament of Edwin D. Aderman

I want all who read this to know that Jesus Christ is my Savior. I have no doubt about my being saved by him or my being in heaven. I ask my children, whom I love, never to forget the instructions Christ has given us, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation." Share God's Word with everyone at home and abroad. May God grant you peace, love, and strength as he guides you through this life. Then at the end of time, we will be reunited in heaven as a happy family.

If you have an example that you'd like to share, send it to us at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <nl@sab.wels.net>.



This is your work

Four times a year, you are represented at a Synodical Council meeting in Milwaukee. At those meetings, pastors, teachers, and laymen from all 12 WELS districts determine how WELS is carrying out its mission. They also look forward to determine what future plans will help us fulfill our mission.

At its April meeting, the Synodical Council (SC) discussed goals for WELS over the next five years. They started by reviewing and slightly revising the WELS mission statement. This one sentence, based on Christ's Great Commission, explains the focus of your church body.

WELS mission statement

As men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the Word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel in Word and sacrament to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.

After studying this statement, the SC addressed six objectives that outline how WELS can carry out its mission.

Objectives

1. Uphold and testify to the truth of God as fully revealed in the inspired, inerrant, infallible Holy Scriptures and articulated in the Lutheran Confessions, and to use Scripture as the sole authority;
2. Foster a sense of urgency for the lost and to seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls;
3. Establish churches where Christians help each other grow and mature in the faith through public worship and a life-long study of the Word of God;
4. Encourage and equip each other for the application of our faith in lives of Christian service for the Lord, his church, and his world;
5. Mobilize our people, as members of the universal priesthood, in ministry using the Word;
6. Recruit and train candidates qualified for public ministry and provide for their continuing education so that the Word of God is proclaimed faithfully and effectively in accord with the Lutheran Confessions.

It would be easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of work God gives us. By grouping our opportunities into four

simple categories, these emphases guide all the work we are given to do.

Key emphases

Getting more people into God's Word more often through worship and Bible study.

Recruiting, training, and supporting those called to proclaim God's Word publicly.

Reaching the lost in our nation with God's Word.

Reaching the lost in other nations with God's Word.

Keeping the mission and the emphases in mind, the SC will now evaluate the plans and programs of WELS administrators and leaders. But these emphases are not for church leaders only. They are for you and every one of the 413,000 WELS members.

How can you play a role? Take the mission statement, objectives, and emphases and make them your own. Discuss them at your next Bible study or church meeting. Share them with other Christians. Review them in your home. See how you—personally—can fulfill the mission God has called you to do.

Directors join synod administration building staff

The synod has filled two positions at the Synod Administration Building. Mark Meissner was hired as director of finance, and Keith Schwichtenberg as director of benefits.

Meissner works with accounting, auditing, budgets, decision packages, financial analysis, financial statements, payroll, and taxes. He will also look at improving the financial and operating systems.

"Providing sound business advice and support services to the mission and ministry side of the house is what we do," said Meissner.

Meissner received his undergraduate degree from UW-Milwaukee,

earned a Naval Officer commission at Marquette University, and received his graduate education at George Washington University, Washington D.C. He worked for Mellon Mortgage and the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh, Penn.; and Carruth Mortgage Corp., Siemens Energy and Automation, and FedEx, in New Orleans, La. He also served on the Board for Home Missions.

Meissner and his wife, Mary, a manager at FedEx, have three children: Thomas, 21; David, 19; and Erica, 14. They are members at Crown of Life, New Orleans, La.

Schwichtenberg works directly with

employee health benefits for WELS employees. He also helps with pension-related issues.

Before becoming director, Schwichtenberg worked at the benefit plans office as manager of benefits. He also worked at the Michigan Municipal League, Ann Arbor, Mich., and the Rhode Island Risk Management Trust, Providence, R.I. He spent four years in law enforcement in the Air Force. He received his undergraduate degree from Central Michigan University.

He and his wife, Sue, a homemaker, have 2 children: Andrew, 9 and Miles, 5. They are members at Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.



Through e-mail, world missionaries are able to keep in touch faster with family and friends and offer quick updates to their work. Because we're hearing from our missionaries more often, we've decided to run this new feature. In this section, you'll hear updates from missionaries that came via the Internet. We hope you enjoy these tidbits from our missions.

From John Hering, missionary in Japan:

Mr. and Mrs. Wang came to Japan last year from China. She had been exposed to Christianity in China. We had barely started the English Bible adult instruction class when Mrs. Wang began to tell what a terrible time she is having trying to raise her only child. "Because my child has been babied by my mother in China for two years he can't do anything. He is five years old and can't feed himself, can't dress himself, and can't go to the bathroom by himself! I think he has a disability! Can you help me?"

I assured her that her son is living in a foreign country; he has a new home and hardly any friends. The

Japanese in the class also assured her that he will be okay as he gradually learns Japanese. Then his "disability" will also gradually melt away.

I could feel for her in a very personal way: in a foreign land, foreign language, and hardly any friends. But, then our talk turned to God's love. He loves us even when we think no one else does. God gives us promise after promise and asks that we lean on him. Finally one of the Japanese women who has been studying with us for over two years asked, "Are you a Christian?" Mrs. Wang answered, "I believe that Jesus is my Savior, but I haven't been baptized yet." Then the Japanese mother responded, "Oh, you're the same as me then." I was bubbling with anticipation for them to be moved to take that next step! But, it wasn't time yet.

I think there are many Japanese like these women who believe that Jesus is their Savior but face the terrible consequences of mental persecution by their families and their employers if they publicly announce that they are Christian. Please pray that the promises of God would convince them to boldly confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

We thank you—WELS—for giving us the blessing of being in Japan. It is a great privilege to be here for people like Mrs. Wang. There are so many here that need to hear the hope that Jesus offers.

In the news

The late **Leonard Umnus**, athletic director for 39 years at Northwestern College and Northwestern Preparatory School, was inducted into the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in March. The *Watertown Daily Times* says the following about Umnus: "By using the athletic field as his classroom, Umnus prepared his players for the rigors of serving in the ministry. By posting a 135-64-9 record with 11 conference titles as the coach of the college football team, he earned a spot in [the Hall of Fame] . . ." Umnus died on Apr. 13, 1996 at the age of 92.

