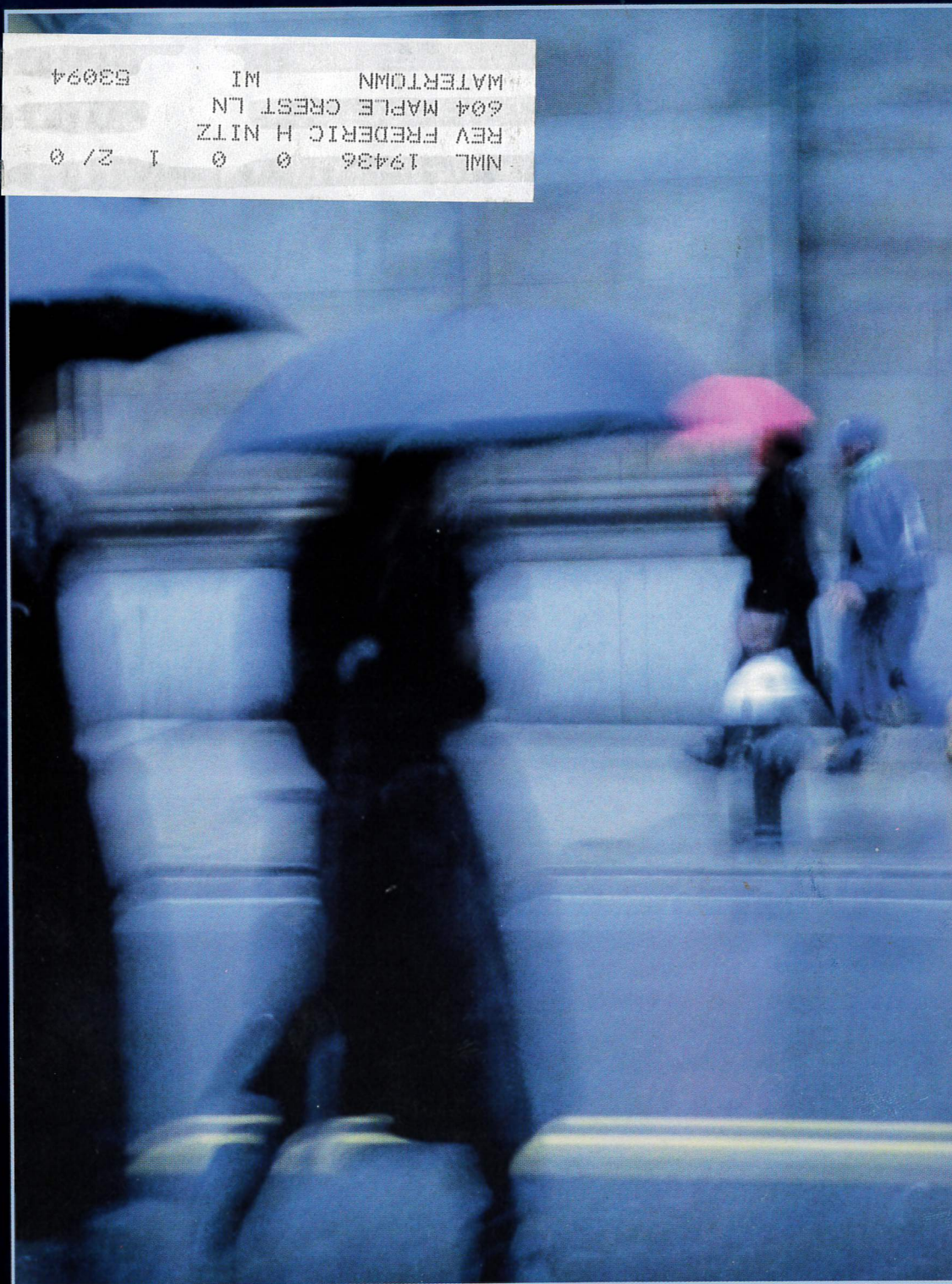


NORTHWESTERN

September 1998

LUTHERAN

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



NML 19436 0 0 1 2 / 0
 REV FREDERIC H NITZ
 604 MAPLE CREST LN
 WATERLOO MI 48094

Concern for the city

page 6

A tale of two families

page 10

A cycle of addiction

page 12

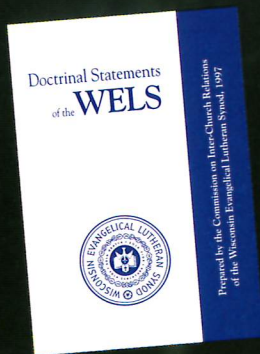
Stamp of approval page 8



TELL THE TRUTH 101:

Quick, convenient summaries of the beliefs of the WELS—who it is and what it stands for.

Study the convictions and harmony that keep this synod united in God's truth. Examine and ponder what God has graciously said in Scripture. Prepare for speaking the truth and speaking it in love. Offered by the Commission on Inter-Church Relations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



Doctrinal Statements of the WELS

Seven doctrinal statements on often-debated subjects of 20th-century society:
Scripture • Antichrist •

Church Fellowship • Church and Ministry • Abortion • Lord's Supper • Man and Woman Roles.

Papercover, 69 pages.

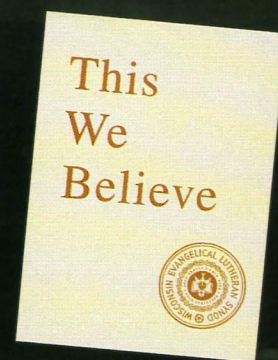
LU15N2006 \$2.50

Order by phone 1-800-662-6022

(Milwaukee area 414-475-6600) 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. weekdays

online at www.wels.net/nph

or mail the convenient order form below.



This We Believe A Statement of Belief of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

What we believe, teach, and confess about nine biblical doctrines: God and His Revelation • Creation, Man, and Sin • Christ and Redemption • Justification by Faith • Good Works and Prayer • The Means of Grace • The Church and Its Ministry • The Church and the State • Jesus' Return and the Judgment. (Also available in German, Norwegian, and Spanish.)

Papercover, 24 pages.

LU04N0622 \$1.00

Please place my order for

Doctrinal Statements of the WELS and/or **This We Believe**

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Daytime Phone (____) _____

Check or Money Order enclosed
(make payable to Northwestern Publishing House)

NPH Charge Account (net 30 days)
If NPH charge, fill in 6-digit NPH Acct. No.

Bankcard No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Stock #	Qty	Book Title	Price	Total
LU15N2006	_____	Doctrinal Statements of the WELS	\$2.50	\$ _____
LU04N0622	_____	This We Believe	\$1.00	\$ _____

Merchandise Total \$ _____

Shipping & Handling* \$ _____

Subtotal \$ _____

5% Sales Tax—Wisconsin residents \$ _____

Note: 5% on Subtotal required by Wisconsin law

.6% County Tax—Milwaukee County residents \$ _____

Total Amount \$ _____

***SHIPPING & HANDLING CHARGES**

Note: Bankcard and NPH charge customers will be billed actual postage plus \$1.50 handling.

If order totals	Add
up to \$ 10.00	\$ 3.70
\$ 10.01 to \$ 25.00	\$ 4.80
\$ 25.01 to \$ 50.00	\$ 6.25
\$ 50.01 to \$100.00	\$ 7.90
\$100.01 to \$150.00	\$ 9.40
\$150.01 to \$200.00	\$10.90
\$200.01 and up	\$12.50

We reserve the right to bill you for actual shipping costs when the charges exceed the schedule.



Northwestern Publishing House
1250 North 113th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284

Harvest time

Do you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. John 4:35,36

Paul M. Janke

The disciples wondered what Jesus was talking about. He had just told them, "The fields are ripe for harvest." But it wasn't harvest time in the farmers' fields of Samaria. The grain wasn't close to being ripe. Harvest time was still four months away.

Jesus wasn't referring to the grain harvest, however. While his disciples had gone into the Samaritan town of Sychar to buy food, Jesus sat down to rest at Jacob's well. There he struck up a conversation with a local woman. He offered her living water, and identified himself as the Messiah. She believed. A precious soul was harvested for eternal life. Then she ran to town to share the good news.

Ripened fields

Jesus was giving his disciples a lesson in mission awareness. For farmers, harvest time is well defined. In Palestine, grain was harvested in late spring. But in the kingdom of God, it's always harvest time. Souls are ripe for harvest year-round. Just then the seed that Jesus had sown was bearing fruit. At the woman's invitation, people were streaming out of Sychar to Jacob's well. The grain in the fields was still



Conversations about the Savior take place in cafeterias and bus stations and hospital rooms.

green and tender, but it was harvest time in Samaria.

"Open your eyes and look at the fields," Jesus said. Look at people as they really are. They're not just clerks or students or truck drivers. They're not just members of a certain race or natives of a certain region. People have souls. Either the thirst of their souls has been quenched at the well of living water, or they're perishing. Jesus saw the Samaritan woman not simply as a Samaritan or as a woman. He saw her as a soul who needed to know her Savior. He tells us to look at people the way he does.

Reaping with rejoicing

With farmers, the rewards of the harvest are the compensation for the hard work of planting and tending the crop. But in Christ's kingdom,

often those who plant the seed don't get to see the harvest. Conversations about the Savior take place in cafeterias and bus stations and hospital rooms. Christians sow the seed, telling friends and strangers alike about the Savior who gives his holiness in exchange for our sins. We may never again see the person with whom we shared the gospel. In this life we may never know whether the seed we planted bore fruit.

On the other hand, we sometimes reap what we didn't work for. Someone else planted the seed, years ago, perhaps, or thousands of miles away. But Jesus positions us to harvest the crop for eternal life. He gives us the joy of hearing the confession of Christ or seeing the baptism.

In heaven the sower and the reaper will finally be able to rejoice together. Here on earth, harvest celebrations delight in God's blessing on fields and orchards and vineyards. Heaven's harvest festival will be far better, celebrating God's mercy in bringing souls to the joy of eternal life.

Plant now. Harvest now. And rejoice in the harvest forever.

NL

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



NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

Official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
September 1998 / Vol. 85, No. 9

- ❑ In the past, WELS has never had a strong ministry to the cities, but that's no excuse for giving up on them in the present and into the future. Mark Jeske honestly confronts our lack of outreach to the millions who crowd the cities—and what we can do to change that. Don't miss this series.
- ❑ Every other year, your pastor, male teachers, and a member of your church attend a district convention. At these meetings, delegates address issues that are specific to your district and that face our synod as a whole. For a summary, see page 20.
- ❑ Our office fielded many requests for permission to photocopy the July cover story "Now I lay me. . . ." David Zietlow, a retired pastor facing his own death from cancer, pointed out that everyone wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. On June 10, God took Pastor Zietlow to heaven—and granted his wish.
- ❑ With this issue, John Parlow ends his series on the occult. Our thanks to him for shining God's light on the darkness of the occult. We also thank David Valleskey for his five-part series on fellowship.
- ❑ You may notice something different about NL this month. Through December we will test a new paper—it is whiter and has a matte finish. This will reduce the glare from the paper that some of you have written about, and it costs less. Let us know what you think.

—LRB

Cover photo by Digital Stock Corporation

Editorial office: *Northwestern Lutheran*, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Road, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>

Editor
Rev. Gary P. Baumler, 414/256-3230

Senior Communications Assistant
Linda R. Baacke, 414/256-3232

Communications Assistant
Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231

Communication Services Commission
R. D. Balge, J. M. Barber, W. F. Bernhardt, M. D. Duncan, R. E. Lauersdorf, J. Sprecher

Contributing Editors
J. A. Aderman, W. F. Beckmann, M. E. Braun, J. F. Brug, J. C. Gerlach, E. S. Hartzell, R. K. Hunter, P. M. Janke, M. J. Lenz, A. J. Panning, F. E. Piepenbrink

Art Director
Paul Burmeister

Graphic Designer
Paul Ehlke

Photographs and Illustrations
Mrs. Kevin Scheibel Photography, p. 3
Digital Stock Corporation, p. 7, 12
Bruce Bond, p. 8
courtesy of Sandy Greco, p. 10
Paul Ehlke, p. 14
Julie Tessmer, Tom Wietzke, p. 16
Tyra Baumler, p. 18
Joe Below, p. 36

Subscription services
1-800-662-6093 ext. 8
Milwaukee area 414/475-6600 ext. 5

Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N 113 St
Milwaukee WI 53226-3284

USA—\$9. Canada—\$9.63. All other countries—air mail \$40; surface mail \$24. Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates.

Available on audio cassette and in large print from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55107.

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN (ISSN 0029-3512) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Northwestern Lutheran*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. ©1998 by *Northwestern Lutheran*. Printed in the USA.

TO ORDER *Northwestern Lutheran*

Send this coupon with check or money order to:
Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N 113 St
Milwaukee WI 53226-3284

- A subscription in U.S.A. (Canada)
- for 1 year at \$9.00 (\$9.63)
 - for 2 years at \$17.00 (\$18.19)
 - for 3 years at \$24.00 (\$25.68)

Name (print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

You can also subscribe to *Northwestern Lutheran* by calling toll-free 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8. In the Milwaukee area call 414/475-6600, ext. 5. Phone weekdays between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM



Harvest time
page 3

666

Satanism—the
deadly scheme
page 14



Suicide watch
page 36

3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Harvest time

Paul M. Janke

In the kingdom of God, it's always harvest time. Souls are ripe for harvest year-round.

6 REVITALIZING URBAN PARISHES

Concern for the city

Mark A. Jeske

A church body's spiritual vigor is demonstrated in its mission commitment to share the gospel across cultures.

8 SACRAMENTS

Stamp of approval

Wayne A. Laitinen

When Jesus was baptized, he took on your identity and your sins. When you were baptized you were given a new identity—Jesus' identity.

10 SUNDAY SCHOOL

A tale of two families

Laurie Biedenbender

Two families' stories show how God works through parents and children in Sunday school to reach out to the unchurched.

12 ADDICTIONS

A cycle of addiction

Linda R. Baacke

People caught in the cycle of addiction use sex and food to replace God as the center of their lives.

14 EXPOSING THE DARKNESS

Satanism—the deadly scheme

John M. Parlow

We constantly live on an invisible battlefield in this life. Our battles are against a formidable enemy—Satan and his hosts.

16 PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

Sing along with saints and angels

Julie K. Tessmer

A trip abroad offers history, music, and fellowship to WELS members.

18 WE ARE REBORN TO THE FAMILY OF GOD

The loving practice of church fellowship

David J. Valleskey

We protect our family under God by separating ourselves from those who deviate from the truth.

20 WELS NEWS

- District convention highlights
- Time to volunteer
- LIBRA launches study in Israel
- Bells for Brazil
- Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany meets

27 WORLD NEWS

- Growth of non-traditional families slows
- Two Lutheran bodies meet over ecumenical rift
- Religious schools included in voucher plan

28 BULLETIN BOARD

29 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Interact

Mark J. Lenz

30 KOINONIA IN PRACTICE

Fellowship of a family

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

Believers in the church treat all the same—as redeemed children of God.

31 EDITORIAL COMMENT

The dignity of honest labor

Armin J. Panning

Labor Day is a . . . day to recognize the privilege we have of being allowed to glorify God with honest labor.

32 YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE

End-time issues

John F. Brug

33 READERS FORUM

34 THE EDITOR'S PEN

Numbed by the numbers

Gary P. Baumler

It's not the numbers that need our attention. It's our attitudes, particularly when the numbers make us pause.

