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FORWARD IN CHRIST

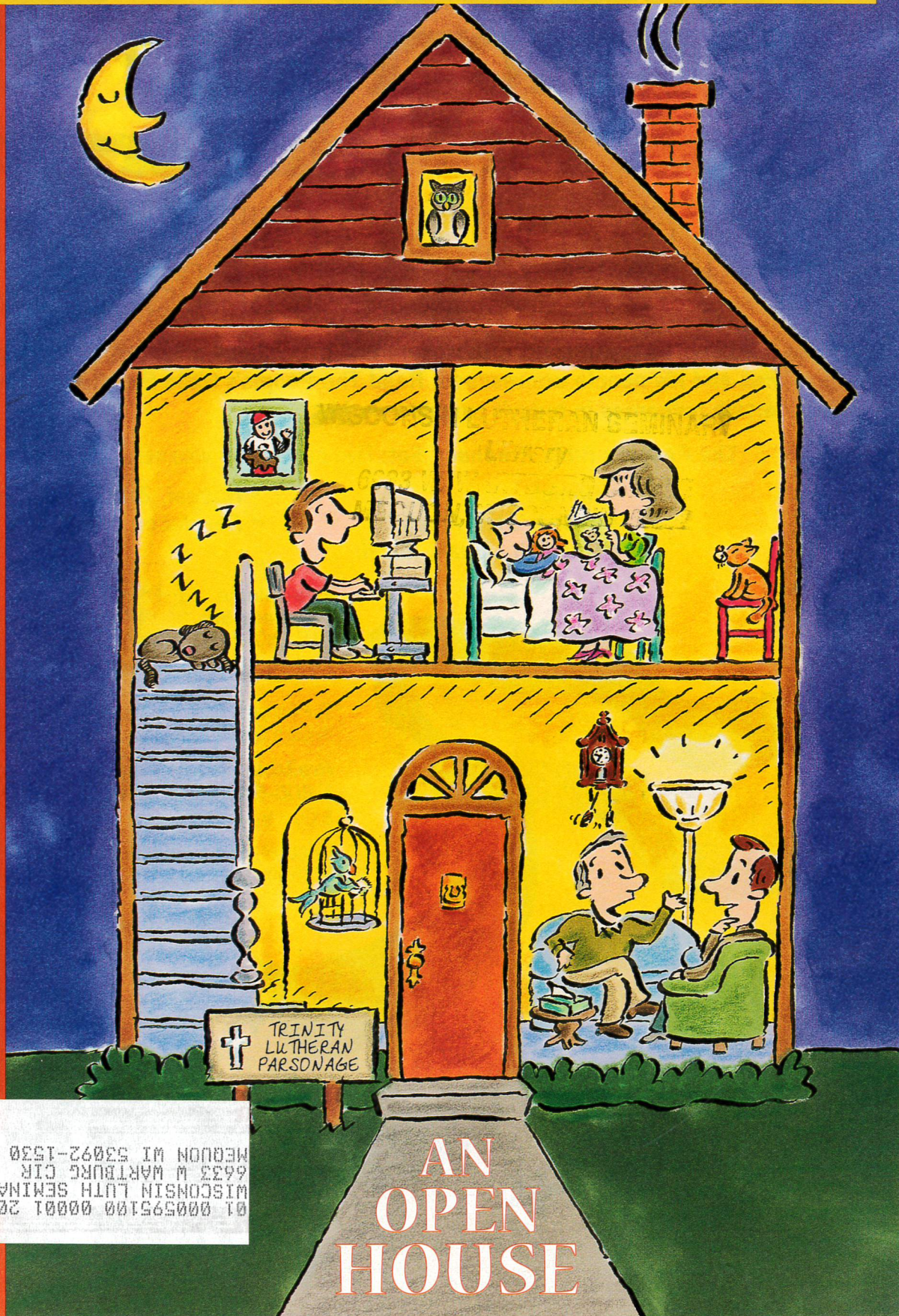
July 2000

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

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God's story

Jesus said, "It is finished." John 19:30

Eric S. Hartzell

Story telling has been in the minds and mouths of humans since the beginning. People have sat around flickering fires and heard their elders tell them stories. (They sit around television sets today.) The story is entertainment. It is life itself in verbal form. People like a good story.

God's exciting story

One story makes all others pale in comparison. This story is called God's story—his story . . . or history. This story began with the words "In the beginning," and ended with Jesus' words, "It is finished."

The Lord God himself is the protagonist. He is the reason for the story's very being. There is also an antagonist, Satan himself and no other.

There is a plot. God wants man to live and be with him. Satan wants man to die and be with him.

After all the chapters of struggle between protagonist and antagonist, there is that awful denouement that trudged up the slopes of Calvary to a cross and to the words, "It is finished."

He used a simple quill to write this last chapter. It was his life as the adopted son of a Jewish carpenter. He scratched out descriptions of a birth in a manger, a childhood experience in the temple, a beginning career as an itinerant teacher with a small following. He wrote in



this special last chapter—his chapter—little vignettes of disciples fishing for fish and for men, of people caught in sin, of little people up in sycamore trees, of leprous and sick people being healed, of traitors, of betrayers, of believers, of a dark garden. Here the pen sped and shook and betrayed the passion of the writer. The writing was difficult. The words came hard. The light was failing. Sweat fell in blots on the manuscript. You can see it still in the margins of that great last chapter.

But you can also read the final words clearly and sharply. Read them out loud. "It is finished." You know them to be true. It really is finished.

Our finished story

When Jesus said those words, it really was the end of the story. Nothing else needed to be said, nothing else needed to be done,

and nothing else could be added. No editor would change a single letter, add or take away a single word. No other story would ever tell of a struggle with these same stakes, the eternal lives of all people. No other story would better be read by all than this one. No other story would inspire and enliven than this. Jesus lay down his pen. He said, "It is finished." What the Word had written, he had written.

It isn't just any story that is finished. It isn't even just the story that is finished. Your story is finished too. Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, has also allowed you a beginning and an ending. He has allowed you a story in his great story. When he says, "It is finished!" it means something for you and your story. Your salvation is finished. The end of your story is secured.

There is no greater story than this one with its beginning and its ending, this prototype of all good stories to come. This is the only story where it really happens that all who read it and believe it truly live happily ever after.

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

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Glass house or
crystal palace?

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bits & pieces



What is it like living in a parsonage under the scrutiny of congregation and community alike? Check out "In the eye of the congregation" (p. 8), and discover how a pastor and his wife describe the challenges, the blessings, and the lessons learned in parsonage living.