Rachel Stahl, a WELS member living in Norfolk, England, received the Joan Orr Spouse of the Year award at the Air Force Association's national convention. This award represents American Air Force bases around the world. Stahl received this award for her 800 hours of volunteer work for the base and community at Lakenheath, England. The Stahls attend services at a chapel near their base where Philip Kieselhorst, the WELS civilian chaplain, visits on the first Sunday of each month. They also receive weekly taped services from Trinity, Jenera, Ohio, Rachel's home church.

Music with a purpose

When two WELS musicians decided to produce a recording of Christian music, they decided it would be more than just another CD.

Keyboardist Valerie Floeter, member at Christ, Pewaukee, Wis., and trumpeter, Patricia Backhaus, member at Grace, Waukesha, Wis., wanted to offer Christian music for use at home for inspirational listening, but also as a resource for liturgical musicians. "Our mission is, first, to record

music that will fill a need in mission congregations," says Backhaus.

To help mission congregations, they recorded hymntune-based preservice, offertory, and postlude music organized by the church year. Each piece selected matches hymntunes in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Congregations may use the CD in worship, as long as it is not played for profit.

"Second, we want to provide

church musicians with new ideas on how to use trumpet and keyboard in worship," says Backhaus.

Last, they wanted to choose distinctive music of the Lutheran faith. "There are lots of CDs that claim to be Christian," says Backhaus, "but we wanted our faith to show through the music we chose to record."

For more information, call *In His Service* at 1-800-795-0093.



DISTRICT NEWS

Dakota-Montana

Redeemer, Mandan, N.D., broke ground for the first phase of its new church on Apr. 26. This phase is an educational unit that will also serve as the worship center, until a chancel area is constructed. . . . **James Livingston**, an eighth grader at St. Martin's, Watertown, S.D., won the South Dakota state geography bee and attended the national competition in Washington D.C. in May.

Minnesota



Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., celebrated the 40th anniversaries in the ministry of Dr. Edward Meyer (center) and Dr. John Isch (right) and the 25th anniversary of Earl Heidtke.

Northern Wisconsin

The **Ladies Aid of St. Paul, Howard's Grove, Wis.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary in May. . . . On June 7, **Grace, Neenah, Wis.**, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Joel Lillo

Western Wisconsin

On Apr. 26, Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis., celebrated the 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry of **Dan Kunz**.

North Atlantic

Gethsemane, Raleigh, N.C., celebrated its 25th anniversary on May 17. . . . **St. John's, Newark, Del.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary with pulpit exchanges in its circuit. Each pastor addressed different aspects of ministry and various ways in which the Lord has blessed the congregation through the years. The final celebration was on July 19. . . . **Carla Melendy**, teacher at Atonement, Baltimore, Md., celebrated 25 years in the teaching ministry on May 17. . . . Members at **Abiding Word, Orleans, Ontario, Canada**, surprised their pastor, **Kevin Schultz**, with a Pastor Appreciation Sunday on May 24 in honor of his 10th anniversary in the ministry. A layman led the service while Pastor Schultz and his family worshipped in the pew.

Kevin Schultz

South Atlantic

The **first annual Memorial Day Retreat** was conducted at Camp Keystone, near Tampa, Fla., from May 23-25. Fifty-three people from seven congregations attended the retreat, which featured a discussion of the book of Revelation. The retreat also included swimming, campfires, entertainment, and an outdoor worship service on Sunday evening. . . . **Emmanuel, Zephyrhills, Fla.**, has adopted the youth group of Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. The members helped the youth pay for their trip to the regional youth rally in Chicago in July. The teens, in turn, will go to Florida to help with evangelism and help the elderly members with housekeeping tasks. . . . **Jerry Kassebaum, pastor at Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.**, accompanied Charles Papenfuss on a two-week trip to Nigeria in late January. Papenfuss takes a pastor with mission experi-

ence along on his twice-a-year visits. Kassebaum served the Missouri Synod in Nigeria from 1983-84. They visited all Nigerian pastors, went to 19 of our 21 sister congregations, and taught courses on the first chapters of Galatians to the pastors and laymen. . . . About 15 men and 8 of their wives from **Builders for Christ** helped members at **Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.**, construct their new sanctuary. "Any church that doesn't use their services is making a big mistake!" says Todd DeNoyer, pastor at Good Shepherd. "They all are in worship and Bible class—a great inspiration for the members. Attendance has been close to 200 per Sunday this month. I hate to see the project come to an end!"

Paul E. Zell

Pacific Northwest

On April 5, Messiah, Lacey, Wash., dedicated its new worship facility.

David Birsching



It was the last day of one of my pre-kindergarten classes. As they were receiving hugs and diplomas, I was telling the children I would miss them.

One energetic, curly-headed boy replied, "I'll miss you, too. But next year you'll have new children, and they'll make you happy just like we did!"

*Trudy Madetzke
Marshall, Minnesota*

Synod statistics

Year	Back door losses
1992	8,569
1993	8,992
1994	8,815
1995	8,466
1996	7,947
1997	8,322

Year	Adult confirmations and professions of faith
1992	7,029
1993	6,684
1994	6,511
1995	6,735
1996	6,582
1997	6,718

Over the next few months, we will be running statistics gathered from WELS statistical reports. Next month, turn to "The Editor's Pen" for comments about these and other WELS statistics.

SYMBOLS *for your life*

Symbol: Hand of God (Manus Dei)

Background and meaning: This symbol represents the creative, preservative, and protective powers of God the Father. Everything comes from God.

Bible gems: "Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

"You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16).

"Though he stumbles, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand" (Psalm 37:24).

"It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them" (Psalm 44:3).

"Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him" (Psalm 98:1).

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

A symbol for your life: What service that God does for us is spoken of in the first two passages? What service that God does for us is spoken in the other passages? Is God right-handed? Why is "right" often mentioned? How can this symbol be of comfort to us in times of distress and trouble?

Obituaries

**Carl Wacker
1912-1998**

Carl Wacker was born Mar. 26, 1912, in Pigeon, Mich. He died Mar. 1, 1998, in Watertown, Wis. A 1933 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Wacker served at Mt. Calvary, La Crosse; First German, Manitowoc; and Friedens, Kenosha, all in Wis. He also published choral music for congregations.

He is survived by his wife, Victoria; one son; one sister; and two brothers.