36 INSIGHTS

Suicide watch

Kenneth F. Lenz

For Carmen, life has been one failure after another. Only God can turn this hopeless situation around.

Concern for the city

A church body's spiritual vigor is demonstrated in its mission commitment to share the gospel across cultures.

Mark A. Jeske

What is your perception of the size of WELS? Are we growing? Shrinking? Staying the same? Does growth really matter? If we hold tenaciously to the message of the Bible, is it enough then to leave numerical growth to the Lord?

Dying city churches

I have been a pastor for about 20 years. In those two decades our synod has grown a little, from 402,573 souls to 411,295 (about two percent). But those general numbers, showing stability and a little growth, conceal what is really going on in different regions of the country. Growth in numbers has been much stronger in the Sunbelt, while many older congregations in the Midwest have been declining.

WELS has never been an urban church body. Our roots and emotional center have always been country and small-town churches. We are like the people of Lake Wobegon, who, Garrison Keillor says, "when confronted with life's big choices, went unhesitatingly for the small potatoes." We chose to invest manpower in Hadar, Neb., long before Omaha; Colome, S.D., before Sioux Falls; Fort Morgan, Colo., before Denver. We are barely represented in America's 10 largest cities. Efforts in New York City have failed. Our lone church in Chicago is a gift from the Missouri Synod. We have one small church in Los Angeles after 45 years of work there. We have none in Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Atlanta, or Pittsburgh.

And it hasn't only been difficult to plant churches in major cities. The past 20 years have been nothing less than devastating for WELS in the great cities where we are already. Membership losses range from 25 to 50 percent. Detroit's congregations went from 1,306 souls in 1977 to 663 today. Racine, Wis., went from 1,909 to 1,375; Kenosha, Wis., from 3,896 to 2,922. Toledo declined from 1,213 to 570; Chicago from 776 to 415; Minneapolis from 1,887 to 1,025; St. Paul from 3,720 to 2,535. Milwaukee's north side fell from 17,231 to 10,733 with two congregations disbanding; the south side churches went from 8,320 to 6,159.

The city of Milwaukee has lost at least nine WELS congregations, and more will follow. It is no comfort that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has lost seven, too, or that the Milwaukee Archdiocese has lost 10 of 11 parochial schools and eight parishes on the near north side alone.

The congregation I serve is located in the middle of a major metropolitan area, and so these are life-and-death issues to my ministry. But they are a concern to all of us in WELS—how can we plant new churches and celebrate their growth at the same time that some older ones are collapsing? Why are so many city churches dying? Do we know? Is it God's will? Does it matter, as long as the suburban congregations are doing all right?

Need for revitalization

Some in our synod believe it is too late to revitalize urban churches. They think we should write off the central cities and use our scarce mission dollars only for new starts in more promising suburban locations. Some think we have been monoculturally German for so long that it is too late to change.

Study Paul's mission strategy—where did he spend his time on his missionary journeys? In the cities.

Wrong! It is never too late. The gospel has been jumping across cultures since Egyptians chose to march out of Egypt with the Israelites, since Philip baptized an African, since a Jewish ex-fisherman came to see an Italian military officer as his brother, since the Greeks told the Russians about Christ, Spanish Franciscans told the Aztecs, the Jesuits told the Japanese, and German Pietists sailed for India. Cross-cultural ministry is happening all over—the Southern Baptists are working in Los Angeles in 14 languages—and it will continue until Jesus comes back for his people.

It is my conviction that a church body's spiritual vigor is demonstrated in its mission commitment to share the gospel across cultures,

not only in faraway missions, but also in cross-cultural ministries in one's own community.

How can we give up on the cities? Remember God's last words in the book of Jonah, "Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Look at Jesus' fearless ministry among the despised Samaritans. Study Paul's mission strategy—where did he spend his time on his missionary journeys? In the cities. In Ephesus and Corinth. In Thessalonica, Philippi, Berea, Athens, and Rome. God's country. Why? That's where the people were!

After working in a poor barrio in Medellin and in the inner city streets of Milwaukee, I have come to prize the stories in the Bible, especially Acts, of how people overcame their suspicion, racism, and arrogance and got close to strangers with the Word.

Watch Jesus take time with a Syro-Phoenician woman. Note the three languages on Pilate's paper on the cross. Watch as the Spirit's Pentecost miracle linguistics undo Babel with the one message. See how God used the persecutions in Acts 8 to make missionaries out of refugees. Rejoice at the first Gentile convert we know of—a black African! Watch Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene dare to evangelize Greeks in Antioch. See how the first synodical convention in Acts 15 urged super-conservative Jewish members "not to make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

Cross-cultural ministry is possible. It pleases God and invites his blessing. It does not diminish your own culture and your cultural treasures; it only enriches you.

NL

Mark Jeske is pastor at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Worship thoughts for cross-cultural outreach

1. Don't usher people out after worship. Let them go at their own pace and talk with whomever they want. This will upset the control fanatics at first, but after you get used to it you will wonder why anybody does it any more.
2. Have greeters work the narthex both before and after worship.
3. Begin worship by asking people to introduce themselves to all who sit around them. This reminds us that our worship time not only connects us with our Lord, but also binds us together with our human family. Put name tags on everybody from time to time.
4. Get your choir out of the balcony. When they sing from the front, they can sing to faces, not the backs of heads.
5. Have your congregation celebrate events that really matter to the community you are trying to reach.
6. Find worship music that comes from your community. Encourage your musicians to use whatever instruments will best present that style. If you have outreach possibilities to Hispanics, for instance, and you know that the dominant musical instrument in all Hispanic culture is the guitar, don't fight it. Tune up and play to God's glory. Some Lutherans think that to be truly loyal to our traditions, the only appropriate musical instrument in church is the pipe organ. Phooey! Let Psalm 150 inspire us to use all instruments and all human ingenuity to lead the people of God in worship and praise!

STAMP OF APPROVAL

When Jesus was baptized, he took on your identity and your sins. When you were baptized you were given a new identity—Jesus' identity.

Wayne A. Laitinen

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’ ” (Luke 3:21,22).

Standing up for identity

I was waiting in line at the post office when a woman walked up to the only clerk on duty and asked for 100 first-class stamps. As she began writing out her check, she added, “And I would like African-American stamps.”

The teller, somewhat embarrassed, admitted that he didn't have any at

that time of the year. There was a pause. The line was growing longer. Other than the nervous shuffling of feet, you could have heard a pin drop.

“You mean you don't

have a single African-American stamp in the whole post office?”

“I'm very sorry ma'am,” the clerk said nervously, “we don't have a single one in the whole post office.” Another long pause.

“Then I want to speak with your supervisor.” Ten minutes later, as I was leaving, she continued the same line of questioning with the supervisor.

No identity crisis here! She was determined to display her ethnic pride on every piece of correspondence. In fact, she wasn't the least bit reticent about keeping a post office lobby captive until they knew how proud she was about her race.

Each day when we pray, “forgive us our sins,” our Savior brings us back to the Jordan and our baptism.

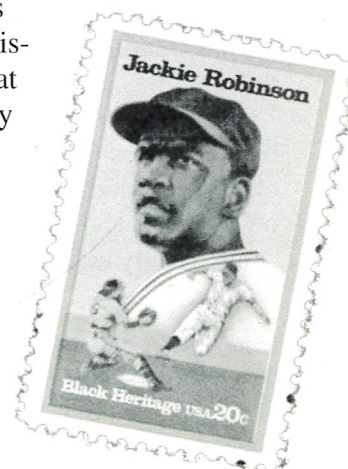
She also exploded the pious fiction that says, “My convictions are so dear to me that I cannot speak about them. I can only treasure them in my heart.” In fact, there is an inseparable connection between who we are and the way we talk: “I believed, therefore I have spoken” (2 Corinthians 4:13).



Finding true identity

So who are we? Or perhaps we could put it another way: What is it that we would be willing to hold an anxious line of postal customers hostage to hear about? A good joke? Our grandchildren? Our occupation? America's moral decline? Our Savior?

Or, better yet, ask a jury of your peers who you are. They've listened to you long enough. You could tolerate it if they called you a religious fanatic. At least they've caught the drift of your conversations. It's when they register surprise that you've had any association whatsoever with Jesus Christ that your sins are more than you can



bear. One man's friends, after listening to his funeral sermon, wondered out loud who was really inside the coffin.

When it comes to our personal identity crises, we need to listen to God most of all. In the waters of the Jordan there was a divinely calculated identity crisis. It is written:

"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized, too."

Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize him, but John protested, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" John understood that baptism was a sinner's sacrament and Jesus was no sinner. Jesus replied that he must be baptized with sinners, not for his own sake, but "to fulfill all righteousness."

Ask a jury of your peers who you are. They've listened to you long enough.

It was as if Jesus said to John, "John, if you, a sinner, go down into that water, you will only add to the pollution of all the other sinners there. What baptism needs is a cleansing agent . . . something to add forgiveness and purity to that water so that those in it can be saved."

O blessed identity crisis! In the water of baptism (both Jesus' and ours), the sinless Son of God contracted the pollution of our sin, judgment, death, and damnation. In the same water, we wretched sinners contracted Jesus' holiness, righteousness, life, and salvation!

It really was a crisis for Jesus, not us. When he entered the water to



associate with sinners, he received the lightning bolt of God's justice for us all.

His solidarity with us would lead to his crucifixion and death. O blessed injustice of cosmic proportions! When

God looked into the water, Jesus was our sin, and we were his righteousness.

Each day when we pray, "forgive us our sins," our Savior brings us back to the Jordan and our baptism. There he reminds us that since he participated with sinners in their baptism, we have become participants in all of his redeeming work. At the font we were "buried with [him] Christ through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, may live a new life" (Romans 6:4). We have a new identity, a high calling, and a bright, eternal future! We are "heirs, having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

Being proud of our identity

Make no mistake about it. I'm proud of my Finnish heritage. And now that that hapless postal clerk has had time to collect his wits, I have half a mind to go back to his window and insist upon Finnish-American stamps. If I did that, I imagine it would be all the poor man could do to keep from laughing me out the door.

But what does it matter? Where my grandfather came from before he stepped foot on Ellis Island is not "who I am." In a sense, it is "who I was": flesh born of flesh. In the last analysis, I don't want my epitaph to read, "Here lies another Finn, proud

without but dead within."

I would much rather have a stamp of Jesus going down into the Jordan with all the people. Let all the world know: That's who I am. That is my Savior. Those are my people. And since, by God's grace, you and I were with Jesus in the water, we know that the Father's words on the Last Day will be identical to the ones he spoke to his Son at the Jordan: "You are my son whom I love, with you I am well pleased."

NL

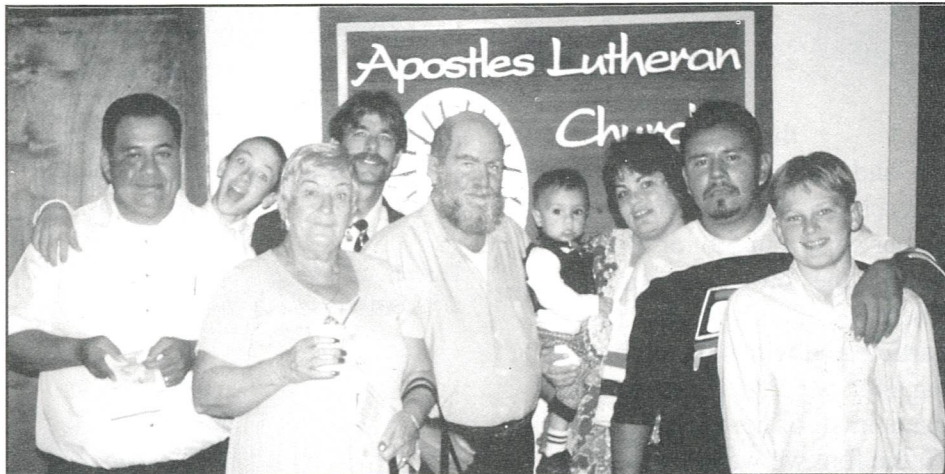
Wayne A. Laitinen is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



A tale of two families

Two families' stories show how God works through parents and children in Sunday school to reach out to the unchurched.

Laurie Biedenbender



Part of the Greco and Gonzalez families at Jonathan's and little Jesse's baptism: (l to r) Jesse Gonzalez, Daniel Greco, Grandma Mae, Joe Greco, Grandpa John, Jonathan Gonzalez, Michelle Gonzalez, Eddie Gonzalez, and Chris Greco. Michelle and Jesse Gonzalez started attending Information Class after their son, little Jesse (not pictured), began going to Sunday school. Then they invited Michelle's parents to church.

“Sometimes it comes down to the invitation of a child and the power of prayer,” says Sandy Greco, member and Sunday school teacher at Apostles, San Jose, Calif.

Sandy's daughter Sarah kept inviting her cousin Jesse Gonzalez to Sunday school. Then Sandy signed up Jesse's mom, her sister Michelle, for Information Class.

“I told her I'd baby-sit if she'd just come. She was a little mad, but she came anyway—and kept coming. And then I watched her entire life change.”

Next, Michelle invited their parents. “I've been praying for my parents for years,” says Sandy. “They sometimes came, but it was like they had to. Now they come because

they want to.”

And it hasn't stopped there. Michelle's husband is now attending Information Class. And little Jesse, who first visited Sunday school, is inviting the neighbors. Sandy's summary? “I say you can never invite too much or pray too much. Then you leave it up to God. It's God's work.”

Meanwhile, in Fort Worth, Tex., Vickie Ehlers learned about Abiding Faith Lutheran Church in a new-parent mailing. “I'd been brought up Lutheran, and the girls—Kimberly and Kylie—needed to be baptized, so we visited Abiding Faith.”

The baptism led to regular church and Sunday school attendance. “Church is sometimes hard for children. Sunday school is more of a one-on-one thing. The stories and activities keep them interested.”

The Word has traveled to other family members as well. Three-year-old Kylie recently put her hand on Grandma's heart and said, “Did you know that Jesus is in your heart and in my heart too?”

Vickie's brother, seeing his nieces grow in faith, dropped off a gift and a note at Pastor Bill Werth's house. “I just want to thank you for your Sunday school,” it said.

The home-church connection

Sometimes Sunday schools reach parents through their children. Sometimes they reach children through their parents. Either way, the desired end result is a partner-

A free, quarterly newsletter addressing the interests of the 5,838 WELS Sunday school teachers is available from the Commission on Youth Discipleship. *Partners in Christian Education* “aims to encourage WELS Sunday school teachers and to suggest biblical resources and strategies that will strengthen children's nurture in Lutheran congregations,” said Gerald Kastens, youth discipleship administrator.

To receive a copy, send your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address to Youth Discipleship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3224; <gkcyd@sab.wels.net>

ship between parents and church—the spiritual training partnership that God commands.

“The church has a responsibility for nurture, and the home has a responsibility for nurture,” says Gerald Kastens, administrator of the Commission on Youth Discipleship. But right now, he notes, the partnership is not an equal one. “God tells parents, ‘Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord,’ but the church and school have taken over for the parents. We’ve allowed that to happen, and it shouldn’t be.”

How can we empower parents to train their children spiritually? How can we forge a stronger home-church partnership? Both Sunday schools and parents must reach out to each other.