Every Easter, your WELS brothers and sisters living in Europe meet for a special retreat, filled with God's Word, worship, fellowship, and laughter. Hear about the retreat, meet these WELS members, and see how their spiritual needs are served in "Fellowship—European style" (p. 18).



Mark Lenz is starting a new Interact Bible study series on theological words ending in "-ion." Learn about creation this month (p. 21).



The United States will again celebrate its independence on July 4. David Sellnow reminds us to continue to pray for our God-given governments and to use our political freedom to tell others about spiritual freedom through Jesus. Read "Prayers for kings and authorities" (p. 36).



We conclude our series on the called worker shortage with an informative article about the status of WELS teachers (p. 14). After you read the article, turn to p. 22 and rejoice in the newest pastors entering the field—the class of 2000 from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

—JKT

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The push to pay organists prompts me to pose some questions. Is this ability a gift from God? Granted, significant learning and work are involved in mastering the undertaking, but isn't that true of many tasks in Christ's Kingdom? Don't congregation presidents, trustees chairmen, et al, have responsibilities calling for a high degree of skill, as well as many hours spent in execution?

*E. Scott
Denver, Colorado*

In Rachel Mendell's letter [March] she asks, "Where are all the musicians coming from?" **Well, my question is, "Where are all the artists coming from?"** Art too is important in our society—and yes, even in our churches.

I see our WELS teachers coming out of college with very little art training. The WELS elementary school my children attend is weak in its art curriculum as a result of this, and the WELS high school our daughter will attend next fall offers no art classes at all. When art has played such an important role in the history of our church, why is it being ignored in our educational system?

If we don't teach creative thinking to our children in our WELS schools, where will our artists come from? Will we always have to hire artists and designers from other walks of life to do our work for us? Will they really know how to get our message across?


*Carla M. Bergmeier
Pontiac, Michigan*

I am an organist, now 40, who was trained at the age of 11, and **I would like to respond to the recent series on church musicians [March and April].**

I believe that churches can encourage church musicians by more than just paying them. I receive a nominal payment for playing, but that is not what is important to me. Far more is the chance that I get to use my God-given talents to serve the Lord. That others appreciate it is wonderful too.

A personal note, a word of thanks, or an acknowledgement that they really listened to what I played is a wonderful way of showing appreciation.

One other way is to give musicians the freedom, for lack of a better term, to try different things—whether that be a different type of service such as a choir song service or cantata, piano accompaniment rather than organ, monetary support for music or choir robes, or song leaders. This shows them that they are valued and appreciated.

*Ann Johnston
 San Antonio, Texas*

Peter Press wrote, "Yet organists are hamstrung for the essential tool of their trade like a high-quality pipe organ" [May].

I am now a member of a large congregation that has a beautiful large pipe organ. However, I also once served in a mission where we began in rented facilities with a piano, progressed to a small house organ when the congregation finally had its own building, and rejoiced when it was finally able to purchase a good quality electronic church organ. The mission chapel that is still used today certainly could not house a pipe organ. It may also be noted that we had the most organists when we used the small house organ.

Also, we must consider the fact that over 700 of our 1,239 congregations have fewer than 200 communicants. Of the 700, over 60 percent are under 100 communicants and 30 percent of those under 50 communicants. Some of these don't even have their own worship facility. Whatever musical instrument we have in our churches can be used to the glory of God.

*Alvin R Kienetz
New Ulm, Minnesota*

I am a member of a small church, St. John, Phelps, Wis. **I know what a chore it is to get organists.** It seems that the younger generation

doesn't take an interest in learning to play the organ.

I suggest that the synod work on a program to put on tape for small churches that don't have organists.

The liturgy plus the organ music could be controlled by the pastor. Also tape hymns to be used during the service.

*Donald Crass
Phelps, Wisconsin*

Northwestern Publishing House has some products available for those without organists. This includes Hymnsoft, a computer program that plays hymns and liturgy through a computer or a MIDI keyboard; and two volumes of Christian Worship hymns on CD, one for Advent and Christmas and one for Lent and Easter. Check out NPH's Web site at <www.wels.net/nph> or call 1-800-662-6022 for ordering information.—ed.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

August 2000

1. Nehemiah 12	17. Haggai 1
2. Neh. 13	18. Hag. 2
3. Psalm 90	19. Zechariah 1, 2
4. Ps. 91	20. Zech. 3, 4
5. Ps. 92, 93	21. Zech. 5, 6
6. Ps. 94	22. Zech. 7
7. Ps. 95, 96	23. Zech. 8
8. Ps. 97, 98	24. Zech. 9, 10
9. Ps. 99, 100	25. Zech. 11
10. Ps. 101	26. Zech. 12, 13
11. Ps. 102	27. Zech. 14
12. Ps. 103	28. Malachi
13. Ps. 104	1:1-2:9
14. Ps. 105	29. Mal. 2:10-3:6
15. Ps. 106:1-33	30. Mal. 3:7-4:6
16. Ps. 106:34-48	31. James 1:1-18

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



The vain hopelessness of shared confusion

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Can someone explain something to me? When did Christian churches decide that it was to their advantage to present themselves as utterly clueless?

The headline of an ad for a new Methodist church asks, "Are you searching for answers to life's big questions?" The second line proclaims, "So are we!"

A radio spot for an Evangelical Lutheran Church of America church features children's plaintive voices asking, "Do God and the devil fight like Mommy and Daddy?" "If God loves everyone, why does that man have to sleep on the street?" The announcer then gently intones that their church doesn't have answers for questions like those. That's why it's the perfect place for people like you who are wrestling with life's uncertainties.

The message is clear. Doctrine is "out," and doubt and uncertainty are "in." The message from many churches isn't, "Come and hear the truth." It's "Come and share our confusion."

Even a message like that does have a certain appeal—and here's something we ought to remember. Nobody likes a know-it-all. People are quickly turned off by the kind of arrogance that claims to have all the answers. Really, we Christians ought to be the last ones to make that claim—to act as though we thought the truth originated with us (It didn't!), or as though our Bible had glib, pat answers for every question a human mind can conceive (It doesn't!). God, forgive us whenever we pretend to know more than we do.

Just the same, God, forgive us when we pretend to know less than we do. We certainly don't know everything. But we do

know what God tells us in his Word, and what we learn there is absolutely, immutably true. To claim anything less for God's Word—though it may sound humble and open-minded—is really to impugn the trustworthiness of God himself.

Besides, it backfires. In his *Candide*, Voltaire has a Venetian nobleman say about a certain philosopher: "When I saw that he doubted everything, I concluded that I knew as much as he did, and that I didn't need anyone's help to be ignorant." A community of spiritual "seekers," who freely admit that they know nothing that you don't, may sound like a humble, open-minded group of people. Then you think again and realize that joining them would be utterly pointless.