**Paul W. Knickelbein
1920-1998**

Paul William Frederick Knickelbein was born Jan. 7, 1920, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died May 19, 1998, in Milwaukee.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Knickelbein served at Mancos, Colo.; Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, and in Tulsa, Okla.; Lutheran High School, St. Philip, and St. Marcus, all in Milwaukee, Wis.; Salem, Nasewaupee, St. John-St. Peter, Cleveland, and St. Paul, Tipler, all in Wis.; Bethany, Bruce Crossing,

Immanuel, Sault Ste. Marie, and St. Mark, Stambaugh, all in Mich.

He also served on the Nebraska District praesidium.

He is survived by wife, Emily; four sons; three daughters; two sisters; 22 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

correction: Erwin Schewe was not born on May 29, 1915, as reported in the June issue (p. 24). He was born on Oct. 7, 1911. A 1937 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he also served a mission in McConnell, Ill.; a mission in Monroe; St. Peter, Brodhead; Friedens, Bonduel; and Zion, Allenton, all in Wis.

Volunteering brings families together



In an era of long work hours, karate and gymnastics lessons, soccer and softball games, one might assume that “family togetherness time” had gone through the shredder of modern life. Not so. Families are finding time to be together through volunteer involvement.

More than half of U.S. adults (51.4 percent) do volunteer work with family members “several times a year” or more frequently. Nearly one-fifth (19.5 percent) volunteer as a family “weekly or more often.” In contrast, 10.5 percent do family volunteering “once a year or less often.” All totaled, a majority of Americans (61.9 percent) report volunteering with family members at least occasionally.

According to the survey, the people who volunteer with family members most often are those with children age 17 or younger in their household. Regionally, more families volunteer in the West (71.4 percent of Westerners surveyed) compared with the North Central region (66.1 percent), the Northeast (57.9 percent), and the South (55.6 percent).

The Aid Association for Lutherans survey was conducted by Yankelovich Partners and polled a nationally representative sample of 887 adults.

Teen birth rates decrease

In the United States, teen birth rates decreased across all races and in every state in the early 1990s, the government reported in April. Teen birth rates decreased 8.5 percent between 1991 and 1995 nationwide. The national rate fell more dramatically among young teens—those between ages 15 and 17—than for 18- and 19-year-olds.

Hispanic teens are giving birth at the highest rates, with more than one in 10 giving birth each year, according to an analysis by the National Center for Health Statistics.

African American teenagers gave birth at the lowest levels ever recorded. Their birth rates dropped by 21 percent between 1991 and 1996.

Birth rates have declined steadily nationwide since 1991, but have varied across the country. Nationwide, in 1996, there was about one birth for every 20 women between the ages of 15 and 19. But the rates ranged from 28.6 per 1,000 teens in Vermont to 105.5 per 1,000 in the District of Columbia.

Australia's alarming abortion rate

Australian statistics show that about half of all teenage pregnancies end in abortion, and the younger a teen is, the more likely she is to have an abortion. National birth rates show that every three days a teenager under 15 becomes a mother. In 1996 nearly 12,500 teenagers gave birth—1,549 of them were 16 and under. In addition, nearly half the 183 teenage mothers interviewed in one study said they had been sexually abused before they became pregnant, a majority said their pregnancies were unplanned, and many did not tell the father about the pregnancy. [*The Sydney Morning Herald, May 15*]

Abortion opponents found guilty

A federal jury found three national leaders of anti-abortion groups guilty of committing acts of extortion against abortion clinics.

The lawsuit, brought about by the National Organization for Women and abortion clinics in Wisconsin and Delaware, claimed that the defendants damaged the clinics' ability to do business during a 15-year period, the Associated Press reported.

The plaintiff claimed that the defendants and their groups tried to intimidate and shut down the clinics through a campaign of fear and violence.

The defendants—Operation Rescue and the Pro-Life Action League as well as three of the league's top leaders—must pay \$85,000 in damages.

Most teens believe in God

A poll of teenagers shows that the majority of them get along with their parents, believe in God, and trust the government.

Ninety-four percent of the teens polled in the New York Times/CBS News Poll said they believe in God.

Differing from stereotypes, 51 percent said they got along “very well” with their parents, and 46 percent said they related “fairly well.”

The teens also proved to have more faith in the government than their parents have.

Fifty percent of those surveyed said the government can be trusted to do the right thing always or most of the time. In a January survey by the same organizations, just 26 percent of adults agreed with that sentiment.

The poll of 1,048 teens had a margin of error of ±3 percent.

Poll: doctor-assisted suicide is rare

Only six percent of "front-line" physicians have hastened patients' deaths with lethal injections or prescriptions.

Reported by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, this news is described as the first national poll of doctor involvement in assisted suicide. The survey was conducted by Dr. Diane Meier of Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

In 1996—the year before Oregon became the first state in the nation to legalize physician-assisted suicide—Meier sent questionnaires to 3,102 doctors, and 1,902 responded.

When told to check all situations that applied, 18 percent of respondents said they had received requests from patients for help in speeding death, five percent had given at least one lethal injection, and three percent had written a prescription.

"This is really not happening very often. That's the most important finding," said Meier, adding that doctor-assisted suicide is "a rare event."

Are people you love celebrating an anniversary?

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Prime-time TV shows more violence

A three-year study of prime-time TV shows finds they are growing more violent.

Researchers say about two-thirds of prime-time network and basic cable channel programs aired in June 1997 contained violent scenes, compared to about half of similar programs in October 1994.

Violence is defined as any "overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force or the actual

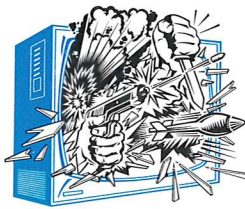
use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings." The definition did not include psychological or verbal abuse.

The study, based on a sample of about 10,000 hours of programs on 23 cable and broadcast channels, found that pay cable networks aired the most violence—averaging 92 percent since 1994.

The report, commissioned by the National Cable Television Association, also concluded that most TV violence is sanitized and glamorized. Almost 40 percent of the violent incidents are prompted by "good" characters who could be perceived as attractive role models.

Long-term negative consequences of violence are only shown in 15 percent of the programs, the report stated.

"These patterns teach children that violence is desirable, necessary, and painless," said Dale Kunkel, another of the study's researchers and an associate communications professor at UC Santa Barbara. "We need to see more anti-violence messages in TV shows."