Seven things Sunday schools can do

1—Communicate with parents via newsletters, home visits, telephone calls, conversations at drop-off and pick-up time—anything to make contact.

2—Display lesson illustrations, projects, class pictures, and what’s new on an ever-changing bulletin board.

3—Recruit more parents as teachers. Our Savior’s, East Brunswick, N.J., and Apostles, San Jose, Calif., have found that a rotating teacher schedule encourages more parents to teach. Parents know they will only teach for a while, and then they’ll rest and refuel by attending adult Bible class.

4—Encourage husband-wife teams to teach. The couple will enjoy the job-share, the Spirit will build them up through the Word, and the students will see a mom and dad working together for the Lord.

5—Invite parents to sit in on a lesson. They will better appreciate the teacher’s work and their children’s spiritual growth.

6—Start a home-Sunday school society, a PTA for Sunday school parents. Discuss basic parenting skills, discipline techniques, how to hold a home devotion.

7—Plan fellowship activities for Sunday school families: roller-skating, picnics, sledding, etc.

How can we forge a stronger home-church partnership? Both Sunday schools and parents must reach out to each other.

Seven things parents can do

1—Talk to your children about their Sunday school lesson. Ask about the craft project. Read the story at home. Discuss more penetrating questions as they grow up. Pray about the lesson together.

2—Tell your children what you learned in Bible class: “Pastor showed me that passage in a whole new light. . . . I want to look it up again at home.”

3—Listen to your children’s memory treasures. Better yet, learn them together.

4—Encourage the teacher. Thank him regularly. Send him a Christmas card. Tell him how much your children have learned.

5—Teach a Sunday school class. You’ll share the best news ever with the next generation—and you’ll grow in the process too.

6—Offer to help. Bring a snack. Assist with an art project. Purchase the book the teacher has had her eyes on.

7—Talk the talk. Echo Sunday school class all week. Integrate Jesus, sin, forgiveness, blessing, and heaven into your everyday speech.

Blessings of the partnership

When the parents and the Sunday school work together to teach children, the partnership God designed works. The Word isn’t boxed up into a two-hour Sunday morning ritual that fades soon after brunch. It lives in our homes and our children’s hearts. And, as the Ehlers and the Greco-Gonzalez families have learned, it bursts out of its seams to reach grandmas and grandpas and aunts and uncles—and other little children that Jesus has graciously invited to come to him.

NL

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

Christ-Light® connection

“Recognizing the home-Sunday school partnership, the *Christ-Light* religion curriculum empowers parents to train their children spiritually at home,” says Gerald Kastens. “Teachers send messages home with each lesson. The message contains the lesson or a lesson summary and suggests an activity the family can do together. The messages also encourage parents in their spiritual training.

“We also look forward to the adult lessons the Commission for Adult Discipleship is developing. These will parallel *Christ-Light* lessons, so that on any given Sunday, what the child learns in his Sunday school classroom will be the same lesson his parents learn in Bible class.”



A cycle of addiction

A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction A cycle of addiction

People caught in the cycle of addiction use sex and food to replace God as the center of their lives.

Linda R. Baacke

Sam* is a faithful church member. He's on the council, is an usher, and sends his children to the church's school. At night, he ducks into the local adult bookstore to rent pornography. Sometimes, for a change of pace, he heads to the exotic dance club.

Jodie* is 20 years old. She's beautiful and popular. She attends college, but still teaches Sunday school. After the potluck dinner, she sneaks off to the bathroom to throw up. That night, she wakes up at 1 AM to exercise in her room.

Sex and food. Two items, designed by God as wonderful blessings, can become frightening addictions.

Sexual addiction

Sam didn't grow up planning to be a sex addict. But he is.

Sam, like most sex addicts, felt lonely and lost. Because he didn't find emotional intimacy in his relationships, he used sex as a temporary fix, thinking it would fill his need. But, as Sam now knows, illicit sex never satisfies.

Most sexual addictions start with fantasies. Yet, because a human's sinful nature is never content, fantasies only fulfill an addict for a short time. Once an addict feels safe acting out, he moves to the next level of excitement, to the next level of fulfillment.

The addict soon progresses to pornography and masturbation. Then to phone sex, topless bars, and possi-

bly prostitutes. He thinks these acts provide the intimacy he desires. And they do—for a little while. But it is not enough, and soon the cycle of addiction starts again.

However, the addiction is



Sam

not about the sex act. It is about control. An addict is in charge of the movie or the magazine or his fantasy, therefore, he thinks he's in control—even though he's out of control.

Because he uses sex to gain a sense of control, an addict no longer trusts in God to fill his needs. And the gift from God that was created for good is twisted into something ungodly.

Food addiction

Jodie didn't grow up planning to be a food addict. But she is.

Jodie, like most food addicts, wanted to be in control. Her addiction started when she was young because she listened to society, which says thinness equals beauty. Yet Jodie never thought she was thin enough—and she never thought she was beautiful. But, as Jodie now knows, it is impossible to achieve her self-set standard.

Food addicts use different methods to meet their unrealistic goals. Some addicts starve themselves. Others eat and then vomit. Still others compulsively overeat. In addition, some abuse laxatives—even up to 20 or 30 a day. Many exercise compulsively and secretly—like Jodie who does sit-ups in the middle of the night.

Food addictions start for many reasons. For Jodie, and for many others, it was society's pressures. Others were abused as children. Some have family problems. All, though, use food to gain control and fill their needs.

These addicts do not see themselves as created children of God, beautiful to him. Instead, they turn to a number on a scale to provide a sense of well-being. But that number never satisfies. Only God can.

Mastering addiction

For Sam, Jodie, and countless others stuck in the cycle of addiction, the outlook may seem bleak.

But it doesn't have to be. The following three realizations can help an addict break the cycle.

Realize the role that addiction plays. An addict needs to admit she is searching for intimacy, fulfillment, and control in the wrong places. She's replaced healthy coping skills with unhealthy practices. Once she recognizes that her addiction has replaced God as the center of her life, she can get the help she needs.

Realize that recovery is a process. True change is possible, as the apostle Paul writes, "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. . . . Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (Romans 6:18,19).

But when an addict admits to his sin, it doesn't mean everything is immediately "normal." He will cope the rest of his life. At first, for a Christian, the struggles to overcome addiction may be greater, and he may fall back. That's because Satan works overtime to sabotage those who try to walk in step with the Holy Spirit. But there is hope—Jesus conquered Satan, and Jesus can help the addict conquer addiction.

Realize that the gospel breaks the cycle. An addict beats herself up with the law. She believes that sin brings punishment, and that her sin is so great she does not deserve love or forgiveness. She does not accept that Christ sets her truly free—no condemnation, no guilt.

As a Christian continues to struggle with addiction and places control in God's hands, she finds

peace and power in this promise: "For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

That's reassuring, not just for an addict, but for all Christians.

NL

* Names have been changed. Photos are of models.

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



Jodie

Thanks to Tom Thomas and Tina Rains, marriage and family counselors at Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, and to Dr. John Johnson, counselor at Christian Family Counselors, for the information for this article.

Do you need to talk? Call **1-800-422-7341**. The WELS CareLine offers 24-hour confidential Christian counseling. A professional counselor answers from 8 AM to 5 PM (Central Time) on workdays. All other times, trained volunteers staff the phone.

The addictive cycle

People who don't have an addiction can't understand an addict's thought process. This diagram shows how an addict gets in a cycle that is difficult to break.

Faulty beliefs

Addicts, in general, have low self-esteem and feel unworthy.

Impaired thoughts

Addicts may become delusional or paranoid and may rationalize their thoughts.

Preoccupation

Addicts daydream in a trance-like state about what makes them feel good.

Ritualization

Addicts plan how and when they will next fulfill their act.

Compulsive activity

Addicts complete the act they were fantasizing about. But the good feelings last only a moment and are replaced by the guilt and worry of being discovered.

Despair

Addicts believe they are no good and will never be able to quit.

Preoccupation

Addicts return to this phase.

Unmanageable

Addicts feel that they need the addiction—emotionally and physically.

To break the cycle, addicts need to first break the physical habit. Sex addicts need to avoid videos, magazines, 1-900 lines. Food addicts need medical help or hospitalization. Once the physical habit is broken, an addict can work on the emotional and spiritual challenges.

Satanism—the deadly scheme

We constantly live on an invisible battlefield in this life. Our battles are against a formidable enemy—Satan and his hosts.

John M. Parlow

The late 20th century has seen interest in the occult explode and the attitude toward the occult change—remarkably.

Society and satanism

This year thousands will pay \$19.95 for a Parker Brother's Ouija board. The sale of Anton LeVey's *Satanic Bible* will rival that of The Bible. Talk shows will boost ratings by promoting the occult. Television networks will inculcate adults into the arena of witchcraft and magic with humorous and clever illusions.

Hollywood will develop an unhealthy interest in thousands of adolescents who pay to see the latest "slasher" movies. Some TV programs will slowly and spiritually pollute millions of children, for the occult has even invaded that world of animated escape, where children once lazily spent their Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons. Some in the music industry will promote the occult for the almighty dollar and to the detriment of souls.

And while the occult generally refers to the darker side of supernatural activity, it also involves parapsychology. The occult was big and bold in the 20th century, and is not going away in the 21st—Scripture makes that clear (Matthew 24).

Interest in the occult, particularly satanism, is on the rise and seems to

captivate the minds and energies of our youth. Satanism is a growing teenage subculture phenomenon, and not just among burned-out under-achievers. Intelligent, upper-middle-class honor students and covert adults in every professional vocation are dabbling. Self-styled and self-generated satanic cults are becoming more blatant in recruiting youth.

Amid the hoopla and shock of occult mysteries, we need to be aware of this phenomenon. One of the best ways we can "fight the good fight" is to expose the lies of the Liar and proclaim the power of God.

The Bible and satanism

God condemns all forms of witchcraft and occult worship. "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead" (Deuteronomy 18:10,11). Such worship is nothing more than gross idolatry.

The Bible urges us to be on our guard against the devil's schemes and tactics. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Be aware that Satan still desires your soul and attacks the same as he

has in the past. Satan's attacks can be summarized in two categories: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). With the phrase "deceiving spirits," Paul here refers to Satan's overt methods of attack. The deceiving spirits are false teachers. They are called "spirits" in accord with what they represent and in accord with the spirit (the devil) that speaks through them. Today, these are satanists, vampires, witches, spirit guides, or anyone who blatantly teaches contrary to Scripture.

One of the best ways we can "fight the good fight" is to expose the lies of the Liar and proclaim the power of God.

With the phrase "things taught by demons," Paul refers to Satan's covert methods of attack. The "things taught by demons" are nothing more than teachings of false teachers. Today false teachings are abundant, not only in society but even in the church. Some false teachings are more obvious than others. The most damaging is the belief that you can earn your salvation.

Lightning bolt—Satanists often use the lightning bolt as a power symbol.

666—This number was given to the devil in Revelation 13:18.

Anarchy symbol—Widely used by heavy metal music fans, this symbol represents the abolition of all law.

Christians ought to recognize that any form of occult worship or witchcraft is no proper area for entertainment or idle curiosity. It ought to be as abominable to Christians as murder and adultery. 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. That is a good example for all modern Christians.

Warning signs

Because young people are often the prey of satanists, the following list of warning signs is geared toward parents but can easily apply to friends and acquaintances. (Warning: Just because someone exhibits one of these characteristics does not mean that individual is involved in a cult or covenant. But if two or more appear regularly, don't hesitate to take action. Confront such a person in Christian love and concern).

1. Watch for an overemphasized interest in the occult.

- occult and satanic literature (i.e., *The Satanic Bible*, vampirism)
- school essays about occult or fixations with death and violence
- occult symbols (drawn on floor or carved into objects, tattoos)
- an altar (sometimes hidden in the closet)
- occult items: robe, silver chalice, sword, oddly shaped knives, black candles, bone collections
- a "Book of Shadows," a satanic journal in a black or ornately covered book or other journal
- writings in strange lettering such as Egyptian glyphs, runes,

backward script, or a homemade alphabet

2. Notice strong behavioral and personality changes.

- whole new set of friends
- self-mutilation such as occult symbols cut into the skin
- interest in occult or religious designs
- remarkable increase in aggression and violent behavior
- drastic drop in academics
- an obsessive interest in heavy metal bands that push satanic themes
- preoccupation with death and destruction
- consistent inability to account for absences

How to help

If you suspect a loved one is involved in satanism, please act. First, pray. With God's help a person can overcome anything and anyone (Romans 8:31-39). However, if you attempt to fight against Satan's forces without God's help, you will just become another victim.

Second, make a copy of any writings and list of any occult items belonging to the person.

Third, get an expert opinion on what level of involvement these items suggest. Resources may be law enforcement, school counselors, clergy, mental health personnel, and other organizations.

Finally, encourage the person to seek professional counseling along with pastoral counseling. If at all possible, enlist Christian counselors.

His final word

We constantly live on an invisible battlefield in this life. Our battles

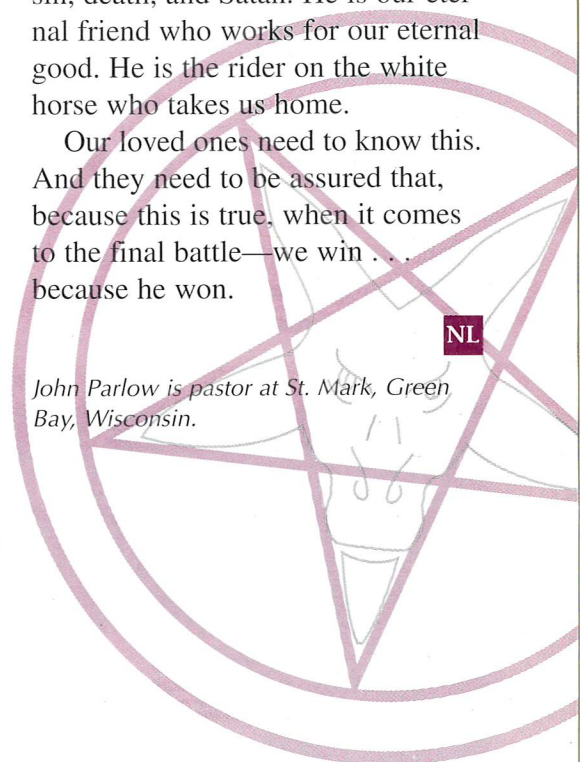
are against a formidable enemy—Satan and his hosts. The battles are fierce, the price of victory is precious—eternal life.

Our ministry as Christians is to wield the sword of the Spirit. As we win the lost and nurture the found we remember that the Lord Almighty is on our side. Therefore we need not fear nor go through life peering nervously around the next corner.

The Lord Almighty fights for us. He is our fortress who commands his angels to guard his children (Psalm 91:11; Hebrews 1:14). He is the victorious Lamb who conquered sin, death, and Satan. He is our eternal friend who works for our eternal good. He is the rider on the white horse who takes us home.

Our loved ones need to know this. And they need to be assured that, because this is true, when it comes to the final battle—we win . . . because he won.

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



Cross of confusion—Combining the cross with a question mark, this symbol questions the validity of Christ.

Upside-down cross—The cross represents Christ's victory over death. The inverted cross represents the defeat of Christianity.