Embracing your doubts and uncertainties sounds liberating, but only at first. Then you realize that you're clutching nothing but thin air.

That's why, recently, I was delighted to hear someone involved with our synod's campus ministry talking about how sick and tired young people today are of moral and spiritual relativism. They're tired of hearing that there are no answers, only questions. They want answers. They want the truth—the kind we have in God's Word.

Let's give it to them. In it, they'll meet a Savior who says, "I am the way" (John 14:6).

Not one whose motto is, "Don't follow me—I'm lost, too!"

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr. is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

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IN THE EYE OF THE CONGREGATION

Karl R. and Barbara A. Gurgel

Can you imagine yourself living in a parsonage? Scary thought, no? What is it like? How do called workers' families handle it? We asked two well-known parsonage dwellers those questions, and here's what they said. After reading their views, why don't you make a point of asking your pastor and his wife, too, how it is in their house? Maybe you can help make it even better.

I'VE LIVED IN A PARSONAGE ALL MY LIFE

Typically, a parsonage is the home a congregation provides for its "parson," its minister. Though I relate to such a traditional parsonage setting, I like to think of the word "parsonage" as referring to any home occupied by someone in full-time service to the Lord.

OPPORTUNITIES UNDER GLASS

Sheryl and I became acquainted in a motel elevator.

Vacationers in the southwest, our midwestern background was evident on this chilly evening as we headed for the pool. Our similarities did not stop with our accents and vacation choice. In minutes, we discovered that our daughters matched ages, we enjoyed travel, and we both lived in a parsonage.

Because of our commonality, conversation flowed easily. Then Sheryl paused momentarily. "I don't know if many women do this, but I prayed to be able to serve God next to a spouse." Sheryl prayed to be able to live in a parsonage!

A recent study of seminary wives in another denomination indicated that up to half did not want to be in the ministry. Parsonage living is not always desirable and often avoided.

There are some negatives—leaving family, comfortable jobs, living in someone else's house with different decor and colors. Parsonage life can mean loneliness because of lifestyle differences, parenting alone while a husband faithfully serves his congregation, having no confidant, bearing the brunt of unfriendly talk. All of this happens under glass, living in a confining fish bowl with everyone, or seemingly everyone, peering inside.

But glass houses afford great opportunities. Parsonage living is not a disadvantage. Here we are privileged to work in God's Word, every day and on holidays. Loving the Lord is not scorned, but expected of us. Because our lives are on display, our glad times and sad times are easily shared. Conversation quietly turns to faith matters, and we bond with those around us who love Christ, just as he promised.

"Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29).

Providing a home is only one of a number of ways congregations show their concern for the physical well-being of their called workers. As a young boy growing up in a farming community, I still have mouth-watering memories of delicious, Sunday chicken dinners with members. Colonel Sanders hadn't come to Caledonia, but he could have learned a lesson or two from the great cooks of Houston County.

But why all these dinner invitations? Members often thought of the pastor's family as an extension of their own. So they made them part of joyous family occasions: baptisms, weddings, anniversaries, almost any occasion.

But it was more than just a dinner invitation. It was a way of acknowledging how much we all are a part of God's one family. So it seemed natural to consider as one of the family anyone who shared with them the Word

through which the Holy Spirit made us part of God's extended family.

As part of a family living in the parsonage, we children often had to be unusually quiet. More often in those days, the pastor's home was also his office. So when someone came to announce his intention to attend the Lord's Supper on Sunday, or to be counseled in her Christian life, or when adult instruction classes were going on, the children could not be seen or heard.

But I had a place where I could not be seen and yet hear. It was the stair landing leading upstairs from my father's office. I could lie there undetected and listen to my father and his minister friends talk. That is unless I fell asleep and had to be awakened by my dad on his way to bed. But, before I fell asleep, it provided a wonderful opportunity for me to hear about the work of the synod. It awakened in me a love

and an interest in the work of the Lord beyond what I could see locally.

There was yet another lesson I learned living in a parsonage—serving God by serving others.

The time didn't matter. Whether it was day or night, there needed to be a willingness to serve God's people. Nor was it a burden you unhappily bore. It was a way, like every other act of Christian service, to love him who loved you first.

I have fond memories of parsonage life. Let's put that in the present, since I'm still living in a parsonage today. Parsonage life makes me feel part of God's family. It helps me see the limitless opportunities for service that God provides. It's one important place, among many places, from which we can go forth to serve him.

Karl Gurgel is president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

God not only gives eternal life with his gift of faith, but he promises countless encouragers as I serve him next to a spouse in my transparent manse. I can testify to the many Christian family members that God has given us outside of our own physical family. They encourage and support us with words and actions: sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers, and children—who do for us what our own would if they were nearby. I am comforted by this promise each time I must leave my own children or they leave us for the sake of serving Christ.

Living under glass is not peculiar to parsonage living.

All Christians are under scrutiny by their neighbors, relatives, associates . . . a curiosity that may be annoying, and yet gives similar opportunities for all who serve him.

In all of our glass houses others watch our milk spill, dark clouds gather, tears sneak between the tensions of everyday routine. All our homes experience faith-lifting joys as well as world-induced trauma under watchful eyes. My prayer is like yours. If tears and loneliness threaten to shatter, may Christ's love shine through. Should strife and hurt cause cracks, let God's forgiveness reglue. If gladness and laughter ring, join with me in the joys of God's gifts.



A fish bowl? Glass house? I prefer to think of our home as a crystal palace filled with God's love, forgiveness to share, and wonderful opportunities to serve him.

Barbara Gurgel, wife of President Gurgel, attends St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

UNIQUE challenges and approaches

The small number of pastors and members in the Pacific Northwest District are creative and pitch in—and then watch the Holy Spirit work.

Linda R. Buxa

In the mid-1800's Horace Greeley encouraged: "Go west young man." People listened. And they keep listening. Today, over 11,000,000 people live in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) region.

How do you reach the people in this diverse area? That's the big question for the 45 pastors and 7,133 WELS members who serve and worship here. This small group faces unique challenges, but comes up with unique ways to meet those challenges.

Unique challenges

Large area. As the largest geographical district, the PNW District covers all of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, and a portion of British Columbia, and is in three time zones. Climates vary from the desert of Eastern Oregon to the snow and cold of Alaska.

Church isn't a given. The Pacific Northwest is the least church-ed area of the nation. "We are dealing with children whose parents came west and lost interest in church," says Warren Widmann, district president. In addition, "we perhaps have more distractions than most areas of the country."