Two-thirds of U.S. adults claim to be church members

Two out of every three adults in the United States (67 percent) say they are church members, based on two surveys in 1997. In 1996, the figure was 65 percent, matching low points recorded in both 1990 and 1988.

When Gallup first asked people about membership in 1937, 73 percent said they were members. High points of 76 percent were recorded in 1943 and 1947.

Every year for the past 60 years, women have been more likely than men to belong to a church. And while some believe that young people are staying away from church, as many as six in 10 of the under-30 group report they are members. Membership increases as people grow older, with 75 percent of those 65 and older saying they are members.

This annual Gallup poll reports those who identify themselves as church members. Respondents may or may not be on the official rolls of a given church.

Year	Percent of U.S. church members
1997	67
1996	65 (low)
1995	69
1992	70
1991	68
1990	65 (low)
1988	65 (low)
1985	71
1980	69
1975	71
1970	71
1965	73
1947	76 (high)
1943	76 (high)
1937	73

(Selected annual averages)

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Danell, James C. Jr., from Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.

Ewings, Jerry, to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.

Fellers, Tadd D., from Ascension, Jacksonville, N.C., to Grace, Charlotte, N.C.

Goehring, William C., from Shepherd of Peace, Norfolk, Neb., to Nebraska LHS, Waco

Heitsch, Jeffrey T., from St. Paul, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, to Good Shepherd, Cheyenne, Wyo.

Hoyer, Philip J., from St. Paul, Litchfield, Minn., to exploratory, Jacksonville, Fla.

Lidtke, Paul J., from Our Savior, Freeport, Ill., to Lord and Savior, Waunakee, Wis.

Mischke, Steven M., from Hope, Louisville, Ken., to Peace, Granger, Ind.

Quandt, Roger S., from Grace, Dakota, Minn., to National, Calumet, Mich.

Ragner, Bradley E., from St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis., to Messiah, Shiocton, Wis.

Satorius, Timothy J., from Puerto Rico to St. John, Antigua

Schliewe, Dale W., from Mt. Olive, Graceville/Bethany, Clinton, Minn., to St. John, Vesta, Minn.

Spencer, Steven D., from Beautiful Savior, El Paso, Tex., to Bethlehem, Benson/Trinity, Sierra Vista, Ariz.

Waldek, Paul G., from Malawi to Our Savior (exp), Roanoke, Va.

Teachers

Affeldt, Lynn R., from Mount Lebanon, Milwaukee, to St. John, Newburg, Wis.

Amundson, Nathan K., to Luther HS, Onalaska, Wis.

Berg, Rebecca L., to MLS, Saginaw, Mich.

Birsching, William, from MLC, New Ulm, Minn., to retirement

Bitter, Nathan M., from Gloria Dei, Belmont, Calif., to St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn.

Cherney, Kenneth A., from WLC, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement

Chesak, Beth, to King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.

Cross, Julia C., from St. John, Newark, Delaware, to Trinity Christian Academy, Woodbridge, Va.

Dieraur, Julie, to St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul.

Ferch, Nannette, to Divine Savior, Indianapolis
Foley, Theresa M., from Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis., to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.

Gensmer, Amy N., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.

Getka, Naomi S., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee

Gostchock, Scott A., from Sola Scriptura, Decatur, Ga., to Pilgrim, Minneapolis

Gurgel, Douglas J., from Trinity, Hoskins, Neb., to Bulgaria

Haag, Lisa M., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Hafermann, Bethel M., from Timothy, St. Louis Park, Minn., to St. Matthew, Milwaukee

Hall, John, to Winnebago LA, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Hein, Rebecca J., from St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee

Henrickson, Patti, to Calvary, Dallas

Holm, Miriam B., from First, Elkhorn, Wis., to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.

Kohlstedt, Jennifer, from Peridot, Peridot, Ariz., to Waucousta, Campbellsport, Wis.

Kruck, William H., to Michigan LHS, St. Joseph

LaGrow, Martin P., to Our Savior, Longmont, Colo.

Noon, Linda J., from St. John, Maribel, Wis., to Hope, Penryn, Calif.

Oberstadt, Lori A., to St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul.

Plath, LeDell D., from associate administrator for parish schools, Milwaukee, to Board for Parish Services, Milwaukee

Punzel, Janelle M., from Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn., to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Ring, Nancy E., from Our Savior, Wausau, Wis., to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210;
FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>
Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

Russell, Elsa M., from St. John, Montello, Wis., to retirement

Schlomer, Matthew, to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.

Schultz, Dennis R., from Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis., to retirement

Schultz, Loran R., from Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis., to retirement

Schulz, Michael R., from Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich., to Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis.

Steiner, Mark A., from East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee

Tessmer, Susan M., from St. John, Baraboo, Wis., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.

Urban, Wendy L., from Green Valley Preschool, Henderson, Nev., to Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev.

Waage, June K., from Trinity, Marshfield, Wis., to East Twin, Mishicot, Wis.

Watchke, Alice M., from Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn., to retirement

Weide, Craig R., from Zion, Valentine, Neb., to Christ, Big Bend, Wis.

Wessel, Mary E., to Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio

Wilson, Ann M., to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.

Wulff, Frederick H., from MLC, New Ulm, Minn., to retirement

Zamenski, Christopher., from Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn., to Christ, Zumbrota, Minn.

COMING EVENTS

Workshop—Training on bloodborne pathogens and managing your ministry. 8 AM to noon, Aug. 4 at Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. \$50 per school. David Niemi, 608/784-1050 (school).

Campout—Aug. 7-9 at Pineridge Campground, Waldo, Wis. Free camping, games, crafts, and activities. <ppt.cmp.fritz@juno.com>; 4659 N 38 St, Milwaukee WI 53209; 414/442-1137.

WELS Labor Day Retreat—Sept. 5-7 in the Berkshire Mountains, MA. Educational seminars and recreational activities. Phil Becker, 603/472-5551.

Women's Retreat—LWMS Rocky Mountain Circuit. Sept. 18-20 in Evergreen, Colo. Cost: \$70. M. Longshore, 719/522-0439.

Charitable contribution tax strategy seminars—Sept. 24 in Milwaukee and Sept. 25 in Minneapolis. For attorneys-at-law, CPAs, CFPs, financial planners, and insurance representatives. Jim Huska, 1-800-827-5482 or your district gift planning counselor.