Inverted pentagram—Jesus pictured unbelievers as goats in the parable of the sheep and the goats. A goat's head is used as a symbol for Satan.

Sing along with saints and angels

A trip abroad offers history, music, and fellowship to WELS members.

Julie K. Tessmer

One . . . two . . . three seconds.
The sound echoed off the cathedral walls and ceiling.

Four . . . five . . . six seconds!

The longest reverberation yet. We kept singing, listening to the harmonies bounce around the room, until they finally died away.

But not really. The music and the singing, as well as the friendships and the memories, will stay with us much longer than those six seconds.

In June, 31 WELS members traveled to England, the Netherlands, and Germany as part of a 16-day European choral history study tour. Led by Martin Luther College professors Roger Hermanson and Mark Lenz, we studied the history of these countries and composers and saw famous sites.

But what we did most was sing. From our three-day workshop in New Ulm, Minn., before the trip (we had to learn the music sometime!) through singing in 10 different churches or cathedrals during the tour, to our final stop at the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, the tour was filled with melodies and harmonies. Daily devotions on the bus ended with four-part (and sometimes more) hymn singing. We often caught people humming a tune "I just couldn't get out of my head." We learned new songs and remembered old tunes.

In the same way, we made new friends from a variety of backgrounds and reestablished old acquaintances. The common bond

of Christ made these friendships all the more special.

"We could have gone anywhere in the United States and had just as good a time because of the people," said Sue Burgeson, a member of Grace, Sitka, Alaska. "The Christian bond was the best part. Going to Europe was just the icing."

Synod schools and organizations offer opportunities to travel abroad with WELS members. A special tour of Israel is in the works; see p. 25 for details.

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



Members of the European choral history group singing at Chichester Cathedral, England. The group spent three days in New Ulm, Minn., before the trip, learning music that they sang in cathedrals and churches in England and Germany. "I never had the experience of singing with a group as good as this," said Clay Zank, a member at Redeemer, Weston, Wis. "At our first practice, I almost had to stop singing. I had goosebumps."



Mark Lenz and Roger Hermanson, the tour leaders, at Ely Cathedral, England. Besides singing at the cathedrals, the group learned about the countries' and the cathedrals' rich histories. Lutherland was of particular interest. "We talk and read about these places, but to actually go there and hear people tell us is so much richer," said Hermanson. "It's so valuable for teachers because it enriches their ability to communicate our roots in a more interesting way."

We often began our day with Mark Lenz leading us in devotion and song from a daily devotional booklet called "Sing Along with Saints and Angels."

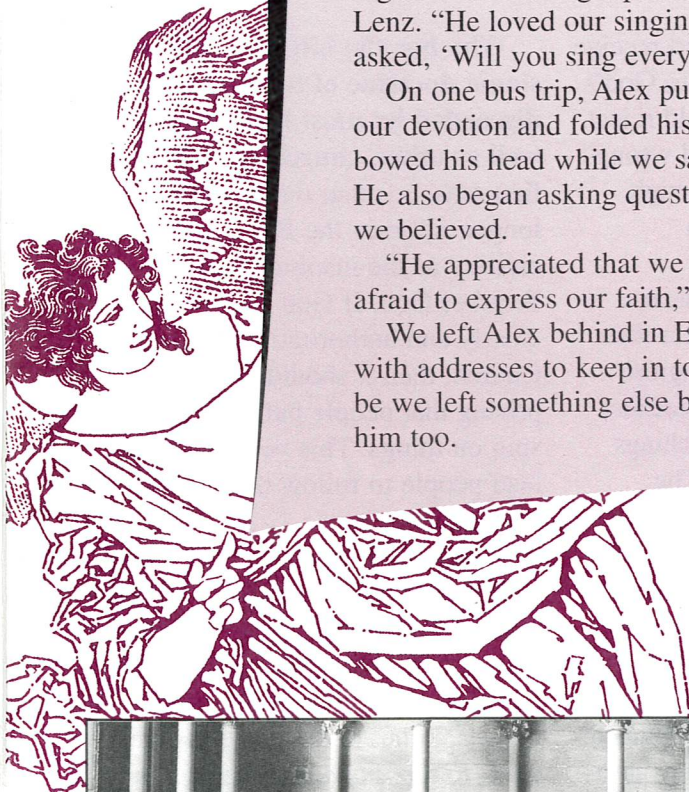
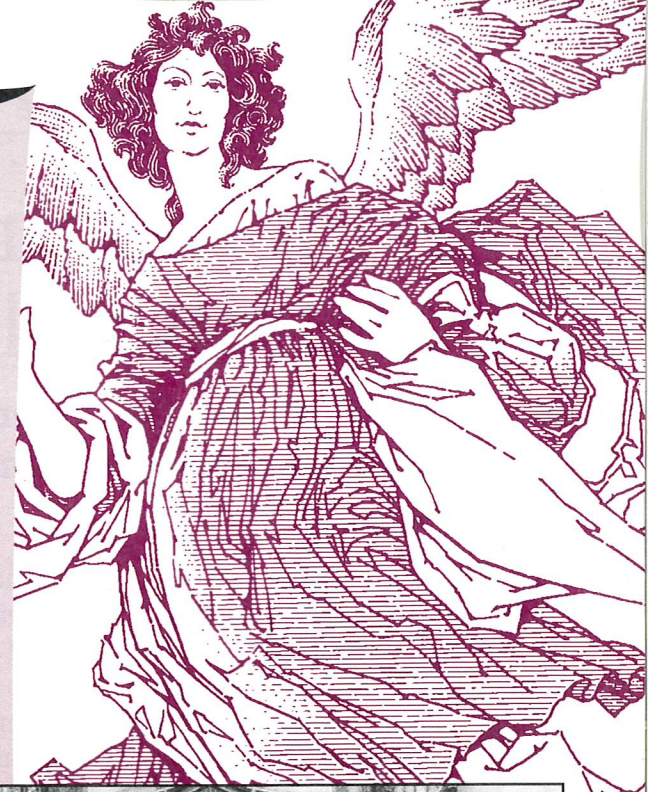
These devotions not only reminded us why we were there, but also told others the same thing. Alex, our bus driver, sensed there was something different about our group.

"The hymns we were singing were reaching him and having a powerful impact," said Lenz. "He loved our singing on the bus and asked, 'Will you sing every day?'"

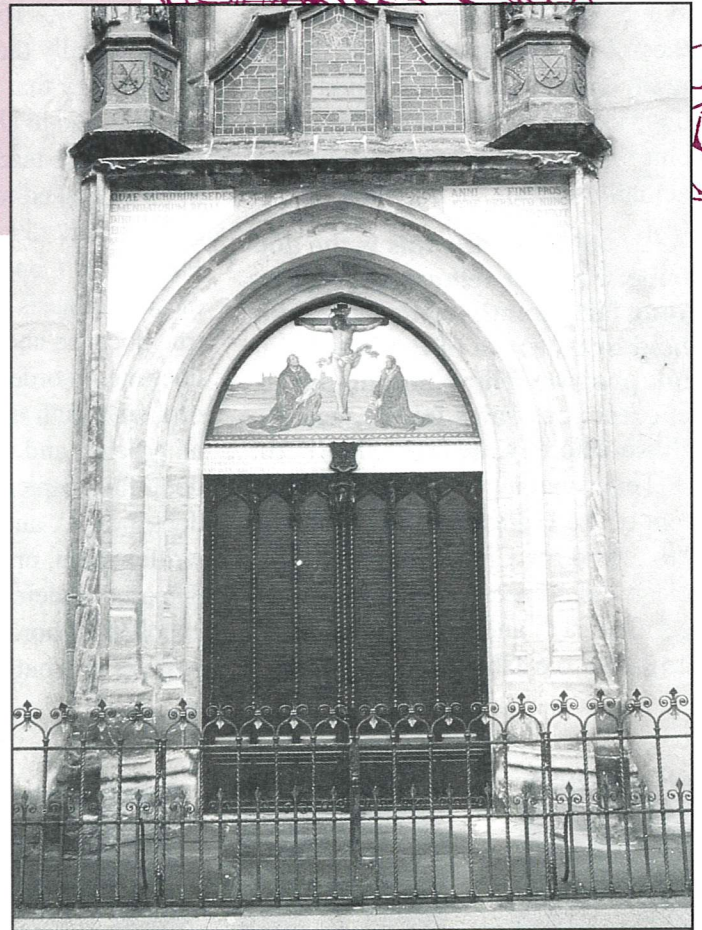
On one bus trip, Alex pulled over during our devotion and folded his hands and bowed his head while we sang the doxology. He also began asking questions about what we believed.

"He appreciated that we weren't afraid to express our faith," said Lenz.

We left Alex behind in England—with addresses to keep in touch. Maybe we left something else behind for him too.

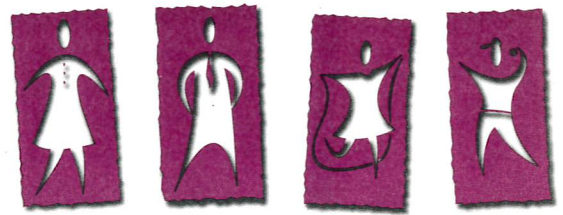


Members of the European choral history group at Ely Cathedral. Thirty-one WELS members from nine states toured England, the Netherlands, and Germany for 16 days. Friendships quickly developed. "In two or three days all the people came to be so special, so quickly," said Esther Lenz, a member at St. John, New Ulm, Minn. "And some we'll never see again this side of heaven."



The restored doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses. History was an important part of the trip, from understanding the times of major composers to learning more about our Lutheran heritage. "It isn't just a bunch of dead old people," said Mark Lenz, a tour leader. "The past helps us understand the present."

The loving practice of church fellowship



We protect our family under God by separating ourselves from those who deviate from the truth.

David J. Valleskey

Few, if any, doctrines held by WELS draw more questions (even among WELS members) than the doctrine of church fellowship, the “avoid them” aspect of this doctrine in particular. It’s simply out of synch with our times. A visitor to the WELS Web page wrote, “Is this really part of your church body’s doctrinal stand? I didn’t think that a church in the 20th century would actually believe such a thing.”

To put it briefly, this is the doctrine: Practice fellowship, express your faith jointly, with those who hold to the truth of the Word. Do not practice fellowship, do not express your faith jointly, with those who deviate from the truth.

This is not a new teaching. The intent of the Lutheran Confessions was “to afford the Christian reader . . . clear and correct information concerning each and every controverted article of our Christian religion, as

to what he should regard and receive as right and true according to God’s Word . . . and what he should reject, shun, and avoid as false and wrong” (Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, “Of Articles in Controversy,” 16).

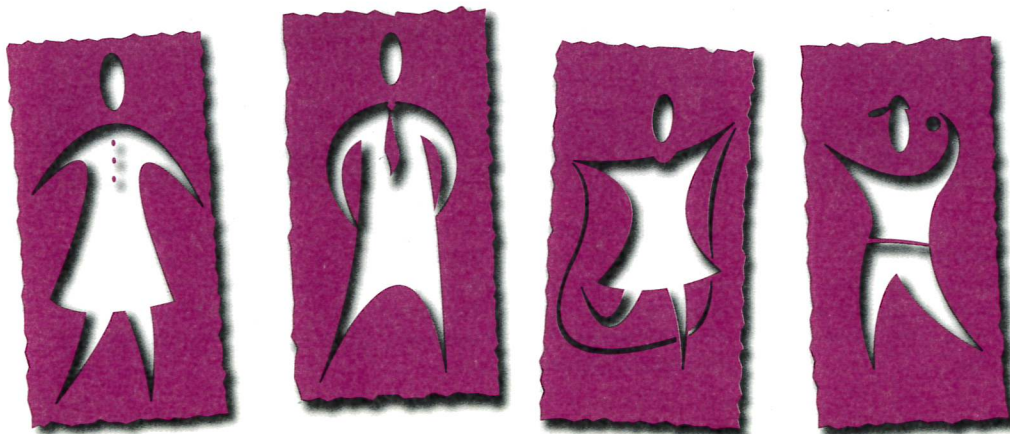
Repeatedly the Confessions use terminology that makes it clear their purpose was to sharply distinguish between true teachings and teachers to be embraced and false teachings and teachers to be avoided. The Formula of Concord was written in thesis/antithesis form, i.e., stating the true doctrine and then stating the false doctrine, in order that “the foundation of divine truth might be manifest in all articles, and that all unlawful, doubtful, suspicious, and condemned doctrines . . . and whoever may have written them, or even now may be disposed to defend them, might be exposed” (Thorough Declaration, “Of Articles in Controversy,” 19-20).

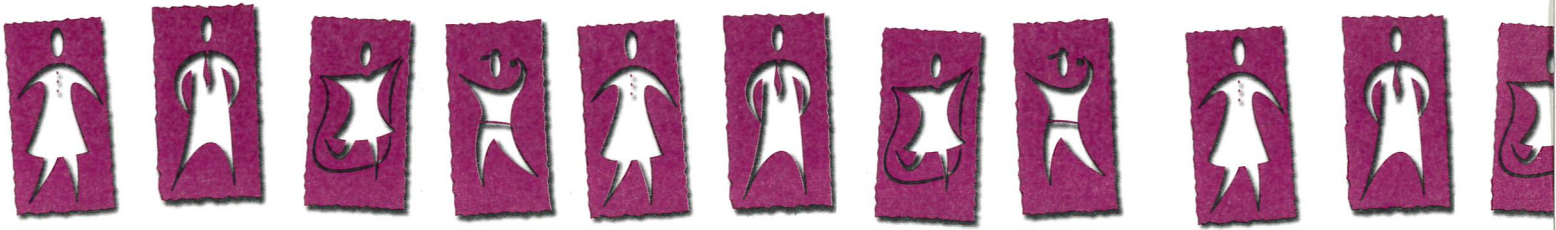
Why has the biblical, confessional doctrine of fellowship been discarded by most Lutheran, as well as other, church bodies? The first reason is that many bodies no longer embrace the Bible in its entirety as the inspired, inerrant Word of God. If God does not speak clearly and authoritatively to his Church, then it should not be surprising that people put their own spin on things. This will inevitably lead people to follow the path of least resistance.

Which leads to a second reason why most Lutheran bodies no longer hold to the historic Lutheran practice of fellowship: It’s not the popular thing to do in our society. It’s more popular, in the name of tolerance, to gloss over differences as minor variations in interpretation than to say, as the Lutheran Confessions say over and over, that false doctrine and false teachers shall not be tolerated in our midst.

Difficult as it may be, this is a doctrine to which we must continue to hold firmly. It is what the Scriptures teach and a major way we protect one another within the family of God.

Error “spreads like gangrene,” says Paul (2 Timothy 2:17). Slowly but surely gangrene, if it is not cut out, kills. So it is with error. Error is poison to the soul. Whole church bodies have been





poisoned unawares through the injection of little bits of error over an extended period of time with the result that, in time, very little of the truth is left.

What shall we do with the truth God has given to us?

1. Guard the truth.

Paul urges Timothy, "Guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20). The book of Jude talks about the need to "contend for the faith [the body of truth] that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). It is a solemn trust: Guard the truth. Contend for the truth.

2. Teach the truth.

Paul says to Titus, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). "Sound doctrine," that's one of the phrases we find again and again in the Pastoral Epistles. Only sound doctrine, i.e., the truth, preserves and builds people up in the faith.