He's referring to the lure of the mountains and oceans, fishing and

camping, hiking and mountain biking. People use the weekends for their adventures, and church isn't considered an adventure.

Large cities. As WELS tries to reach urban areas, the district wants to reach the heart of cities such as Seattle and Portland. For the past 15 to 20 years, congregations have served the metro areas, but not the downtown portions. "We are devising a plan to get in there," says Mark Cares, district mission board chairman.

Remoteness. After mentioning large cities, it seems odd to mention remote areas, yet "there are so many pockets of smaller places that want to be served," says Cares. Sometimes groups of two to 10 people look for support. But every group can't possibly have a pastor. "We try to cover a lot with preaching stations, convener systems, tapes," says Cares.

Small churches. Churches with only a few members struggle to make ends meet and stay afloat. In addition, small churches have a hard time imagining losing a core of members to start a daughter church.

Staying focused on missions. A study of congregations in 1996-97 found that many WELS people lack

passion for sharing the gospel. That attitude can be found in the district. Widmann is honest: "People need law and gospel, and we need to become more aggressive in bringing it to them."

Unique approaches

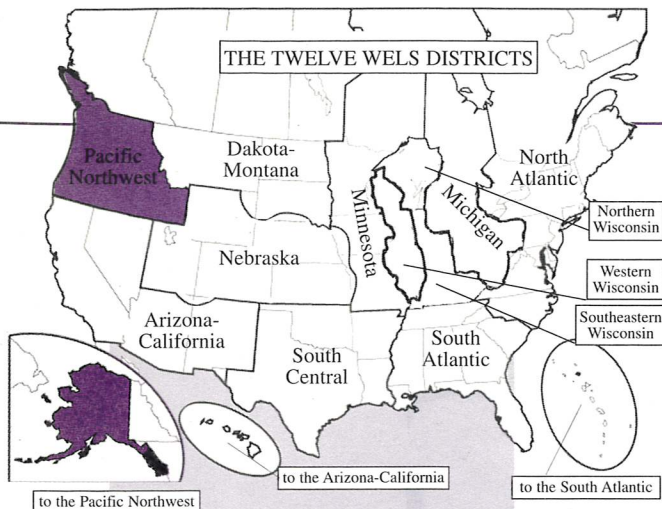
All this seems overwhelming. However, many in this region consider themselves independent and innovative. Members and congregations use this attitude to find new ways of reaching people who don't know Jesus.

Faith, Tacoma, Wash., is one example. South Hill, a suburb 10 miles south, was growing rapidly. Wanting to reach this community, but not wanting to start a daughter church, the congregation established a satellite site. Services in South Hill began on Oct. 10, 1999. Faith is now one church with two locations.

"We don't see the purpose for separate things," such as two evangelism committees or two church councils, says Tom Unke, pastor at Faith.

This sounds unusual, but "the Lord blessed us at every turn," says Unke.

Members started getting into the Word, and Bible study attendance went from high 20s to high 80s.



■ Pacific Northwest District

Stats at a glance
Pacific Northwest District

- Conferences: 2
- Circuits: 6
- Congregations: 45
- Mission churches: 12
- Exploratory churches: 5

- Baptized members: 7,133
- Communicant members: 5,134
- Average attendance: 51.6%
- Pastors: 45

- Adult baptisms: 58
- Adult confirmations: 166

- Sunday school enrollment: 1,080
- Bible class attendance (teens): 172
- Bible class attendance (adults): 1,200

- Early childhood education schools: 4
- Lutheran elementary schools: 9
- Area Lutheran high schools: 1

- Statistics taken from the 1998 Statistical Report, Commission on Parish Schools, and Board for Home Missions.

Members began inviting people to church, and worship attendance increased 70 percent over the past three years. This spring, Faith had almost 20 adult prospects in Bible Information Class.

But, neither Unke nor the members take credit. “The Lord is moving, and we’re a part of it,” says Unke.

At Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, the Holy Spirit is moving too—through the work of Jim Lillo. Seven years ago, Lillo befriended Carlos, his Spanish-speaking neighbor, even though Lillo could not speak Spanish. He introduced Carlos and his friends

to Jesus, using the *Communicating Christ* video in Spanish. He then offered videotaped worship from missionary Ronald Baerbock in the Dominican Republic. Now, services are sent from Phoenix.

In 1999, Spanish-speaking pastors started visiting every other month. They conduct worship, offer communion, and answer questions.

Through these methods, almost a dozen have been confirmed. All because a member saw a need and filled it.

“It is due to Jim’s determination,” says James Oldfield, pastor at Faith. “It shows the power of the gospel.”

The gospel is also showing its power in Boise, Idaho. Eight years ago some members at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho, sponsored Vietnamese families who settled in Boise. Pastor Mark Cares started teaching these families simple Bible stories.

The work grew, and Dan Kramer was called to serve this group. Peace in Jesus held its opening service on Easter 1999.

Kramer, who conducts services and Bible classes in Vietnamese, puts his faith into action. “We’ve spent two years becoming the church that cares for Vietnamese. When you love and care enough about their language and culture, they are amazed.”

He recognizes that this concern must be genuine, so Kramer helps where people really need it. He holds citizenship and English as a Second Language classes so Vietnamese refugees become more comfortable in the United States.

“You build trust bridges so you can take the gospel across,” he says.

It hasn’t been easy though, Kramer acknowledges. In this Vietnamese

community of 2,000, many believe in a blend of religions such as Buddhism, Catholicism, and Taoism. In addition, the only other churches reaching out are the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons.

However, at Peace in Jesus, “everyone commits to sticking with God’s Word,” says Kramer. The power of God’s Word, as well as love for people, is making a difference. On Palm Sunday, four people, ranging in age from four to 71, were baptized. One week later, 70 people—many first-time visitors—attended.

“The Holy Spirit is in this place,” says Kramer. “We’re excited to be part of his work.”

That seems to be this district’s theme. Though aware of their challenges, pastors and members know that the gospel needs to be shared. So they do their work—and hold on when the Holy Spirit takes over.

Linda Buxa, who lives in Kodiak, Alaska, worships via teleconfer— a speaker phone-like device—twice a month with Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage. The other two Sundays, pastors from the Anchorage area fly in to conduct worship.



Pastor Dan Kramer baptized 71-year-old Giaó Nguyen on Palm Sunday. This was the first adult baptism at Peace in Jesus, Nampa, Idaho.

JESUS' WAY OF LOVING THE LOST

Jesus gave a set of keys to every believer. How should you properly use these keys so the Lord's work is blessed?