Mission rally—of the Lutheran Ladies League. Sept. 30. St. John-St. Peter, Cleveland, Wis. Registration, 8:30 AM. Pre-register, 920/726-4687.

ANNIVERSARIES

Jenera, Ohio—Trinity school (50). Aug. 9. Worship, noon meal, open house, program at 2 PM. 419/326-4685.

Oshkosh, Wis.—Zion (100). Aug. 9. Services, 10:15 AM & 2 PM; dinner, noon. Pie social on Aug. 8 at 7 PM. RSVP by July 26 for catered dinner. 920/426-1764.

Burke, S.D.—Grace (75). Aug. 16. Services, 10:30 AM & 2 PM. 605/775-2462.

Manchester, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Aug. 16. Service, 10 AM; picnic follows. 920/398-2885.

Helenville, Wis.—St. Peter (150). Aug. 23. Services, 8 & 9:45 AM; picnic follows. 920/674-3307.

Chesaning, Mich.—Zion (125). Aug. 23—Christian education (school's 15th anniversary). Services, 8 & 10 AM; pig roast at school. Sept. 20—Mission Festival. Services, 8 & 10:30; dinner, noon. 517/845-3006.

Slinger, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Aug. 30. Outdoor service, 9 AM; picnic follows. RSVP for dinner. 414/644-8890.

Milwaukee—Risen Savior (25). Sept. 13. Festival service, 10:30 AM; picnic follows. 414/354-7320.

Mishicot, Wis.—St. John-Gibbon (125). Sept. 20. Services at 10 AM & 2:30 PM; dinner, noon. RSVP for dinner by Sept. 11. 920/776-1308.

Charles City, Iowa—Cross (50). Oct. 18. Service, 10 AM; lunch follows. RSVP for lunch. 515/228-6654.

Campbellsport, Wis.—Immanuel (75). Oct. 25. Service, 10:15 AM; dinner follows. RSVP for dinner. JoAnn Maedke, 920/477-2806.

MLC EXTENSION COURSE

History of Israel—Taught at WLC by Dr. Richard A. Krause from Sept. 1-Dec. 8. Three credit course applies to ministry certification. Contact MLC Special Services, 1-800-686-4142.

AVAILABLE

Organ—Vogelpohl two manual pipe organ. Some repairs needed. Free to WELS/ELS congregation for cost of shipping. Pastor Mark Sattler, 320/826-2280; <sattlerm@midstate.tds.net>.

Organ—Wurlitzer two keyboard electronic organ (Model 45000) with 25 key pedal board. Minor repairs needed. Free for cost of shipping. St. John, Janesville, Minn. 507/234-5353.

Banner—LWMS "Send Out the Light" Quilt Banner (20'x10'). Free but needs to be transported from St. John, Red Wing, Minn. Loren Lucht, 612/388-2149; <lucht@win.bright.net>.

SERVICE TIMES

Calgary, Alberta, Canada—Touring the Canadian Rockies? Worship at Mountain View. Located on the Transcanada Highway (Hwy 1) west of Calgary at the Old Banff Coach Road interchange. Summer worship, 9:30 AM; Bible study and Sunday school, 10:45 AM; 403/242-5000.

Crivitz, Wis.—Visitors to northeastern Wisconsin worship at Grace, Crivitz. Saturday 4 PM (during the summer) and Sunday at 10 AM. 715/854-2216.

Manhattan, N.Y.—Services Sundays, 10:15 AM at the Marriot Marquis Hotel in Times Square, Manhattan, N.Y. Richard Schleicher, 518/371-9544.

NEEDED

Bell—for mission in rural Calgary. Pastor Jonathan Schultz, 403/242-5000.

Preacher—at St. Peter, Clovis Calif., for August 2, 9, or 16; lodging available. Michael Engel, 209/291-1601; <StPCLOVIS@aol.com>.

Communion ware, offering plates, altar ware—for exploratory mission Risen Savior. Pastor Darin Aden, 612/714-5889; <dkaden@juno.com>.

NAMES WANTED

Rockton/Roscoe, Ill.—Pastor Tim Gumm, Peace. 5183 Pebble Creek Trail, Loves Park IL 61111; 815/633-6197.

Indiana Business College, St. Joseph's College, TKE, IVTC—Lafayette Technical Institute, Purdue University (Lafayette), Wabash College—WELS/ELS students. Pastor Larry Schwanke, Faith, 3215 W Judson Rd, Kokomo IN 46901; 765/457-0578; <faithwelskokomoin@juno.com>.

Butler University—WELS/ELS students. Pastor George Ferch, 13461 Shakamac Dr, Carmel IN 46032; <gferch@in-motion.net>.

Taking time to renew strength

Karl R. Gurgel

It was one of the most memorable vacations we ever had. In the planning, we had little idea of how significant a two-week camping trip to some of our favorite places in New England would be.

While I served as pastor for 10 years in South Windsor, Conn., our family enjoyed camping. Our favorite spot was Black Woods Campground in Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor, Maine. The campsites were hidden, nestled in the woods, nearly all within the sound of the pounding waves of the ocean. We could go on family hikes in the mountains, returning with freshly picked blueberries, just right for the next batch of pancakes. Because there was no WELS church anywhere nearby, we held our worship on the rocks by the sea, not unlike the times Jesus' disciples heard his Word alongside the Sea of Galilee.

This was all to be revisited. And it was especially meaningful because all of our children would be with us. It was sure to be a great adventure. Little did we realize how great, how meaningful.

We were scheduled to leave on the first Saturday of August 1993, just hours after I would return home from the synod convention in Saginaw, Mich. But we had no idea how that convention would change our lives, when my fellow delegates elected me president of WELS.

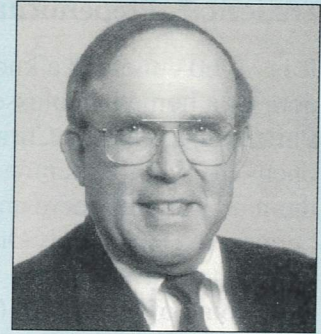
I don't think we seriously thought about canceling our vacation. But my election complicated matters. It would be three weeks before I could speak to the congregation I had served for 15 years. Becoming acquainted with my new responsibilities in Milwaukee would be postponed for three weeks. And yet, in preparation for what was to come, in helping me say farewell to what had been, God would use the vacation we were taking.