3. Pass on the truth.

Paul encourages Timothy: "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2). One of our grave responsibilities is to pass on intact to the next generation the whole body of truth we have received.

4. Warn against those who would distort and destroy the truth.

Paul begins his first letter to Timothy by warning him against

false teachers who were disturbing the church: "Command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies" (1 Timothy 1:3,4). He warns the Colossian Christians, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Whole church bodies have been poisoned unawares through the injection of little bits of error over an extended period of time.

5. Avoid those who teach contrary to the truth.

This means avoiding the practice of fellowship with unbelievers, as Paul brings out in 2 Corinthians 6:14,17 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord."

But the admonition to avoid false teachings and teachers also includes the heterodox who mingle truth and error; for the error they teach is no less destructive than that which comes from the lips or pen of the unbeliever. That is why Paul writes, "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching [the whole body of doctrine] you have learned. Keep

away from them" (Romans 16:17). Cling to the truth; avoid error.

Some might respond, "Aren't you being a bit arrogant? Do you think you have a monopoly on the truth?" To that we can only reply, "No, we do not. No human being has a monopoly on the truth. But God does. And he has seen fit to reveal his truth in his Word. So we must cling to the Word."

And we must just as earnestly—but always lovingly—warn against and avoid teachings and teachers that go contrary to the Word of truth, even at the risk of being labeled rigid, narrow-minded, intolerant, or worse.

More than 40 years ago, WELS detected a change in the way its former sister synod, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, was interpreting and putting into practice the biblical doctrine of fellowship. This compelled us to dig deeply into the Word and restudy this doctrine. The majority of our pastors, teachers, and lay people today did not live through those times. Some perhaps are wondering how important this doctrine really is. It's time we thoroughly study it again and thus give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to impress its truth and vital importance upon our hearts. For through the loving, responsible practice of church fellowship, we protect one another within the family of God.

NL

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



DISTRICT CONVENTION NEWS

In June, each of the 12 districts met in convention. The following news highlights what they discussed. Next month we will run election results for district officers. Thanks to the district reporters for the information.

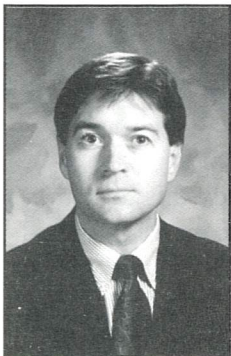
Arizona-California

Convention paper: Paul Janke presented "Christ in Us: The Place of the Doctrine of Sanctification in Reformed and Lutheran Teaching."

New congregation: Lamb of God, Phoenix, was accepted into synodical membership.

"This We Believe": After reviewing revisions to "This We Believe," a statement of WELS doctrine, the delegates suggested a clarifying change in the paragraph dealing with fellowship.

East Fork Lutheran High School: Delegates discussed the future of East Fork Lutheran High School. The Administrative Committee for Native American Missions will seek the Apaches' input. All people in the district are encouraged to share ideas to help the committee make its recommendations.



Paul Janke was elected as Arizona-California district president. He replaces Marcus Nitz, who retired.

Retirements: A standing ovation honored Marcus C. Nitz for his service as district president. Nitz is retiring from both the presidency and the full-time pastoral ministry. A special dinner and "roast" was held.

A standing ovation was also given for Allen Schroeder's service as district secretary. Schroeder chose not to run this year.

District Mission Boards: Outgoing members Tom Schlittenhart and Joe Worisheck were thanked for their service to the California Mission District

Mission Board and the Arizona Mission Board respectively.

Hermann John

Dakota-Montana

New congregations: Grace, Minot, N.D., and Shepherd of the Valley, West Fargo, N.D., were accepted into synodical membership.

Convention paper: James Janke presented "We (Still) Do Not Have The Same Spirit. (A Critique of Contemporary Reformed Christology and Its Impact on the Doctrine of the Lord's Supper.)"

Called worker shortage: Richard Lauersdorf, the synod's vice president for mission and ministry, emphasized the challenge of retaining young people as well as recruiting and retaining candidates for the public ministry.

World missions: Missionary Pieter Reid spoke about what is happening in Indonesia.

Citizenship: Winfried Schroeder, born in South Africa, received American citizenship on July 5. He was ordained in 1985 and currently serves at St. Paul, Roscoe, S.D.

Gift planning counselor: Mr. Ken Dierks was installed as gift planning counselor.

Jon Hadler

Michigan

Gift planning counselors: Delegates acknowledged teacher Norman Stellick's years of service. Stellick, who is retiring, and his wife are serving with WELS Kingdom Workers in Taiwan. Mr. Leon Brands and Mr. Alfred Cereske were installed as the new district gift planning counselors.

Forward in Christ: Delegates

encouraged participation in the Forward in Christ program but expressed concern that financial details were vague concerning the proposed building projects.

"This We Believe": Delegates suggested several changes for "This We Believe."

Called worker shortage: Throughout the convention, discussion centered on the current and future shortage of called workers. Suggestions and encouragements, as well as many prayers, were offered.

Miscellaneous: The district president will pursue a personal pilot's license and instrument rating for travel to distant district business.

David M. Zahn

Minnesota

Called worker shortage: President Cross drew special attention to the need for worker recruitment. The delegates called for an increased emphasis on recruitment by calling more full-time recruiters to reach more congregations. They also called on all congregations to establish recruitment committees to explain the need for young people to study for full-time gospel ministry.

Convention paper: Prof. Emeritus Ernst Wendland presented "Jesus is Coming Again."

Missions: Missionary Peter Reid spoke of the work done in Indonesia and the upheaval that caused our missionaries to leave.

Ron Uhlhorn spoke of his departure for Africa to serve as pastoral advisor to the nationals in Malawi.

Loren Steele extended an invitation to "Asian Call '98," an international gathering of people with Asian background in St. Paul, Minn., in October.

The delegates encouraged the Board for Home Missions to use mission funds to start new Lutheran elementary schools in mission settings.

WELS anniversary: The delegates encouraged Martin Luther College to proceed with the reevaluation of their site plans and supported the building of a chapel on the campus with money from a special WELS 150th anniversary offering.

They also supported the effort of Forward in Christ to preserve our synod's history by building archives on the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary campus.

"This We Believe": Encouragement was given to all pastors and delegates to study the rewording of "This We Believe." Circuit pastors were appointed to study the document at pastors' study clubs before October.

Northwestern Lutheran:

Encouragement was given to pastors and delegates to read *Northwestern Lutheran* and to consider (or reconsider) bundle subscriptions for their congregation.

Jeffrey A. Bovee

Nebraska

New congregation: Abiding Love, Loveland, Colo., was granted congregational membership.

Called worker shortage: Delegates focused on the great need for called workers because there are 70 pastoral vacancies and 55 teacher vacancies in the synod—24 vacancies in the Nebraska district in May.

Area Lutheran high schools: Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School (NELHS) needs \$200,000 to meet its immediate short-term debts. The delegates decided that NELHS should plan to relocate to the Omaha area by the fall of the year 2000.

They also said that Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School should work toward the goal of opening in the fall of 2001.

Gift planning counselors: Teacher Arnold Nommenson was installed as Nebraska District Planned Giving Counselor.

Resolution prayer request: The delegates wrote a prayer for the Nebraska district. Their requests included their district, those in synod administration and ministerial education schools, and mission work in the United States, Canada, and the world.

Web site: District news can be found at <www.fortnet.org/spelcs/District_Convention.html>.

Miscellaneous: A celebration and "roast" honored Joel Frank's 30 years in the pastoral ministry and eight years as district president.

Keith Peterson

North Atlantic

Convention essay: Prof. Richard Balge from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary presented "The Active and Passive Obedience of Christ."

District mission board: A resolution was passed to increase the size of the district mission board by one layman (two pastors, three laymen). Mr. Paul Kuske, from Ottawa, Ontario, was elected.

Convention date: A resolution was passed by a vote of 28 to 27 to reschedule our next district convention on a weekend instead of during the week. This will allow more laymen who work full time during the week to attend as delegates. The Sunday of the district convention will be called "Laity Sunday," since most congregations will have lay people conduct their worship that day.

Conference: The day before the convention, Mission Counselor John Huebner led a "missionary's conference" on friendship evangelism.

Kevin Schultz

Northern Wisconsin

World missions: We heard from Richard Russow from Albania and

Pieter Reid from Indonesia. Both had been forced to leave their work because of civil unrest. These missionaries remind us that the work of carrying God's Word to the world can be dangerous, but rewarding.

Merger: By a near unanimous vote, the delegates approved the merger of the Northern Wisconsin District Institutional Ministries with the institutional ministries of Madison Institutional Ministries, Inc. and Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry, Inc.

Called worker shortage: Delegates were urged to communicate more actively the need for young men and women to prepare for the privilege of full-time work in the public ministry.

Convention paper: Wayne Mueller, administrator of the Board for Parish Services, presented "What Do We Mean, Jesus Is the Lord of the Church?"

Joel Lillo

Pacific Northwest

Sunday school: Delegates encouraged the district's called workers to establish and maintain the best possible Sunday school program in their congregation, with special encouragement to implement the *Christ-Light*[®] curriculum.

Anniversary: The district supported our synod's 150th anniversary celebration by establishing a district steering committee to coordinate the district Forward in Christ celebration.

New circuit: A new circuit of the congregations in Idaho was formed.

Teacher certification: The district memorialized the synod in convention to expedite Minnesota state certification of teacher graduates to facilitate their obtaining certification in other states.

David Birsching

South Atlantic

New congregation:

Trinity, Castries, St.

Lucia, was accepted into synodical membership.



Pastor Mark Henrich (left) and Chris Martin, a lay delegate, at the South Atlantic District convention. Both men are at St. John's, Antigua.

Vicars: The district encouraged the home mission board to continue with the "Vicars in Missions" program. This program places vicars in out-reach areas, giving them practical experience in mission settings before they graduate and are assigned.

Convention paper: Richard Lauersdorf, first vice president of WELS, presented "Jesus, the final Word from God."

Anniversary: The district celebrated its 25th anniversary. Arlene Steih, a member of Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., served as a guest organist. Her late husband, William, was the first WELS pastor to serve in the southeastern United States. John Meyer, pastor at Peace, Holiday, Fla., was also at the original constituting convention held in 1973.

Paul Zell

South Central

Convention paper: Prof. Paul Wendland from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., presented an essay on Christology.

Special Ministries: The delegates encouraged information to be sent to the congregations regarding special ministries and its opportunities for our congregations.

Life insurance: Encouragement was given by the delegates to request WELS-VEBA to pursue options of obtaining higher amounts of life insurance through their program for called workers.

New congregations: Two new congregations, Beautiful Savior, Bella Vista, Ark., and Amazing Grace, Pearland, Tex., were received into membership.

Charles Learman

Southeastern Wisconsin

Called worker shortage: President David Rutschow noted the high number of called worker vacancies throughout WELS. He encouraged delegates to pray and recruit future called leaders.

Convention essay: Prof. Forrest Bivens from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary presented, "How Does Our Christology Impact Our Daily Lives?" He also led a Bible study on the Psalms.

Missions: Missionary Pieter Reid presented an update on sharing the gospel in Indonesia.

WELS Connection: The Commission for Communication on Financial Support reported that 79 percent of our district congregations use the *WELS Connection* video series.

Music programs: The Board for Ministerial Education urged Lutheran elementary and high schools to encourage their students to develop their God-given musical talents due to a decreasing number of MLC graduates who are competent to lead the music in worship settings.

Second career pastoral candidates: About 10 percent of the students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are second career.

Scott Oelhafen

Western Wisconsin

Called worker shortage: There was a repeated drumbeat for the delegates to encourage young men and women to enter the preaching or teaching ministry.

Christian men's convocation: The convention began on Sunday with a men's Bible study focusing on "The makings of a godly leader."

Convention paper: Professor Em. Pastor John Jeske presented: "Christology and Justification: A Vital Link." Breakout groups then considered questions for discussion.

WELS anniversary committee: The district resolved "that we encourage continued planning and implementation of the anniversary celebration with the theme Forward in Christ also "that as a part off the celebration a special offering shall be planned." Gerhardt Cares of Columbus, Wis., is the chairman of the Western Wisconsin District Anniversary Committee.

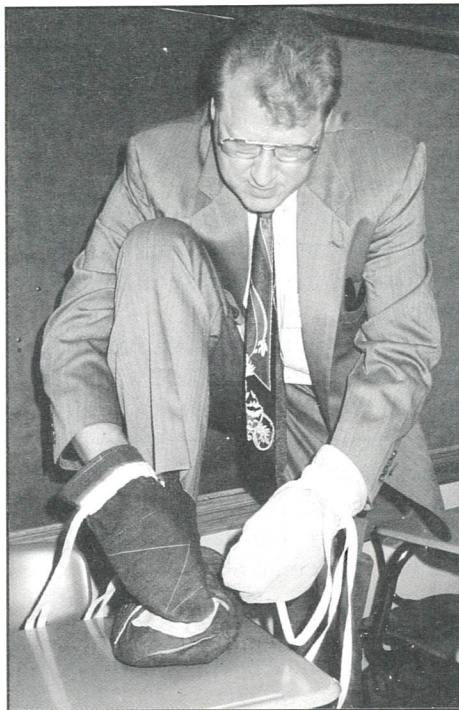
Workshops: Instead of offering reports, each commission under the Board for Parish Services conducted workshops, offering a closer look at their respective ministries.

World missions: Pieter Reid spoke about the mission in Indonesia and the recent turn of political events.

Merger of institutional ministries: Delegates resolved that WELS Madison Institutional Ministries, Inc.; Northern Wisconsin District Institutional Ministries, Inc.; and the Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry, Inc., combine into one ministry. This will serve the institutionalized throughout Wisconsin.

"This We Believe": The convention "felt that the revision was very well done and will serve the church well in the future." The floor committee also gave suggestions for the Commission on Inter-Church Relations to consider.

Elton C. Stroh



Norman Paul, pastor at Beautiful Savior, Marquette Heights, Ill., tries to tie his shoes while wearing a pair of mittens. Instead of giving reports at the Western Wisconsin District convention, each commission of Parish Services gave a one-hour workshop. The Commission on Special Ministries simulated a variety of disabilities to help delegates understand how important it is for congregations to meet the needs of all their members. Other exercises included trying to read while wearing smeared glasses, wearing earplugs, and trying to maneuver in wheelchairs.

rē·li·gi·on

Defining religion

Rationalism: A movement beginning in the 17th and 18th centuries that exalts human reason. Rationalists tend to be distrustful of authority and tradition and believe that truth can be found only through reason, observation, and experimentation. Rationalists exalt human reason above the Bible. The Scriptures, however, teach that God's Word is truth (John 17:17) and that we are to make our every thought obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5) and his Word.

Time to volunteer

Time—a valuable commodity. There never seems to be enough of it to get your work done, much less to do all the other things you planned.

Yet every month thousands of WELS members give their time and talents in volunteer work.

Why?

"I need to be giving to my Lord," said Lynnea Schliesleder, a member of Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.

Schliesleder runs her own business, is married, and is active in her church. Yet she still finds time to set up fellowship opportunities for members of Jesus Cares Ministries and help at a Bible class for 15 developmentally disabled adults.

"Getting there is hard," said Schliesleder. "But it's such a joy to be with these people, sharing God's Word with them and seeing their pleasure. I go home feeling enriched rather than that I've given up my evening."