Wayne D. Mueller

Every member of your congregation, including you, has a set of keys to the church. Some people think that's a little reckless. They think only church leaders and workers should have a set of keys.

But Jesus gave the keys to the church to every believer. The use of these keys, our Catechism explains, "is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth" (p. 11).

The keys we all hold are not for opening the front door of our local parish hall. Our keys from Christ lock and unlock the door to membership in the Holy Christian Church. Every believer has a set of keys from Christ "to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent."

God gives remarkable freedom to us in the New Testament. Our church practices are no longer bound by a lot of ceremonial laws as they were in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:16,17). We are restricted neither by dietary laws nor by mandatory worship and festival days (Romans 14). God leaves it up to each gathering of

Christians how, when, and where we worship, educate, and reach out with the gospel.

Although no laws govern how we conduct our ministries, Jesus enables New Testament ministry with a high privilege: the right to carry and use the keys of Christ. The ministry of our churches will be blessed when we use the keys in the way our Savior directed this privilege. Our ministries will be hurt when we fail to use or we abuse the high privilege of the keys.

Limiting users misuses the keys

We abuse the blessing Jesus brought to his church through the keys in two ways. We abuse the keys, first, when only a few of us use our keys. The idea that only the pastor and a few leaders and church workers have the right to use Christ's keys is a wrongheaded view of ministry. It stifles the outreach of the gospel.

After Easter, Jesus passed the right to use the keys to his disciples. He said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:21-23).

Even before his resurrection, however, Jesus made it clear that he was giving the use of the keys to open and close the door of heaven to all believers, not just to the disciples. He told Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Although spoken to Peter, these words were spoken in the context that the gates of hell would not be able to overcome his church, that is, all his believers.

In Matthew 18, Jesus addressed all believers. He told us to approach Christian brothers privately when their sin offends us. Then, if our brother does not respond to our use of the keys, we are to "tell it to the church," that is, to the whole gathering of believers. All of the church has a part in using the keys to lock out an unrepentant brother.

Holy writers throughout the New Testament urge members of



their congregations to use their keys. Peter spoke to lay members when he told them to use the keys to open heaven by sharing the gospel with others (1 Peter 3:15). Paul and James urged the members of their churches to use their keys both to forgive the penitent and exclude the impenitent (Galatians 6:1; James 5:20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

Our Lord was not reckless when he gave the keys to every member of his church. The church does not function as Jesus intended when we expect only a few to do the work of forgiving and retaining sins. In fact, believers are being poor stewards of a high privilege when they do not offer forgiveness to sinners and withhold it from those who don't believe.

Limiting the keys abuses them

But there is another way we may abuse the great privilege of the keys. That is by limiting their use only to the loosing, or forgiving, key.

Many people today feel that the church should only preach and convey a "positive" message. This creates an overt bias against excluding public sinners from the congregation. Nobody likes to hear that someone who was once a fellow member has declared himself outside the Holy Christian Church by his persistent sin.

Yet that is the clear, consistent message of Scripture. Every time Jesus spoke of the keys, he spoke both of forgiving and retaining sins. He offered both keys for the ministry of his church. He commissioned both keys for use by all his people. The work of the church is both to proclaim forgiveness and to announce the consequences of stubborn unrepentance. This is Jesus' way to do ministry.

If we pretend that unbelief has no consequences, we allow people to devalue the great blessing of faith.

Jesus balanced the positive truth that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16) with the unfortunate reality that "whoever does not believe stands condemned" (John 3:18).

When we do not preach and practice the consequences of denying God's positive truth, we make that truth meaningless. If we pretend that unbelief has no consequences, we allow people to devalue the great blessing of faith.

We will not be doing Jesus' kind of ministry if we dodge the use of the key that binds the sinner to his sin and locks the door of heaven against him. Clever euphemisms like "dropping," "terminating," or "releasing" church members who are living in sin, serve neither our use of the keys nor the sinner's need to hear God's judgment on his true condition.

Paul pulled no punches when he told the congregation at Corinth how to handle the unrepentant fornicator: "Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 5:5). Jesus, too, offered a frank mandate for a stubborn sinner: "Treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17). This is the action the church has come to call excommunication.

Can this possibly be the way to carry on gospel ministry in these touchy-feely, relational, politically-correct times? Or, closer to home, can this be the way our loving Savior wants us to convey our love to others? Stay tuned.



Wayne Mueller is administrator of the Board for Parish Services.



called worker shortage

WE NEED MORE LIKE WENT BEFORE



Lutheran teachers are needed today
and tomorrow more than ever.



Daniel M. Schmeling

More than 40 years ago, I decided that I wanted to be a Lutheran teacher like Ken Leverage, because he cared enough to correct me, guide me, and nurture me with Christ-centered counseling based on God's law and gospel. I prayed that God would use me to help others as he used Mr. Leverage to help me. After more than 35 years in the teaching ministry, I recognize that Lutheran teachers are needed today and tomorrow more than ever.

At this time of greatest need, we are experiencing an increasing shortage of teachers. The need for such Christian teachers is greater than the supply of young men and women ready to answer God's call into the teaching ministry.

We have attempted to fill the holes with "emergency teachers," interim principals, and teachers who are not yet synodically certified. However, these can only be temporary solutions. We need more young men and women who will prepare themselves to accept

the challenges and experience the blessings of the teaching ministry.

The current situation

The greatest shortage now is male teachers. As of May 1, there were 30 vacancies for male teachers to serve as elementary school principals, 8 vacancies for male staff ministers, 26 male elementary school teachers, and 10 male high school teachers. Martin Luther College (MLC) presented 37 male candidates for the teaching ministry to partially fill the 74 male teaching vacancies. The net shortage of 37 male teachers is likely to increase before it begins to decline.


The shortage among female teachers is not as great. Many retired women teachers have returned to the classroom. As of May 1, 83 women graduates were available to be assigned to the 41 elementary and 23 early childhood vacancies. Some, due to marriage plans, will have limited availability for a call. There is, however, a shortage of teachers for early childhood classrooms. The rapid growth of early childhood ministries

in our congregations has created a dramatic shortage of qualified early childhood teachers for our parishes. Only four graduates of MLC's early childhood education program were available for assignment in May.

Congregations with elementary schools have expected teachers to play the organ for worship. Of the 97 elementary school vacancies, 17 included the request for the ability to play the organ. This year, six MLC graduates are qualified to serve as head organists, and 20 can assist with playing organ for worship. The growing gap between supply and demand of teacher-organists has led many congregations to look elsewhere for organists or to train organists from within their congregation.