During the long hours of the trip, we had plenty of time for solitary reflection. We were also together as a family, helping each other make the necessary adjustments. But especially, as God intended, through his Word came the assurance of God's supporting, energizing presence.

One such assurance was Isaiah 40:30,31, a passage my former congregational co-workers included in a telegram following my election: "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Hiking, swimming, running, rock climbing finally tired even the youngest among us. After an evening by the fire, our bodies nourished by daily bread and our souls nurtured with the Bread of Life, we were ready to sleep and to arise, refreshed by God's goodness. We were ready to soar on wings like eagles, not just to climb Cadillac Mountain or battle the waves at Otter Point, but to attempt whatever God would place in our path.

A vacation is not necessarily where you go to get away from it all, but where you go to remind yourself of the need for God's abiding presence. Yes, we do need to take the time to reflect on our interdependence as the family of God, each needing the other. But, a vacation is the perfect time to acknowledge our total dependence on God, his daily care, his eternal grace. Then, when we do, as Isaiah was inspired to write, "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."



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

A vacation is not necessarily where you go to get away from it all, but where you go to remind yourself of the need for God's abiding presence.

Philemon—a short story

In only 25 verses, Paul shares a message of Christian love, fellowship, intercession, and forgiveness.

Frederic E. Piepenbrink

It is AD 60—there is a knock at the door of a home in Colosse. Philemon, a wealthy Christian man, opens the door. Philemon recognizes the man standing there and is flabbergasted. Here stands Onesimus, his former slave who ran away and stole some of his wealth (not a small amount) in the process.

The penalty for such action was severe—scourging, imprisonment. Some were literally branded with “thief” on their forehead. Some were put to death, even crucified. Professional slave hunters would occasionally capture and bring runaway slaves back to their owners, but rarely did one come back on his own. Onesimus was the exception. However, Onesimus was not the same man who left.

What led to this front door encounter was a remarkable chain of events. Onesimus had fled to Rome with his new found freedom and ill-gotten gain. There he met the Apostle Paul, who was confined to house arrest. Not only did Paul share the gospel with Onesimus, but was also served faithfully by him. Onesimus was like a son.

Now Paul faced a dilemma—what to do with Onesimus. To keep him as a fellow worker would not do. Onesimus had wronged his master, not just by running away, but by stealing from him. Paul would be harboring a criminal. To complicate matters, Paul knew Philemon personally. The early Christian church was small in those days (like WELS today). Paul had also brought the gospel to Philemon and his whole family. Philemon was a good worker in the church and a gifted leader. He used his wealth to promote the gospel. But Paul couldn't give sanctuary to his dear friend's thief.

The solution became painfully obvious. Paul would send Onesimus back to Philemon, but not empty-handed. Paul wrote a letter for Onesimus to give to Philemon, recommending what Philemon should do when Onesimus arrived. The letter is one of four found in Scripture that Paul wrote to individuals. It is the shortest of Paul's epistles—one chapter, 25 verses—but by far the most personal. Instead of dictating the letter to his companion Luke, Paul wrote it himself. Paul spoke from one man's Christian heart to another man's Christian heart. It is

a lesson in Christian love, fellowship, intercession, and forgiveness. It is a lesson in how Christians treat each other when they are getting along, and when they are not.

Because of its brevity, personal circumstances, and lack of doctrinal content, we might think Philemon got into the Bible by mistake. Luther elevates our sight to its spiritual importance:

What Christ has done for us with God the Father, that St. Paul does also for Onesimus with Philemon. For Christ emptied himself of his rights and overcame the Father with love and humility, so that the Father had to put away his wrath and rights, and receive us into favor for the sake of Christ, who so earnestly advocates our cause and so heartily takes our part. For we are all his Onesimuses if we believe (*Luther's Works* 35:390).

Surprisingly, Onesimus agreed to Paul's plan. Onesimus was eager to demonstrate the genuineness of his conversion. Onesimus found a higher freedom and wealth in Jesus that made worldly freedom and wealth unnecessary.

After the door opens, Onesimus stands for a moment. He then hands Philemon the letter. Philemon opens it, and this is what it says. . . .

Next time: The greeting

Fred Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.

PHILEMON
family respect
intercession together
love forgiveness

Struggling to overcome

Walter F. Beckmann

A few months ago a famous athlete told the Wisconsin state assembly that homosexuality was a sin that the Bible condemns. The next day newspaper editorials condemned him as “ignorant, arrogant, a bigot who takes the Bible literally when it describes homosexuality as an abomination,” and “uses religion to justify his own prejudices.”

I don't know how carefully he chose his words or if he picked the best time to speak them, but the Bible does refer to homosexuality as “shameful lusts,” “exchanging natural desires for unnatural ones,” “men committing indecent acts with other men,” and finally, “a perversion” (Romans 1:26,27). Is it right to call a person “an ignorant, arrogant bigot” if he accepts that passage as God's inerrant Word? Isn't it a form of bigotry to say that he is?

Two weeks later another article announced the dedication of a church in my area that will “primarily serve the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community.” The pastor said their church was needed because “people tell us that God does not love us.”

I wouldn't say that. The Bible says that God loved the world, that Christ died for all and wants the world to be saved and brought to the knowledge of the truth. God loves homosexuals as much as he loves heterosexuals. If we truly are his children and members of Christ's church, we want to serve them.

But how do we serve them? Certainly not by saying, “Only an ignorant bigot would call your sin a sin. Feel good about yourself and what you are.” No, we have to say that God's words are true—homosexuality is sinful. Sin moves people further away from God. We have to show

them from God's Word that when Christ calls sinners to himself, he calls them to repentance (Luke 5:32).

We don't serve our fellow sinners by enabling them. The Bible condemns drunkenness as a sin. We wouldn't serve alcoholics by operating a bar in our church fellowship hall.

Some time ago, my blood tests showed a high sugar count. My doctor gave me tracts about diabetes, put me on a special diet, and told me what I'd have to do so I wouldn't lose my eyesight, have my kidneys fail, and suffer other terrible consequences. Should I fault him for taking my blood tests so literally? Should I call him a bigot for calling me a diabetic? Should I seek another doctor who'll be more loving, who'll tell me to eat all the Eskimo Pies and drink all the soda I want? Hardly! Love and concern for my physical well being moved him to level with me.