In April a volunteer appreciation banquet celebrated the talents of over 1,100 mostly Milwaukee-area volunteers of WELS and other WELS organizations.

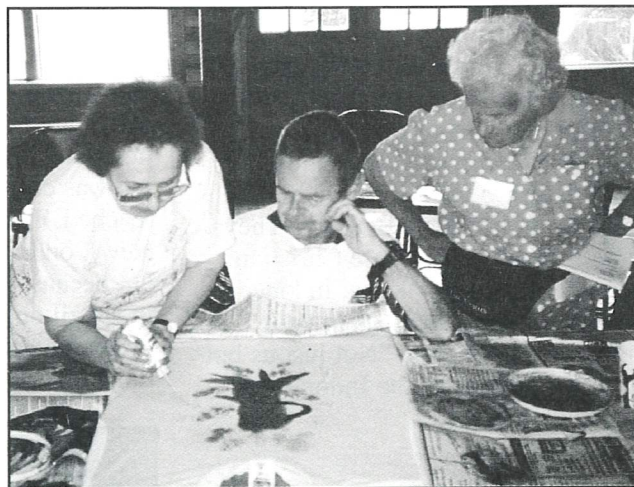
"We weren't stroking ourselves for volunteering. This was a celebration of lay people led by the spirit to serve the kingdom," said David Timm, national director of WELS Kingdom Workers. WELS Kingdom Workers and Lutheran Brotherhood co-sponsored the event.

Besides thanking God for volunteers, volunteers at the banquet were thanking God for the opportunity to serve him by serving others. And not just with physical needs.

"Volunteering is an opportunity to share and show our faith," said Judy Eisenmann, director of volunteer services and church outreach at Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services. "It gives us an opportunity to serve others without necessarily expecting something in return. It's what Jesus did for us."

And it doesn't matter whether it's mowing the church lawn, visiting a shut-in, doing mailings, or helping teach a Bible class.

"The Lord has blessed us," said Eisenmann. "We're not all millionaires, but we can give of our time and talents. We can say 'I care enough about you to give you some of my time.'"



Erna Nitschke (left) and Betty Hetzel work with Lloyd Olson at the Jesus Cares Ministries' weekend retreat at Camp Minikani, Hubertus, Wis., in summer 1997. Fourteen people gave their time and talents to help 26 developmentally disabled people enjoy a weekend of boating, crafts, games, and worship.

There are many opportunities for volunteering in WELS. Volunteer locally at branches of WELS Lutherans for Life, Jesus Cares programs, Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers, and Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. Volunteer nationally (or internationally) with WELS Kingdom Workers. Or call your pastor and see how you can help at your church and other local organizations.



WELS members return to Indonesia

Missionary Pieter Ried, his wife, Marlys, and three of their children returned to Indonesia in August. The Reid family was evacuated in May because of political and economic unrest.

"It's where we're supposed to be, at least for now," said Pieter. "We're aware that things [unrest] could happen again in the future. But there's a need to work with the people of Indonesia when the door is open."

Three WELS members—Cherie Wehausen, Stephanie Hopf, and Kathy Uhlhorn—were also evacuated in May. They returned to Indonesia in mid-July along with three additional WELS members, Rebecca Kallies and Joe and Monica Beatrice. They will all teach at a private Christian school outside of Jakarta, Indonesia.

"Please keep all of us in your prayers," said Pieter. "Not just us but all the members of the Indonesian Lutheran Church."

Obituary

David Deverne Zietlow 1932-1998

David Deverne Zietlow was born on Dec. 30, 1932, in Viroqua, Wis. He died June 10, in Soldotna, Alaska.

A 1958 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Zietlow served in Winnetta, Melstone, Grass Range, and Sand Springs, all in Mont. He also served in Anchorage, reaching out to Fairbanks, Eagle River, Sitka, Kenai, Wasilla, and Juneau, all in Alaska.

He is survived by wife, Carole, two daughters, five sons, 21 grandchildren, and a brother.

Bells for Brazil

It started with a simple conversation about handbells. While on furlough in summer 1996, Missionary Bruce Marggraf from Porto Alegre, Brazil, visited his original congregation, Emanuel, New London, Wis. He asked a lot of questions about the handbells. He had never seen them used in Brazil and believed they would make an excellent mission tool.

Emanuel Lutheran School's Mission Committee decided that "Bells for Brazil" would be the December mission project. The cost was \$3,415 for a two octave set of handbells.

The elementary school and Sunday school children contributed, and the offerings from the children's Christmas services also went toward the goal. As the "Bells for Brazil" word got around, several members and church organizations made donations. In February 1997, a door offering was collected, and the goal was reached. The bells were shipped to New London during summer 1997, but because of red tape didn't arrive in Brazil until April 1998.

And even though ringers—who range in age from seven to 70—only

got through eight measures of music in one hour, Marggraf was elated after the first rehearsal. He shared his excitement:

"You should've seen their faces. They were impressed with their ability to make music, and for it to sound beautiful.

"A 74-year-old woman, who is so poor you wouldn't believe it, played the top bell, making music for the first time in her life. She asked her daughter, who set foot in our church for the second time in her life just to see her mom play and help her play the bells, to come along. (The mother was scared she wouldn't be able to play them). It was truly a miracle to see her daughter in church; maybe we will see more of her!

"Plus a man, who saw through our front window that we were playing bells, came in and said he would like to study with me—right during our rehearsal."

God works in wonderful ways. He used this evangelism tool quickly. One rehearsal and two people got to hear God's plan for salvation!

Cristine Ladwig



Members of the WELS mission congregation in Porto Alegre, Brazil, rehearse on their new handbells. The bells were a gift from Emanuel, New London, Wis. Two people stopped by this storefront church as a result of their curiosity over the handbells.

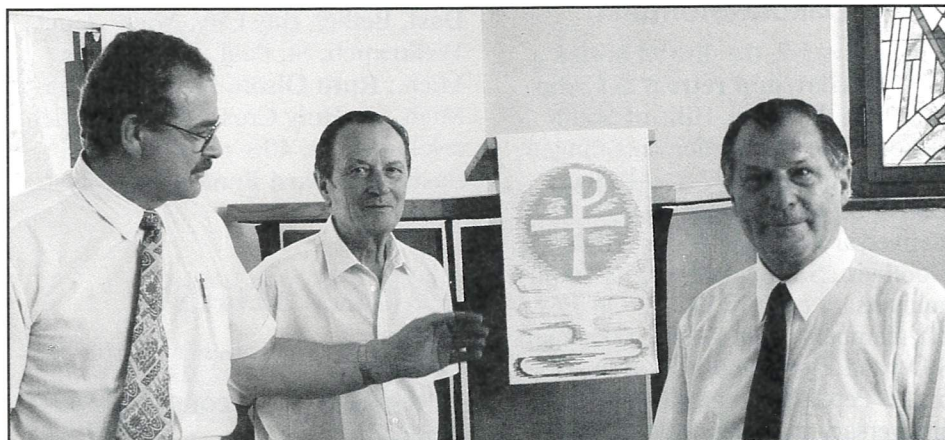
Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany meets

The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELF) of Germany met for its biennial convention in Schoenfeld, Germany in June. Robert Hartman, WELS Commission on Evangelism administrator, led a one-day evangelism workshop for the pastors on the Monday after the convention.

The ELF reelected Pastor Gerhard Wilde of Zwickau-Planitz as president and Pastor Rolf Borszik of Lengenfeld as vice president. Pastor Johannes

Wilde of Kleinmachow (Berlin) was again chosen as president of the Diaspora District. The Diaspora District serves congregations of refugees, some of whom had been part of the WELS mission in Poland before World War II.

The ELF is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, an international federation of 13 Lutheran church bodies. WELS is also a member of the CELC.



Reelected officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (from left): Rolf Borszik, Johannes Wilde, and Gerhard Wilde.

LIBRA launches study in Israel

Tours of Israel are commonplace today. Few, however, offer the chance to take part in a real archaeological dig for academic credit or audit.

Travel and excavation are coming together for WELS and ELS members in summer 1999. Groups will leave June 7, 21, and July 5 and be together for 23 days. Half of the time will be spent at Yafo (biblical Joppa). There diggers will learn how a buried city is uncovered and interpreted. The rest of the time will be spent studying the land in which most of the Bible unfolded.

LIBRA (Lutherans Interested in the Bible and Related Antiquities)

offers WELS/ELS members, lay or clergy, experiences often limited to scholars only.

LIBRA is co-sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon; Bethany Lutheran College and Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minn.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. The Yafo dig is a project of Tel Aviv University's Institute of Archaeology.

For more information, look for LIBRA under "Links" on the WELS Web site <www.wels.net> or e-mail <lawrenz@sab.wels.net>.

WELS news briefs

These updates are from the offices at the synod administration building. You can contact these offices and administrators at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3888.

Commission on Communication for Financial Support

An orientation/training seminar was conducted in June for five new WELS gift planning counselors. Development staff from 11 WELS agencies participated. This is the beginning of a cooperative relationship between the commission and WELS agencies in the area of financial stewardship.

Board for Home Missions

Video broadcasts may be one way to serve people in remote areas or congregations with vacancies. If you have any ideas, questions, or comments about video broadcasts, contact your district mission board or the home missions office.

Board for World Missions

To date, 164,000 copies of The Promise have been printed. This basic presentation of the biblical history of salvation is available in 16 languages.

Commission on Parish Schools

With the called worker shortage affecting teachers and principals, the commission has approved two pilot projects to encourage new workers. LeDell Plath will mentor first-year principals. The Western Wisconsin and Nebraska districts will mentor beginning teachers in 1998-99.

Commission on Youth Discipleship

This past summer, Sunday school superintendents received a packet of materials containing ideas and resources for promoting Christian education. "Strengthening Sunday School" workshops were held in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Oklahoma in the fall.

The International Youth Rally will be held in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada from July 7-10, 1999.

Arizona/California



St. John, Vacaville, Calif., had 77 people at its opening service in a motel conference room on Palm Sunday. Area congregations helped by donating banners, singing in the choir, and even e-mailing music, which the church then played over the MIDI sound system.

Southeastern Wisconsin

On June 14, **St. Marcus, Milwaukee**, celebrated Juneteenth Day with an outdoor worship service and gospel choir concert. . . . **Risen Savior, Brown Deer, Wis.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary on June 28. Two additional anniversary services on Sept. 13 and Nov. 22 are also planned. . . . On June 12, **Calvary Lutheran Academy, South Milwaukee, Wis.**, held its first graduation service for half of its student body. These students were with



At a WELS fellowship retreat, 125 people from the Dakota-Montana District met in the Black Hills.

District news

Calvary since it started in January 1997. Calvary Academy is a boarding school, which exists to provide in-crisis WELS/ELS children and others (ages 6-18) with residential schooling and therapy that is centered on and guided by Jesus Christ.

Northern Wisconsin

Trinity, Appleton, celebrated its 125th anniversary on Aug. 2.

Dakota-Montana

On June 5-7, the district hosted a **WELS fellowship retreat** at Camp Judson in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The 125 participants ranged in age from one to 77. . . . **Peace, Clark, S.D.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on June 28. . . . **St. Peter, Goodwin, S.D.**, celebrated its 100th anniversary on July 12. . . . On July 12, members of **St. Jacobi, Glenham, S.D.**, and **Zion, Mobridge, S.D.**, celebrated **Peter Naumann's** 25th anniversary in the pastoral ministry. Naumann is president of the Dakota-Montana District.

Jon Hadler

Michigan

Trinity Lutheran School, Jenera, Ohio, celebrated its 50th anniversary on Aug. 9. . . . **St. John, Battle Creek, Mich.**, celebrated its 50th anniversary

on June 28th. . . . **Memorial, Williamston, Mich.**, celebrated its 50th anniversary on May 17. . . . **St. John, Frankenmuth, Mich.**, dedicated its new parish center on Sept. 28, 1997. . . . These pastors celebrated their 25th anniversaries in the ministry: **David Krueger**, Hope, Swartz Creek, Mich.; **Gary Pieper**, Emanuel, Flint, Mich.; **Ronald Muetzel**, Trinity, Bay City, Mich.; **Robert Hoepner**, Redeemer, Ann Arbor, Mich. . . . These teachers celebrated their 25th anniversaries in the ministry: **Doug Dast**, Bethel, Bay City, Mich.; **Carl Weihrauch**, St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich.; **Ruth Olson**, Peace, Livonia, Mich. . . . Holy Cross, Daggett, Mich., celebrated the 40th anniversary of **Pastor Leonard Pankow** on July 12.

WELS stats

baptized members		congregations
421,396	1990	1,221
421,189	1991	1,222
419,939	1992	1,230
418,134	1993	1,231
416,174	1994	1,235
413,839	1995	1,235
412,942	1996	1,235
411,295	1997	1,235

The number of WELS congregations has held steady for the past four years, although the number of WELS members continues to decrease. See "The Editor's Pen" on page 34 for comments about these and other WELS statistics.



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

Growth of non-traditional families slows

The rapid growth of non-traditional families has slowed dramatically, the Census Bureau reported in May.

Between 1970 and 1990, the proportion of American households that had a married couple with children declined sharply from 40 percent to 26 percent.

However, between 1990 and 1997 the proportion declined only an additional one percent.

"It hasn't quite turned around, but it has slowed, and that is significant, given the breakneck speed at which we were seeing these changes," Census Bureau demographer Lynne Casper Hayden told the *Washington Post*.

Hayden and Ken Bryson, who together authored the Census Bureau report, cited a drop in teen birthrates and in births to unmarried mothers as a prime reason for the slowing.

The divorce rate has leveled off as well. The Census Bureau now projects that four of every 10 new marriages will end in divorce, instead of the previous figure of five in 10.

The authors drew no conclusions about social factors that have prompted the changes. However, sociologists have noted that aging baby boomers and a concurrent emphasis on family values has generally shifted American culture toward a more traditional path.

Religious schools included in voucher plan

The Wisconsin Supreme Court has ruled that a publicly funded school voucher program in Milwaukee may be expanded to include private religious schools. In a June ruling, the court said that adding private religious schools to the program was constitutional. Previously, vouchers had been limited to private non-religious schools.

The decision to expand the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program now gives equal footing to public and private school choice and gives parents the power to choose where to send their children, said Justice Donald Steinmetz, who wrote the majority opinion.

Since 1990, about 1,500 students have participated in the program, which provides taxpayer funds to students from low-income homes. The ruling is expected to expand that number tenfold.

Tommy G. Thompson, Wisconsin's governor, noted that tax dollars have long been given to college students

who attend religiously affiliated schools. "It's only at the K-12 level that we discriminate against low-income families and restrict their ability to attend the school of their choice," said Thompson. "Expanding to religious schools just makes common sense."

However, Barry W. Lynn, executive director of American United for Separation of Church and State, criticized the ruling as forcing taxpayers to pay for the religious education of others.

The ruling, he said, "strikes at the heart of the First Amendment, ignores the language of the (Wisconsin) state constitution, and overlooks every other court ruling on public funding of religion."

Lynn said the ruling would be further appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Wisconsin is one of five states with school voucher plans in state courts. The others are Ohio, Arizona, Vermont, and Maine, according to the Associated Press.