Contributing factors

The role and responsibilities of the elementary school principal have changed greatly during the past decade. Many congregations have responded by providing time and resources for the principal to do administrative work. Other



congregations have not. The resulting prioritization of administrative work and teaching responsibilities has led many male teachers to return to their first love—teaching.

Also during the past decade, many elementary school principals left to serve in area Lutheran high schools and synodical preparatory schools, and to serve as congregational staff ministers. These important positions frequently need men who have demonstrated their teaching abilities and leadership

qualities in our elementary schools.

In 1992, WELS congregations operated 198 preschool and five child care ministries. In 1999, the number rose to 259 preschools and 40 child care ministries, bringing both blessings and challenges. The demand for qualified early childhood educators has created a significant challenge. The opportunity to share the gospel with young children and their families has brought new blessings to them and to our congregations.

Also, we have seen a gradual decline in the pupil-teacher ratio due to the need for more individualized instruction and the declining enrollment in many schools. Family and societal stresses have made it necessary for our teachers to do more counseling in the classroom and modifying instruction to the students' individual needs. Congregations tend to maintain staff levels even as their school's enrollment declines. So, we are experiencing an increased demand for teachers at the same time as a synodwide decline in elementary school enrollment.

The down side

The shortage of teachers has made it necessary to request MLC students to interrupt their college education to take one-year positions as emergency teachers. Twenty-four emergency teachers served WELS elementary and secondary schools during the 1999-2000 school year. Although this may provide a temporary solution, it can only be a stop-gap measure. Young men and women are required to postpone their entry into the full-time teaching ministry, and congregations receive only a temporary teacher for one year.

During each of the past four years, 15-20 elementary schools have been without permanent principals. Schools have been administered by committee, or the pastor or another teacher serves as temporary principal. This hinders the development of the schools and undermines parental confidence in the schools' Christian education.

The shortage of early childhood teachers has placed many of our congregations in a difficult position. They recognize the opportunities for community outreach through an early childhood ministry. They also recognize the importance of having qualified early childhood teachers in order to make their early childhood program an integral part of their ministry.

More men and women interested in serving their Lord as Christian teachers, principals, and early childhood teachers are needed in order to provide long-term solutions.

The up side

The shortage of elementary school principals has helped us recognize the important role they have as school leaders. More congregations are recognizing the value of providing administrative time and continuing education for their principals.


This increased awareness of the principal's important role will encourage more male teachers to serve as the primary leader of their school.

The shortage of elementary school principals has also brought innovative approaches to sharing the principal's responsibilities. Congregations are making greater use of women teachers in appropriate leadership roles and enlisting members to assist with administrative duties. These efforts will bring long-term support for the principals.

The discussion of the growing teacher shortage has increased synod awareness of this issue. Retired teachers are reentering the teaching ministry. Elementary and secondary teachers are identifying qualified young men and women and encouraging them to enter the teaching ministry. Enrollment is increasing at Martin Luther College. The supply of future teachers is on the upswing.

Moving forward in Christ

Lutheran teachers have ministered to the spiritual, educational, and personal needs of children and their families for over a century. Christian young men and women have always heeded the call to serve their Lord as teachers in our early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools. They have willingly given their lives to help others with the law and gospel as their teachers helped them—as Mr. Leverence helped me. They are needed today and tomorrow more than ever. As we move forward in Christ, may God move the hearts of many to answer his call to teach.


Daniel Schmeling is administrator of the Commission on Parish Schools.

THE QUIET CHURCH IN ROADBLOCK

While life within the church remained quiet during the 1920s, life in American

They call it the “jazz age,” the “flapper era”—the 1920s. Evidence of declining morals abounded, and writers throughout the United States, including *The Northwestern Lutheran* (TNL) writers, reacted to this shift in moral principles.

Declining morals

• “America is facing a most serious situation regarding its popular music,” wrote Anne Shaw Faulkner in the August 1921 issue of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. “Never in the history of our land have there been such immoral conditions among our young people.” Faulkner’s article, “Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?”, placed blame squarely where she believed it belonged.

The National Dancing Masters’ Association decreed: “Don’t permit vulgar cheap jazz music to be played,” because it “almost forces dancers to use jerky half-steps, and invites immoral variations.” Industry experts even noted that jazz played in factories and workshops had a “demoralizing” effect, causing “unsteadiness and lack of evenness” in workmanship.



• TNL writer John Brenner decried the growing custom of a bride’s refusal to take her husband’s name: “Evidently women of this type regard it as a degrading sign of bondage.”

• Brenner further wrote that the Moving Picture, which “might have been the greatest achievement for education and wholesome entertainment,” had fallen instead into “sordid commercialism that panders to the lowest and vilest elements of human nature for the greed of gold.” Silly, slapstick comedies and sex relations dominated the movies, while the real-life “divorce scandals, hotel episodes,” and “free love” of movie heroes and heroines too often became the ideals of young people.

Rising liberalism

The 1920s also witnessed the battle between fundamentalism and liberalism.

“These are the modern names,” wrote Hans Moussa of TNL, for “the age-old warfare between Bible faith and moralistic humanitarianism,” the struggle in which “the Church always finds itself contending for its faith against the forces of the Devil and the world.” This great debate between fundamentalism and modernism was actually “a very good thing,” Moussa suggested, because it offered “the one chance to put a stop

to the ruin that has been eating at the heart and vitals of Christian faith.”

While “no open conflict between modernism and fundamentalism” was apparent in the Missouri and Wisconsin synods, John Brenner cautioned, “We cannot deny that there have been heard among Lutherans utterances criticizing the traditional conservatism of our church and demanding that we grow more liberal and broad.”

TNL paid special attention to the Tennessee trial of a high school biology teacher accused of violating a state law that forbade the teaching of evolution. Former presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan arose in support of the Tennessee law.

“As all the world knows, there is no Christian body more outspoken against Darwinianism [sic] and the whole evolutionary system than is our own Lutheran Church,” said a TNL editorial. “But that does not make us allies of Bryan, nor is he our ally.”

At trial’s end, and after Bryan’s sudden death, Moussa said Bryan would be remembered as an “outstanding defender of orthodoxy” from “the ravages of destructive science and criticism.” Yet as a champion of Christianity in public life, “we must deplore his methods and his principles.” Bryan failed to sepa-

THE WENTIES



society swirled with controversy.

Mark E. Braun

rate church from state. “Never can the gospel of Christ be served by laws or by majorities or by the accidents of political ascendancy.”