I hope that any homosexuals reading this realize that love and concern for your spiritual and eternal welfare move us to plead: Take God's Word literally and seriously.

At times we may not express our concern for you as we should. We may act and speak insensitively. Forgive us, and don't let it turn you against God's Word. We don't want you to bow before our wisdom and say, “You are right,” but to join us in bowing before God and praying, “Forgive us our sins.” We want you to share Christ's blood-bought forgiveness, join us in struggling to overcome our sinful flesh, and walk in the paths he has mapped out for us.

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

We don't serve
our fellow
sinners by
enabling them.

Expectations of God's Old Testament leaders

John F. Brug

Why is the book of Judges called "Judges"? It doesn't seem to be a good name, since the heroes in the book are more fighters than judges.

The only "judge" in Judges who is described as exercising judicial functions is Deborah (Judges 4:5). Other heroes of the book may have exercised such functions, but their main activity described in the book was as military leaders and deliverers for Israel. Samuel, whose "judgeship" is described in 1 Samuel, frequently held court, so he deserves the title "judge." He too, however, served as a military deliverer and political leader.

The Hebrew name of the book, *Shophetim*, means "rulers" or "deliverers." When the Old Testament was translated into Greek in the second century BC, the translators chose a Greek word that means "judges" as their rendering for *shophetim*. The Latin Bible, which was the standard Bible of the church for many centuries, simply followed the Greek. The earliest English translations followed the Latin, and most contemporary English translations have retained the translation.

"Deliverers" would be a better translation of *shophetim* than "judges," but translators are hesitant to undo more than 2,000 years of tradition when it comes to naming a book of the Bible.

In Exodus 4:24 why was God going to kill Moses? Why wasn't Moses' son circumcised? Why did Zipporah circumcise him? Was Jethro, Zipporah's father, a Hebrew priest?

These questions have puzzled commentators for centuries. Since neither the context of the verses nor other parts of Scripture provide additional information, the only answers are those we can deduce from the text.

The failure of Moses to circumcise his son was an act of negligence and disobedience. The penalty for neglecting circumcision was to be "cut off" from God's people (Genesis 17:14). This explains why God threatened Moses with death. Apparently, Zipporah had to quickly circumcise their son because Moses, incapacitated by the blow the Lord sent against him, was unable to do so. By touching Moses with their son's foreskin Zipporah was demonstrating that the offense that threatened Moses' life had been removed. She may also have reacted quickly because she realized that the threat to her husband's life was her fault.

Most commentators believe that Moses' failure to circumcise his son was due in part to the objections of Zipporah. Her comments after she had circumcised their son imply that this ritual was disgusting to her. She said to Moses, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me." This sug-

gests that she thought her marriage to Moses was forcing her to subject her son to a rite she found repulsive, yet this was the only way she could keep Moses as her husband. The opinion that Zipporah was not in agreement with all that God was requiring of Moses receives some support from the fact that Moses sent her away when he was confronting Pharaoh (Exodus 18:2).

Although much about this incident remains a mystery, the basic lesson is clear: God expected that a man who was going to be the leader of his covenant people would be faithful in observing the regulations of that covenant within his own family.

We probably wouldn't call Jethro a "Hebrew priest" since he was not a member of the Israelite priesthood descended from Levi and Aaron. He was, however, apparently a worshiper of the true God. He was probably a descendant of Abraham through his wife Keturah (Genesis 25:4). In that sense, he could be called a "Hebrew."

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

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



Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity and conciseness. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Northwestern Lutheran*.

Thank you for a wonderful, spiritually uplifting publication that we get to enjoy on a monthly basis.

There are some touching stories in the *Northwestern Lutheran*, such as "If I die before I wake" [June]. The pastor summed it up well and had me putting a new perspective on my life. I should live each day, preparing for our Savior's arrival on earth, for it is not for us to know the time or day of his arrival. This way I know that I will be ready to go to heaven to be with Jesus.

I read each publication, then pass them on to co-workers. One gentleman at work is a Christian and I give this magazine to him. This man shares the message of Jesus Christ daily with his co-workers as well as I do, and this magazine helps us together to share each other's beliefs. Thank you.



Todd Jacobs
Lake Orion, Michigan

This spring I viewed the ICR/Austin video, "Grand Canyon—Monument to the Flood" advertised by the WELS Audiovisual Library [Dec. '97].

The ad said that the canyon was washed out "in a matter of days" by "water from the Flood" that was "trapped over the Great Plains" until it "suddenly broke through."

This was in error, the video showing the water in question to have come from northeast of the Colorado Plateau, well west of the Continental Divide. This video also suggests that the flat Kaibab limestone countryside bordering the canyon today was first swept clean of at least 1,000 feet of "Flood" sed-

iments, leaving Red Butte as a remnant. Given some 2,000 cubic miles of materials that would have had to have been removed here, this idea is ten times more incredible than the instant canyon erosion scenario.

I propose that a theory of created fossils be discussed in the WELS rather than the idea that fossil strata are a "proof" of the Flood. I know of nothing in the detailed realities of world geology that supports the ICR scenario.

Gerhold Lemke
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Re: Prof Brug's treatment of Psalm 104:4 and Hebrews 1:7 [June].

It might have been helpful to refer people back to the King James Version. Not only does the KJV of Psalm 104:4 correspond nicely to the KJV of Hebrews 1:7, but we also see that the Hebrew word translated "wind" in the NIV can also be translated "spirit." And a case can certainly be made that "spirit" fits at least as well into the context of Psalm 104 as "wind" does.

Since both the Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek word *pneuma* work this way, we also gain interesting insights into other passages. For instance, in the story of Pentecost in Acts 2, the coming of the Spirit was accompanied by the sound of a mighty rushing wind. Furthermore, the same word that can be translated either "spirit" or "wind" can also be rendered "breath." This suggests fascinating connections that can be made with the Genesis account of the creation of Adam, and with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus also offers the chance to ponder the interplay of Spirit, wind, and breath.

I realize that limited space makes it hard for Prof. Brug to mention all these things. But I wanted to let you know how his column triggered additional thoughts for me.