Two Lutheran bodies meet over ecumenical rift

The heads of the two largest Lutheran denominations in the United States, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), met in August in an effort to overcome a theological rift between them.

Differences between the conservative LCMS and the more liberal ELCA have become more apparent since last summer when the ELCA approved an ecumenical pact with three Reformed tradition denominations and declared a basic consensus with the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of justification.

Following the agreement, A. L. Barry, LCMS president, wrote that the ELCA's ecumenical moves "represent a significant movement away from historic Lutheranism" and are "unacceptable for a Lutheran church."

H. George Anderson, ELCA presiding bishop, said he was "deeply disturbed" by Barry's characterization of the ELCA's ecumenical actions.

News brief

Alvin L. Barry was re-elected to his third three-year term as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Delegates re-elected Barry on the first ballot with 657 (56.6 percent) of the 1,161 votes cast. Robert Kuhn was re-elected as first vice president. LCMS has 2.6 million members.

Also at the convention, delegates voted to end "dual membership" status held by some congregations and members in the LCMS and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The resolution states that if those holding dual membership do not resign their ELCA membership within 18 months of the end of the convention, they "shall have forfeited their membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod."

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Cherney, Kenneth A. Jr., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Franck, Mark D., to Prince of Peace, Howell, Mich.
Kempf, Jay P., to Huron Valley LHS, Westland, Mich.
Leyrer, Carl W., to Cordero De Dios, Miami, Fla.
Leyrer, Joel D., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Nitz, Jonathan H., to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Prange, Victor H., to retirement
Pundt, Gerald A., to St. Peter, Globe, Ariz.
Schoeffel, Daniel L., to Hope, St. Charles, Mich.
Westphal, Walter, W., to Board for World Missions, Milwaukee

Teachers

Aaberg, Nancy J., to St. John, Stanton, Neb.
Armstrong, Amy B., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Bauer, Rebecca H., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.
Birkholz, Jerome P., to St. Peter, Ft. Collins, Colo.
Brandt, Kathleen L., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.
Braun, Bruce W., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Brei, Richard R., to St. Paul, St. James, Minn.
Brenn, Heather A., to St. John, Milwaukee
Butler, Harmon R. Jr., to Gloria Dei, Belmont, Calif.
Byus, John A. Jr., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Carver, Richard D., to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.
Christiansen, Donna, to Hope preschool, West Chicago, Ill.
Cooper, Susan E., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Eisenmann, Mark R., to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Falak, Beth A., to St. Martin, Watertown, S.D.
Fritzler, Patricia, to Salem, Owasso, Mich.
Groth, Arleen R., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Hahm, Amy D., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee
Hoffman, Victoria L., to St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.
Holtz, Carol M., to Mount Olive, Overland Park, Kan.
Hough, Suzanne M., to Peace, Bradenton, Fla.
Jaeger, Gene A., to Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D.
Jarvis, Tracy D., to St. John's, Antigua
Johnson, Gregory A., to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Justman, Dorothy R., to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
Justman, Jodi L., to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.
Kabelowsky, Shaun E., to St. John, Stanton, Neb.
Karow, Eileen K., to Eastside, Madison, Wis.
Kasten, Joann M., to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.
Kruse, Mark W., to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Lange, David B., to LPS, Watertown, Wis.
Lauber, Stephen S., to Illinois LHS, Crete, Ill.
Leifer, Pamela A., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Lindemann, Jonathan E., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Mehnert, Amy S., to Peace, Bradenton, Fla.
Nelson, Jason M., to Board for Parish Services, Milwaukee
Neujahr, Julie A., to Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.
Neumann, Amy J., to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.
Neumann, Neil V., to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.
Niehoff, Nichole M., to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
Pahmeier, Fred W., to Holy Trinity (ELS), Okauchee, Wis.
Radue, Lisa K., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.

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.

Riediger, Susan M., to Bethany preschool, Gibsonia, Penn.
Ring, Cynthia L., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
Ruddat, Donna Jean, D., to St. John, Maribel, Wis.
Scharrer, Amy L., to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Schaumberg, Patricia, to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Schroeder, Monica, to Our Savior, Longmont, Colo.
Schuetze, Delores H., to St. Matthew, Port Washington, Wis.
Schuh, Emil J., to St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Schwartz, Nicole L., to Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee
Sosinski, Michelle K., to St. John, Saginaw, Mich.
Stahl, Susan, to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Stahmann, Lynette M., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Steinke, Therese M., to St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.
Stellick, Norman A., to retirement
Wendland, Rebecca A., to Redemption, Milwaukee
Whitney, Susan C., Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich.
Wilmann, James A., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Wittig-Geske, Susan, to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Yocius, Kay, to Bethany preschool, Gibsonia, Penn.

THE SYNOD ADMINISTRATION BUILDING WILL CLOSE:
from Sept. 7—Labor Day. Callers may leave voice
mail messages, 414/256-3888.

ANNIVERSARIES

Allegan, Mich.—St. John (130). Sept. 6—Service, 10:15 AM; potluck follows. Ron Kruse, 616/673-6212.
Muskegon, Mich.—Grace (75). Sept. 12—Pig roast, 4 PM. Sept. 13—Service, 10 AM; meal follows at 12:30 PM. RSVP, Diane Zechlinski, 616/777-1243.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Fairview (75). Sept. 13—Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Pig roast follows. RSVP by Sept. 5 to Jan Genrich, 414/679-0517.
Redwood Falls, Minn.—St. John (100). Sept. 19—Service, 5:30 PM. Sept. 20—Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; dinner follows. RSVP, 507/637-2035 (mornings); 507/641-5372 (evenings).
Chesaning, Mich.—Zion (125). Sept. 20—mission festival, 8 & 10:30 AM; dinner, noon. 517/845-3006.
St. Paul, Minn.—Emanuel (125). Sept. 20—Service, 10 AM at St. Croix LHS; meal follows. RSVP, 651/222-2429.
Ringle, Wis.—Grace (75). Sept. 20—Service, 10:30 AM. Dinner, noon.
Geneva, Neb.—Grace Lutheran School (50). Sept. 27—Service, 10 AM; meal follows. Scott Schomberg, 402/759-4517.
Colorado Springs, Colo.—Salem (25). Oct. 4—Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; dinner follows. 719/599-0200.
Girard, Ohio—Good Shepherd (25). Oct. 4—Services, 10:45 AM & 4 PM; meal follows 4 PM service. 330/539-6805.
Monroe, Mich.—Zion (150). Oct. 4—Service, 10:45 AM; meal follows. RSVP, 734/242-1378.

North Hollywood, Calif.—Messiah (50). Service, 4 PM; dinner follows. RSVP, 818/767-1298.

Manchester, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Oct. 18—Service, 10 AM; dinner follows. 920/398-2885.

Helenville, Wis.—St. Peter (150). Oct. 25—Services, 8 & 10:45 AM, 3:30 PM. 920/674-3307.

COMING EVENTS

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

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary—Oct. 3, Mequon, Wis. Eunice Heckendorff, 414/677-2498.

Martin Luther College Auxiliary—Oct. 14, New Ulm, Minn. Lori Klockmann, 507/647-5582.

International student rally—Oct. 16-18, St. Paul, Minn. Free. Open to all international students. Joel Lintner, 612/378-1346; Leon Piepenbrink, 612/420-9294; Loren Steele, 612/222-2429.

WELS-CLO—Church librarians meeting. Oct. 17. Zion, Hartland, Wis. 414/256-3222.

Banquet—Waukesha, Wis., chapter WELS-LFL. Oct. 18. Country Inn—dinner, \$25 each, \$40/couple. Kathy Gates, 414/513-9590.

National campus rally—Dec. 27-30 at UW-Madison. 608/257-1969; <national.rally@juno.com>.

Women's retreat—Circle of Love retreat. March 12-14, 1999. Manitowoc, Wis. Karen McVey, 920/757-9401.

Women's retreat—Christian Women Today retreat. March 12-14, 1999. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Info to come.

Tour—Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Munich, and the Passion Play in Oberammergau. Departs Sept. 4, 2000. Sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services, Inc. Fred Matzke, 414/353-5005.

NEEDED

Commentary—Popular Commentary, New Testament, Volume 2 by Kretzmann. Lori Wischer, 785/388-2675.

Choir gowns—Used. For vicars of the Lutheran Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. D. Westendorf, 414/673-3811.

Hymnals—Red TLH in good condition. 734/971-1317; <EdwardZell@aol.com>.

Bagpipe player—WELS/ELS member for Nov. 21 wedding in Milwaukee. James Sonnemann, 414/964-7036; <saalemwels@juno.com>.

AVAILABLE

Communion cushions—5 green, 2 navy blue, 1 light blue. Free for cost of shipping. Lynn Weimar, 602/948-9916; <danlynn@doitnow.com>.

Iowa Basic and Cognitive Basic tests—old copies with answer sheets and teacher guides. Free for cost of shipping. Bill Arndt, 708/448-2260.

Organ—Wurlitzer. Free for cost of shipping. Neil Doerr, 414/483-9103.

NAMES WANTED

Rockton/Roscoe, Ill.—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. Larry Schwanke, Faith, 3215 W Judson Rd, Kokomo IN 46901; 765/457-0578.

Butler University—WELS/ELS students. George Ferch, 13461 Shakamac Dr, Carmel IN 46032.

Messiah, North Hollywood, Calif.—Former members for 50th anniversary. John Moll, 8130 Laurel Canyon Blvd, North Hollywood CA 91605; 818/767-1298.

INTER-ACT

Mark J. Lenz

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

Introduction

Think for a moment about smells you find pleasant. Is freshly baked bread one of them? That tantalizing aroma leads some people to slice off a piece of bread, spread it with butter and jam, and eat it on the spot.

What do you crave most when you are hungry? Is some type of bread part of the picture? There is a reason why bread is called "the staple of life."

Now think of Jesus as bread. Are you thinking how sweet the name of Jesus smells and how wonderfully Jesus satisfies your hunger?

I. Text

Read John 6:32-35

³²Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." ³⁵Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

III. Application

1. What evidence is there that people are hungering for meaning and purpose in life?
2. Many still misunderstand who Jesus is and what he came to do. In what specific ways are they like those who came to Jesus?
3. God's name "I am" teaches that he is eternally faithful to his promises. Why is it comforting to know that Jesus is the "I am"?
4. Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Give us this day our daily bread." He was inviting them to think of the word "bread" as representing all that they needed for their physical well-being. How is the Bread of Life all that we need for our spiritual lives?
5. Some people welcome new neighbors by bringing them a loaf of freshly baked bread. How might this lead to sharing the Bread of Life?

II. Questions

1. Some of the people who had eaten the bread Jesus had miraculously provided in the feeding of the 5,000 wanted another miracle from him. Moses had fed an entire nation for 40 years with manna. They wondered if Jesus could match that—or perhaps top that. How did Jesus correct their thinking regarding the origin of the manna (v. 32)? How did Jesus attempt to divert their thinking from their stomachs to their souls (v. 33)?
2. How does John 3:13 help in identifying "the bread of God . . . who comes down from heaven"?
3. What did the "bread of God" do to give life to the world? What kind of life does he give? See John 3:14-16.
4. What evidence is there that the people were still thinking about bread for their stomachs?
5. Verse 35 is the first of seven self-descriptions of Jesus introduced by "I am." By these words Jesus is in each case solemnly and emphatically identifying himself as God. From Exodus 3:14 explain how we can be certain of this.
6. The words "bread of life" may mean "the bread that is living" and/or "the bread that gives life." Why may both meanings be implied?
7. Which words in verse 35 are synonymous with "he who comes to me"?
8. Why will a person who believes in Jesus never be thirsty? See John 4:14.

IV. Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the Bread of Life. You have satisfied my spiritual hunger by assuring me that for your sake I am at peace with God now and forever. When I think more about bread for my body than food for my soul, set my priorities straight. Keep me from hoarding you as the Bread of Life, but move me always to share you with those who are hungry. Amen.

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

Fellowship of a family

Believers in the church treat all the same—as redeemed children of God.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

In the opening three verses of Philemon we glimpse the close family-style *koinonia* (fellowship) enjoyed by the believers of the early Christian church.

Koinonia then

Paul identified himself as the letter writer in typical Middle Eastern fashion—placing his name first. He then called himself a prisoner of Christ. It doesn't mean literally that Jesus bound up Paul or put him in prison. But it can mean, figuratively, Paul, following his conversion, placed his will and life under Jesus' control. The same could be said for every Christian today. We place our wills in bondage, our lives under the servanthood of Jesus when we come to faith. In another sense, however, Paul was literally a prisoner in Rome (Philemon 10 & 13) because he proclaimed the good news of Christ to a hostile world.

Paul next said Timothy, their brother, was with him. The Christians in the early church commonly called each other brothers. They were so close to one another in attitude, desire, and will; they had so much in common when it came to faith, hope, even property; they

loved each other so much that they were like brothers and sisters. Jesus encouraged this sense of family when he called his followers brothers and sisters (Matthew 12:50).

Next, Paul mentioned the letter's recipients. Philemon is the primary recipient. He is described as beloved (KJV—one who knows and shares the love of Christ) and a fellow worker with Paul and Timothy. Philemon, an active Christian, encouraged and strengthened the saints and reached out with the gospel.

The secondary recipients were Apphia, described as a sister to Paul and Timothy, and Archippus, described as a fellow soldier. Can we assume that Apphia is Philemon's wife and Archippus his son? Since they alone are singled out, it seems they are. We know that both of these members of Philemon's family converted to the faith.

But Paul wasn't finished. When he thought of the Philemon family he also thought of their extended family—the church (believers) who met in their home. Church buildings with pews, pulpits, lecterns, and organs were not yet used. But they weren't necessary. Homes worked fine. What better way for a congrega-

tion to carry on as a family than to worship and study the Word in members' homes. Whenever they did, they enjoyed the grace and peace of God.

Koinonia now

Today, Christians in a congregation strive to carry on this *koinonia* of the early Christian church—like that of a close, loving family. It starts in every home where parents and children live under Christ's rule and in Christian service. If one family member is unconverted or does not practice the faith, the other members encourage by their words and actions.

It continues when members of a church treat each other like brothers and sisters in Christ. They have the same faith, the same goals, the same aspirations, the same destination. Fellow believers in the church do not exclude anyone, but treat all the same—as redeemed children of God. Small congregations have an advantage in creating this family atmosphere, but larger churches are learning ways to do it. One way is through small group Bible studies in homes of members.

Think about this family concept when you are together with church members. Talk about it and act upon it with genuine love toward one another.

Next time: love

Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.

PHILEMON
family respect
intercession together
love forgiveness

The dignity of honest labor

Armin J. Panning

What thoughts come to mind as you observe another Labor Day? For many it's an indicator that another summer is drawing to a close. Perhaps it means a last weekend at the cottage or a family picnic or backyard cookout.

Labor Day is a legal holiday, not a church festival, but it is still significant. It's a day to recognize the privilege we have of being able to glorify God with honest labor and a day to appreciate the work others do.

The dignity of honest labor has not always been appreciated, as is evident in our country's history. The coming of the machine age moved many cottage industries into factories where working conditions were often unsafe and unsanitary. Workdays were long and the pay often low. By 1820 various organizations in our land were attempting to improve conditions, such as reducing the 12-hour day and six-day workweek to more humane levels. These organizations grew, and some 50 years later (1878) the Knights of Labor, for example, captured national attention by gaining nearly 750,000 members. It's from this age that the Labor Day holiday stems, the brainchild of Matthew Maguire (or perhaps Peter McGuire).