Maintaining pure doctrine

Our synod was half as old in the 1920s as it is today. It marked its 75th anniversary in 1925. “Synodical consciousness was never inordinately strong in Wisconsin,” Moussa reflected. Pastors and laymen possessed a “spirit of individuality” that was not so much disloyalty to their synod as “a manner of asserting independence of all mass influences.”

Perfection was not to be found in the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and

Other States, nor in any other body of believers on earth. Yet Moussa praised his synod’s strengths. “If the world stands another 75 years,” and if “our descendants delve into the distant past to read their future by their past,” they will read God’s handwriting in its history. “They will thank their German founders in one breath for the gospel they brought to these shores, for their zeal in keeping it pure in doctrine, and for their tireless devotion to schooling in the hearts of the young.”

Dealing with disaster

The front page headline of *The New York Times* on Sunday, Oct. 13,

1929, reassured readers: “Stock Prices Will Stay at High Levels for Years to Come.”

Only 11 days later, on Black Thursday, Oct. 24, new headlines read: “Prices of Stocks Crash in Heavy Liquidation, Total Drop in Billions,” and “Many Accounts Wiped Out.”

Wall Street’s disaster struck all Americans—including Lutherans in the synod of Wisconsin. And, while the stock market crash itself happened in 1929, the aftereffects shaped the way of life in the 1930s.



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

More comments made in *The Northwestern Lutheran in the 1920s:*

- Hans Moussa in 1923, while warning against the dance and other evils of the age, said: “There are Lutherans, perhaps, who reason that since we have no laws against this or that, they may indulge in such things with impunity. They are poorly informed. . . . A Christian’s conduct grows out of his spiritual condition. He lives as he does because he is convinced that for himself any other course would be deadly and a willful denial of his enlightened Christian understanding. And Christians go a step further: If they have any reason to feel that their conduct may induce other, weaker brothers and sisters to take harm they will govern themselves accordingly. That was St. Paul’s way.”
- John Brenner, 1929: “A church can live well and thrive without the use of the radio. Give us faithful preaching of the Truth, conscientious pastoral work, Christian day schools and higher schools for the careful indoctrination and education of our youth, living witnesship on the part of our members, and all this with constant prayer to him who really builds the Church, and we are willing to let the Federal Council of Churches have the air, the movie, and whatever else it may be able to monopolize on this earth of ours.”

part of God's family

Fellowship—*European*

WELS members living in Europe share a special connection—to each other and to the Word.

Julie K. Tessmer

Saying goodbye is never easy. It was especially difficult for the 44 people who went to the European Civilian Chaplaincy 2000 Easter Retreat in Berlin, Germany, in April. These WELS American civilians and military personnel traveled up to 750 miles to worship, study the Bible, and interact with fellow WELS members scattered throughout Europe.

Traveling for the Word

From England, France, Italy, Czech Republic, and Germany, people traveled by plane and by car to Berlin to hear the Word and be with fellow Christians. They came when they could during the three-day retreat—some enjoying a tour of Wittenberg on Thursday, others coming late Friday night. The distance didn't matter. It was worth it.

Retreats aren't the only time many of these Christians travel for church. Some travel two to four hours once or twice a month to attend worship.

Not all can make the trip, but they remain dedicated to the Word. The Nitizes in Merano, Italy, hold services in their home. Kris plays the piano. Her husband, Kurt, does the liturgy, and their family watches videotaped services from the Board for Home Missions Taped Services Committee. Others receive services and sermons from their home churches in the

States or e-mailed sermons from Philip Kieselhorst, the European civilian chaplain.

Confirmation classes are "adapted to whatever works best," says Kieselhorst. In England, Kieselhorst meets monthly with students and provides lessons for the rest of the month. Lessons are e-mailed to Belgium and England. In Italy, one family sat down together and went through *Communicating Christ*.

"You need parental support," says Kieselhorst. "They have to be involved and active."

Not just the families travel. When the Military Services Committee of the Commission on Special Ministries called Kieselhorst in 1995, they ironically compared him to a *reiseprediger*, a traveling preacher like the ones originally from Germany who went between homesteads in the States during the 1800s.

Kieselhorst's extended "congregation" crosses 24 countries in Europe and west Asia. "I liken it to having a congregation in Milwaukee, a congregation in New Ulm, (Minn.), and one in Detroit. I try to serve all of them each month," he says.

The first Sunday he travels to London, an eight to 10 hour trip from his home in Mainz, and serves 20 people at a naval chapel.

On the second and fourth Sundays, Kieselhorst holds two services: one for 30 to 50 civilians in Frankfurt (about 15 minutes away), and another at Ramstein Air Force base (about an hour and a half away) for 20 to 30 people.

Zurich, Switzerland, is the destination for the third Sunday. Four core families make up that group.

About 120 people total attend each month, and 12 children are in confirmation class. Through trips to Italy, Belgium, Northern England, and southern Germany, Kieselhorst sees another 30 people a month.

Kieselhorst and his wife, Kathy, also send out newsletters to 200 families (400 people) and plan retreats so their extended congregation can worship and meet together.

Appreciating the fellowship of believers

We inched over. Just a bit more. One more person. Made it. We all fit. All the adults were at one table.

"Take and eat. This is my body."

"Take and drink. This is my blood."

The best fellowship this weekend was when we all communed together—a body of believers. It moved me to tears thinking about what it must be like for them not to have this opportunity more often.

Being an American while living in Europe isn't easy. Relatives are often overseas. Many times husbands in the military are separated from their families. Language can be a barrier.

"It's not a vacation," says Kieselhorst. "It's a living."

He continues, "They need the support of the church and God's Word in their lives."

That's why WELS members in Europe truly appreciate fellowship—

style

both in worship and social settings. Since many worship only as a family, to gather together as a group at the retreats holds special meaning. Here they can openly discuss what they're going through and receive Christian love, concern, and advice.

"It's special for them to get together," says Kieselhorst. "They're so grateful—it doesn't matter where or when."

The where and when of receiving Holy Communion is varied—train stations, cafes, hotel parking lots, in a car, while waiting to get on the bus to go to Bosnia.

"You'll see crying eyes in the congregation when they receive Holy Communion at the retreat," said Kieselhorst. "It's because they miss it."

And the joy of receiving it with their fellow Christians.