Michael J. Albrecht
St. Paul, Minnesota

Through my Bible in 3 years

September 1998

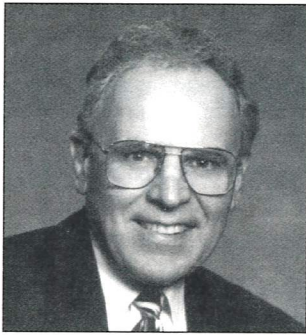
1. 2 Thessalonians 2:13—3:17
2. Joshua 1
3. Joshua 2
4. Joshua 3, 4
5. Joshua 5, 6
6. Joshua 7
7. Joshua 8
8. Joshua 9
9. Joshua 10
10. Joshua 11, 12
11. Joshua 13:1—15:12
12. Joshua 15:13—17:18
13. Joshua 18, 19
14. Joshua 20, 21
15. Joshua 22
16. Joshua 23
17. Joshua 24
18. Galatians 1
19. Galatians 2
20. Galatians 3:1-18
21. Galatians 3:19—4:7
22. Galatians 4:8—5:1
23. Galatians 5:2-24
24. Galatians 5:25—6:18
25. Proverbs 1
26. Proverbs 2, 3
27. Proverbs 4, 5
28. Proverbs 6, 7
29. Proverbs 8
30. Proverbs 9

Ask yourself:

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

Try it in your Bible reading.

We would rather switch than fight. Or would we?



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

It sounds like a bad time to be a denomination. And well it should be if the denomination of itself is what attracts.

“We have become a nation of switchers. . . . Two-thirds of all American Protestants will belong to two or more religious denominations in their lifetime.” So says sociologist and Auburn Theological Seminary president Barbara Wheeler. “Most switchers,” she emphasizes, “don’t care about denominations.”

Going right along with that, people today tend to place their trust in local organizations more readily than in national or global ones. They don’t trust national offices. Furthermore, they tend to feel better about volunteering for an unofficial organization than supporting the official one. “National” and “official,” says Wheeler, are considered ballast. They lend some stability but have little other use.

In fact, the trend is also away from organized activity, but toward religiosity. Translated that means that more and more people don’t care to share their beliefs. “Just leave me alone. My faith carries me a long way, thank you.” Nor do they want their faith defined. Increasing numbers are “everything-goes believers.” They are “spiritual” but not committed to any organized religion.

It sounds like a bad time to be a denomination. And well it should be if the denomination of itself is what attracts. For example, if we take an attitude of “WELS above all!”, then we deserve a lack of loyalty and trust when WELS is not above all, when the inevitable zits come and go on our corporate face. If WELS is construed to be a mindless head detached from its body, it deserves to be detached from the body’s activities. If WELS expects loyalty for loyalty’s sake, it deserves to drift on the sea of shifting loyalties.

However, when a person is reached by the good news of God’s salvation in his Son Jesus Christ and God’s Spirit works saving faith, that person will want two things:

1. to share that good news with others and
2. to nurture that faith regularly through the Word and sacraments.

That person will buck the trends.

When the Spirit of God convinces us that his Word is truth, his commands absolute, and his salvation complete, then we will want to confess his truth in all its parts and join with others who share that confession. We will turn our backs on the trends.

When Jesus’ call to reach all nations with his teachings and preach the gospel to every person stirs the fire in our hearts, we are going to look for ways to unite in doing just that, reaching far beyond where any one person or congregation can go on its own. We will cast the trends to the winds.

When Jesus’ command to love God and love one another resonates with our faith, we’ll look to carry out that love with others and to others. We’ll have no time for trends.

When, under God, we identify like-minded Christians who want to work together in every way possible to strengthen faith and build God’s kingdom, then we have the makings of a denomination.

And as long as the denomination, for all its human shortcomings, continues steadfast in the Word, united in faith and love, and active in mission, why would we want to switch?

Gary P. Baumler

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The surprising verdict

Jesus' resurrection has proclaimed the verdict loud and clear:
We're not guilty!

Kenneth A. Cherney

A hush falls over the courtroom. The jury has returned, and they're about to announce a verdict.

Not guilty—sort of

The foreman stands. "We, the jury, find the defendant—well, mostly innocent, but a little bit guilty, too. What we mean is, it sure looks like he did the deed. On the other hand, we'd like to cut him some slack. So our verdict is: Not guilty—sort of."

The defendant looks perplexed. A murmur of disbelief sweeps through the courtroom, which the judge silences with his gavel.

"I see," the judge says. "Not guilty—sort of." Well then, Mr. Defendant, here's what we're going to do. This court will change the verdict to 'Not guilty at all,' provided that you approach the bench right now and make your personal decision to be acquitted. That's right. Come on up here. I'll give you an acquittal if you decide that's what I should do."

"Absurd," you say, and you're right. No court in the world—certainly not in the United States of America—would render a decision like that. A defendant is declared either innocent or guilty. There isn't any "Not guilty—sort of." And an acquittal isn't the defendant's decision. It's the court's decision. Courts just don't work that way.



Not guilty—period

God's court doesn't work that way either.

God, our judge, has pronounced his verdict over us: Not guilty—period. We've been declared innocent of the crime of sin, free from the penalty of eternal death, all because Jesus took our place under God's justice and paid every penalty we ever owed.

There's nothing you have to do to finish your justification—not even to ask for it, not even to decide you want it.

And to demonstrate his verdict just as dramatically and convincingly as possible, God raised Jesus from the dead. "He was raised to life for our justification," (Romans 4:25).

That means Jesus rose to prove we are justified. Acquitted. Not guilty.

God did not "sort of" raise Jesus from the dead. Jesus did not "kind of" leave his tomb and appear in glory to over 500 people. And Jesus is not alive today only "if you believe it" or "if you make your decision for Christ." There's nothing partial or conditional about Jesus' resurrection. Nothing remains to be done to make it real.

There's nothing partial or conditional about your justification either. There's nothing you have to do to finish it—not even to ask for it, not even to decide you want it. It's true: when God announces his "not guilty" verdict, many people aren't listening, and they lose out on all the benefits. Tragically, they continue to spend their lives—and their eternities—as prisoners of sin and guilt.

But there's no need for that to happen to anyone. Jesus' resurrection has proclaimed the verdict loud and clear: We're not guilty! We're free!

You might still hear some accusing voices—from your conscience, for example. But you know what?

The judge himself has spoken.

Your "accusing voices" are out of order.

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