The first Labor Day parade was held in New York on Sept. 5, 1882. In 1887 Oregon was the first state to make the day a legal holiday. Other states followed suit.

Having an official holiday didn't, however, solve problems or mend employer-employee relationships. When the state in 1912 mandated a decrease from a 54-hour week to 52, textile mill owners in Lawrence, Mass., grudgingly complied, but at the same time cut workers' wages by 3.5 percent. Some 50,000 textile workers went on strike. What their wages were can be estimated from the fact that 25

years later when a federal minimum wage law was enacted, the minimum wage was set at 25 cents per hour.

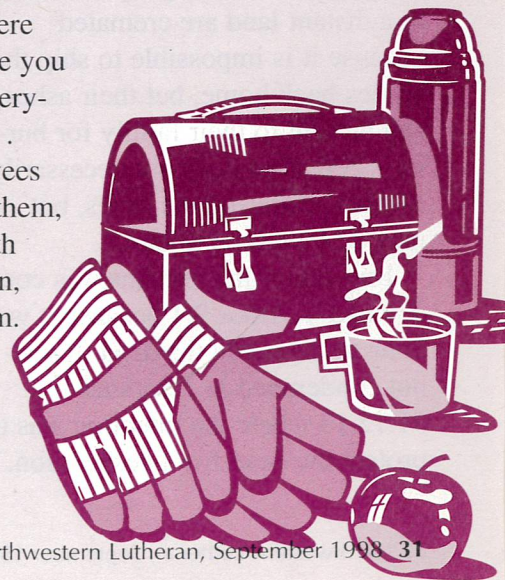
Such glimpses from the past remind us that significant improvements have been made. We now take for granted such benefits as a 40-hour week, paid vacations, pension and health plans, safe workplaces inspected by OSHA, etc. Many current benefits were wrested from unwilling employers through bitter negotiation and, unfortunately, sometimes also by strikes, work stoppages, and slowdowns.

How different, and how much better, when the gospel dominates! That will never be fully achieved in our sin-tainted workplaces, but Paul sets the ideal before us in his *Table of Duties* sent to the Ephesians. Although written for a different culture and a social setting in which there were masters and slaves, Paul's words adapt very easily to our present age and are still perfectly applicable:

Employees, obey your earthly employers with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like employees of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does. . . . And employers, treat your employees in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (Ephesians 6:59 adapted).

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

Labor Day is a . . .
day to recognize
the privilege we
have of being able
to glorify God with
honest labor.



End-time issues

John F. Brug

What is the church's position on cremation?

At times Christians have had a negative attitude toward cremation because it was identified with certain heathen religions and unbelievers sometimes used it to express a defiant attitude toward the resurrection.

Burial was the regular treatment of the body by believers during Bible times. Christ's body was buried to await the resurrection.

We think burial is a good Christian custom because it links our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus. The Bible also compares burial to planting a seed in the ground with the confidence that new life will spring from it (1 Corinthians 15:35-38). We, therefore, prefer to bury the dead in order to follow the custom of Scripture and for the symbolism of burial. Man who was taken from the ground returns to the ground.

Scripture, however, does not forbid cremation. Sometimes during plague or war Christians cremated the dead to prevent the spread of disease. Sometimes people who die in a distant land are cremated because it is impossible to ship their bodies back home, but their ashes can be sent to their family for burial. Cremation does not necessarily involve scattering the ashes, but may be a prelude to burial.

Burning of the remains was condemned in Amos 2:1 because it was done to desecrate the dead. It was not condemned in 1 Samuel 31:12,13 where the intention was to protect the dead from desecration. If

cremation is intended to express unbelief or scorn of God's promise of the resurrection, we would condemn it. This is not necessarily the intention of cremation. As several traditional funeral rites express it, it make no difference to God whether the body has gone "dust to dust" or "ashes to ashes."

Scripture, however, does not forbid cremation.

And it will make no difference to God on Judgment Day whether bodies have been buried, burned, lost at sea, or eaten by animals. He will raise the bodies of all, believers and unbelievers alike, but for two different results.

What does WELS think about the rapture? I've heard about it, but I don't think we believe in it.

The Bible says that when Christ returns, God's holy angels will gather all people together for judgment. As the first step of this gathering, the believers who are still alive at the time of Christ's return will be brought together to meet Christ in the air as he returns from heaven, bringing with him the souls of the believers who have died before the Last Day (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

This gathering will not occur as a separate event, more than 1,000 years before the final judgment, as some millennialists teach. Although certain Bible passages, such as 1 Thessalonians 4, discuss only some of the many events of Christ's return, all of the events associated

with Christ's return will occur on the one Last Day.

The word "rapture" means "to be carried up." It could, therefore, be used to describe that event when believers are "caught up" to meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Lutherans, however, usually do not use the term because of its misuse by those millennialists who have adopted "the Rapture" as their name for an alleged removal of believers from the earth before the Millennium. These "pre-tribulation pre-millennialists" believe that all believers will be raptured out of the world before a time of great tribulation begins on the earth. They believe that this Great Tribulation will be followed by a 1000-year kingdom of Christ on this earth before the final judgment. Scripture, however, teaches only one return of Christ that will usher in his eternal kingdom.

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>

Two beautiful examples of "lifestyle evangelism" appear in the July "News around WELS."

One is how the Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., Pioneers invite friends on their year-end hike on the Appalachian Trail. This has brought new people to hear the gospel. The other is how the Lansing, Mich., news anchor was so impressed with Emanuel's school when she read to the second grade class that she is considering enrolling her child.

These are simple, yet important and powerful examples of how all of us can reach out to a world dying in sin with the precious gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. May we all be aware of the powerful and important impact our lifestyle has on the world around us and use it as a beacon that points to the Savior.

*Dan Schoeffel
St. Charles, Michigan*

Re: the WELS stance on fundraisers [June]:

1. Brug is correct that we should be concerned about good stewardship and the main work of our churches should be supported by the gifts of our members.

2. Fundraisers by youth groups within our congregations or Lutheran high schools are often carried out to do more than just satisfy their own needs or desires.

Parents with lesser resources or single parents would like to send their children to Lutheran camps or on educational trips but lack funds to do this. To have a car wash/servant for a day program

would certainly be better than asking for handouts.

*Herman Schultz
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

Gary Baumler's editorial on ambivalence in the church, society, and the pew was profound [June].

If only more articles of that nature were written in Lutheran periodicals, and we as Christians would put on the whole armor of Christ against the sinful world and false doctrine, our Lord wouldn't have to spit us out for being lukewarm.

As a newcomer to WELS, I appreciate your boldness, and that of my pastor, in standing firmly on Holy Scripture, and for coming out strongly against the wickedness of this world and our own sinful flesh. In addition to Revelation 3:15,16, we should heed the adage: Stand for something lest you fall for anything.

*Catherine Mueller
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

How dare you indict the three million people who have visited and viewed the Shroud of Turin?

[Editor's Pen, July] Why be demeaning? Why not remove all visual aids? Join the Church of the Brethren where all visuals are banned. Your reasoning is fallacious.

*R.H. Dust
Fountain City, Wisconsin*

After reading the editorial on the shroud, the hymn verse came to mind, "All our knowledge, sense and sight Lie in deepest darkness shrouded Till your Spirit breaks our night with the beams of truth unclouded . . ." (*Christian Worship* 221).

Dan Haag 

How can anyone believe that the Shroud of Turin can contain the image of Jesus? We read in John 20:6,7, "He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen." The Shroud is supposed to contain an image also of the face.

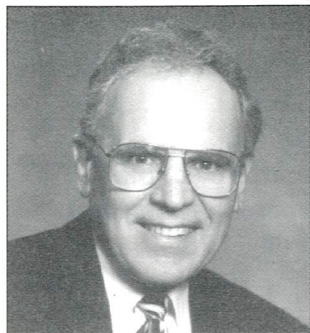
*Gertrude Weissenborn
Blacksburg, Virginia*

*Through my Bible
in 3 years*

October 1998

1. Proverbs 10:1—11:13
2. Proverbs 11:14—12:28
3. Proverbs 13:1—14:21
4. Proverbs 14:22—15:23
5. Proverbs 15:24—16:33
6. Proverbs 17, 18
7. Proverbs 19:1—20:13
8. Proverbs 20:14—22:16
9. Proverbs 22:17—23:35
10. Proverbs 24
11. Proverbs 25:1—26:12
12. Proverbs 26:13—27:27
13. Proverbs 28, 29
14. Proverbs 30
15. Proverbs 31
16. Romans 1:1-17
17. Romans 1:18-32
18. Romans 2:1-16
19. Romans 2:17-29
20. Romans 3:1-20
21. Romans 3:21-31
22. Romans 4:1-15
23. Romans 4:16-25
24. Romans 5:1-11
25. Romans 5:12-21
26. Romans 6:1-14
27. Romans 6:15—7:6
28. Romans 7:7-25
29. Romans 8:1-17
30. Romans 8:18-39
31. Romans 9:1-13

Numbered by the numbers



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

It's not the numbers that need our attention. It's our attitudes, particularly when the numbers make us pause.

As I looked at the numbers (see p. 26), I thought, "How can this be?"

Although we have more churches than ever before in WELS history, we've been stuck on the number 1,235 for four years. Our baptized membership has declined each year since 1990 (down 2.4 percent to 411,295) and is at its lowest since 1981.

Looking further, I am still perplexed. The 7,280 children's baptisms in 1997 were the fewest in 28 years of available statistics. The Sunday school enrollment (39,887) was its lowest in 28 years, and the Lutheran elementary school (31,691) the lowest in eight years. In addition, an increasing number of members joined other churches (4,224 in 1997), and decreasing numbers joined WELS by profession of faith (2,860 in 1997, the second lowest in 24 years of statistics).

Still, not all the numbers left me numb. Adult baptisms (728 in 1997) were the highest since 1981. The average annual adult confirmations in the '90s (3,750) exceeds the average in any other decade. Preschool enrollment is at an all-time high (5,056 in 1997), as is adult Bible class attendance (39,962). Teens, too, are attending Bible study more regularly (4,437 in 1997).

Whew! What do the numbers mean? Does it do any good even to keep such numbers? I'm reminded of David counting the fighting men of Israel and the plague the Lord brought on Israel for it (2 Samuel 24). I'm reminded, too, that the Lord had Moses take a census of the Israelites in Sinai (Numbers 1).

Apparently we have good and bad numbers: not whether they are high or low, but the spirit in which we gather and use them. Were they all high, we could only look on them in awe, humbly praise God for his boundless love and mercy, and rededicate ourselves in his service. To boast of how

well we are doing is to invite plague.

When the numbers are low and, perhaps, discouraging, we still humbly praise God for his boundless love and mercy and look for ways we can serve him better. We ask, "Do the numbers tell us something about our faithfulness in carrying out the Lord's mission?"

In answering that question, we will want to refrain from merely looking for ways to explain away the numbers and, therefore, excuse ourselves.

Yes, it's true that our country is becoming increasingly pagan, that the birthrates are down, that an "everything-goes" mood pervades our society, that people have more distractions than ever before, and that we have improved our record keeping. It might also be true that some among us have grown lukewarm to God's mission or have gotten so busy tending the walls of our church fortress that we've neglected reaching people outside the walls. And it's true that new efforts are now in place, geared to expand our witness to Christ throughout the world and to increase the number of home mission starts.

There are ways to explain and, if so inclined, to manipulate the numbers.

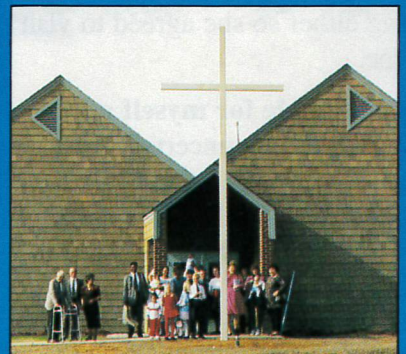
But it's not the numbers that need our attention. It's our attitudes, particularly when the numbers make us pause. We need to ask, "Am I being faithful to my calling as a Christian? Am I seen as a beacon on a hill for Christ or a candle under a basket? What can I do today as a disciple of Christ that I haven't been doing recently?"

The exercise is not one to leave you and me feeling comfortable. Thank God in Christ, who remains faithful even when we are not.

Meanwhile, you, be faithful. God will take care of the numbers.

Gary P. Baumler

*You can help
Build
His
House*



Through the Church Extension Fund your gifts and investments can help new mission congregations acquire their first permanent worship units.

To remit a gift or request an Offering Circular write:

Charles Skeels
VP-Investment Communications
WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.
2929 North Mayfair Road
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

Or you may call:
1-800-729-9357 or 1-414-256-3896

suicide watch

For Carmen, life has been one failure after another. Only God can turn this hopeless situation around.

Kenneth F. Lenz

At the treatment center, the rest of the adolescent girls were in their rooms for personal time. However, one girl was not allowed in her room. She was under suicide watch, sitting alone with a staff person nearby keeping an eye on her.

I think the staff person wanted a break from the boring job, so he asked Carmen if she wanted to visit with the chaplain. She didn't seem too excited about that prospect, but just sitting alone on a chair wasn't exciting either so she agreed to visit with me.

I had a Bible for myself and one for her. In no uncertain words she informed me she wasn't interested in any God talk and didn't believe what the Bible said. Now what?

I asked her what grade she was in school. "I'm 16 and still in eighth grade. I've skipped school so much that they keep flunking me."

Now what? I still didn't believe I had gained her confidence enough to talk about the suicide attempt, so I asked her if she had been living at home before coming to the center.

"Yes," she said, "if you want to call it home. My mother divorced my alcoholic father after she found out he had AIDS. He's dying. My mom's two brothers moved in to help pay the rent. One of my uncles has abused me lots of times. I told my mother about it, but she won't do anything because she needs the rent money and doesn't want them to get into trouble."

Now Carmen was becoming agitated and expressed hatred for her alcoholic father, her mother, and her uncles. She said she saw no point in living this way. Since she envisioned herself dead, she saw no point in school. For her, there was no future. Suicide seemed to be the only answer.

As I drove home that night I thought about my feeling of failure and what this girl had experienced.

The 45-minute personal time was up, and the rest of the girls were out of their rooms. Someone turned on the television, so Carmen got up and asked if she could leave.

I sat a few moments alone in the room, also feeling a sense of failure. The two Bibles were lying there unopened. There never was any God talk. Almost 40 years' experience in the ministry, yet there are times when I sense the feeling of failure. Sitting alone in that empty counseling room was one of those times.

As I drove home that night I thought about my feeling of failure and what this girl had experienced. Her father failed her. Her mother failed her. Her uncles were certainly failures. She had failed in school. To her, life was a failure. Why go on?

I silently prayed that Jesus, the Heavenly Physician, will heal this wounded soul.

I will try to visit her again. Right now failure seems to be in the driver's seat.

NL

Ken Lenz is a chaplain with Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Milwaukee.

Editor's note: Chaplain Lenz did visit Carmen again. There was "God talk." She admitted that she was angry at God because he didn't seem to answer prayer. Passages from Scripture were used to answer her concerns, and she accepted the gift of a Bible, promising to read it. Success? Only God knows.