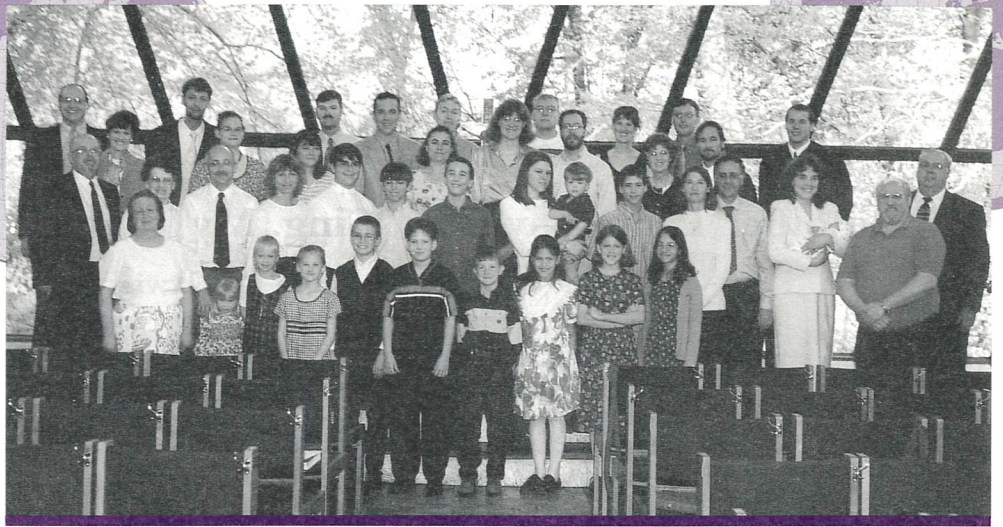
Spreading the Word

The four Bible study classes during the weekend echoed the retreat's theme: "Don't let anyone take away your joy." Commission on Evangelism administrator Bob Hartman taught us a surefire way to keep our joy in Christ's perfect life, death, and resurrection—share it with others.

WELS members in Europe talk about their faith and spread the Word to other Americans—whether neighbors, friends, people they work with, or others on base.

That's the way to get the Word out. "We focus on equipping Americans who are here so they become the lay evangelists," says Kieselhorst.

The Benenati family, stationed at a military base in Bad Aibling,



Attendees of the WELS European Civilian Chaplaincy 2000 Easter Retreat in Berlin, Germany. Worship, Bible study, and lots of fellowship filled the weekend.

Germany, worked hard on getting the Word out. They gathered 10 families plus their own, a total of 28 people, so they could have monthly services on base.

"Our goal—besides selfishly wanting to have services—was to provide for families that work on base," said Meryl Benenati.

Kieselhorst first visited the Benenatis in January. Services and confirmation class started in April and will be held once a month for a six-month trial period.

Meryl puts this success—and any future success—in God's hands. "It wasn't because we worked hard. It's because God wanted it to turn out."

She adds, "You can't make people come. God's going to bring them."

Others are doing similar things. In Kronberg, Germany, Scott Dramer, who works for Opel cars, and his family have brought five prospect families to the Kieselhorsts in three years. Terry and Cheryl Konell, who were stationed in Naples, Italy, from 1995 to 1998, invited others from the military apartments to worship with them every week. Sometimes 30 people would attend, and 10 to 15 children would be in Sunday school. One adult was confirmed.

All because these people want to share the joy they have.

Saying goodbye isn't easy. Hugs, e-mail addresses, and "See you soon" were exchanged as families left the retreat one by one. Tears were also shed, maybe not so much from grief, but from happiness in experiencing that true fellowship of believers once again.



Julie Tessmer is senior communications assistant for Forward/NL and WELS Communication Services.

WELS first sent civilian chaplains overseas to minister to WELS members in the military during World War II.

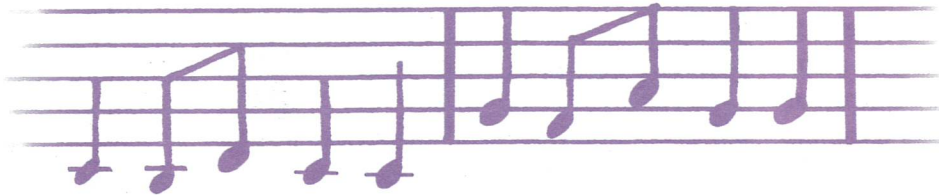
In the past five years, the percentage of WELS military personnel to WELS civilians overseas has changed from 75:25 to about 50:50.

Because of the changing population, the ministry has changed too. Retired pastors now come for three months at a time, two or three times a year to help the chaplain.

Sing, my tongue

Unlike other Lenten hymns, “Sing, My Tongue” is a song of triumph.

Theodore J. Hartwig



Few hymns survive from the first 200 years of the Christian church. Those that do, concentrate on the Lord’s resurrection, so comforting at a time when Christians were hounded to death in a hostile world.

Defending Christian truths

Hymn composing became more urgent in order to oppose deadly distortions of Christian truth popularized with catchy ditties.

The most dangerous assault appeared in the early 300s. It insisted that God’s Son cannot be true everlasting God, but a creature less than God. Had this idea triumphed, as it almost did, the Christian faith would have suffered shipwreck—Jesus recognized as a good man, a teacher of morality, and no more. Athanasius, foremost defender of the Christian faith in the 300s, tired out his life contending for the truth and finally triumphing. “This battle,” he wrote, “is for our all.”

The Nicene Creed is one flower from the battle, as are many hymns written to defend the equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. First to compose such hymns in Latin was the staunchly orthodox Ambrose, bishop of Milan. “What can be more powerful,” he wrote, “than a confession of the Trinity daily sung by the mouths of a whole people.” Best known among the hymns credited

to him is “Savior of the Nations, Come” (*Christian Worship* 2).

Proclaiming Christ’s victory

Venantius Fortunatus holds high place among Christian poets of the 500s. His hymns focus on the Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection.

One of these, “Sing, My Tongue” (*Christian Worship* 122), unlike other hymns for Lent, is a triumph song. Strains of triumph sound immediately in the first stanza, then with arborescent imagery in the fourth: “Faithful cross, the sign of triumph, Be for all the noblest tree; None in foliage, none in blossom, None in fruit your equal be, Symbol of the world’s redemption, For your burden makes us free.” No other hymn sings of the cross, that sign of shame, like this.

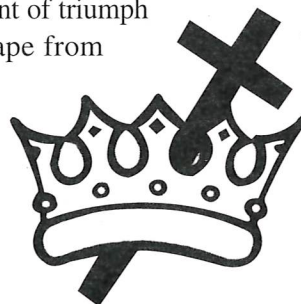
An interesting story clarifies how the cross came to be so viewed. Before 1100, Christ’s passion was commonly understood as a victory over the devil. By harrying to death a man who committed no sin, Satan unwittingly committed an outrageous crime that lost him his legal hold on all sinners. Thus the cross became God’s instrument of triumph and of mankind’s escape from bondage. Pictures and carvings of Christ on the cross showed him not in agony, but in majesty. Instead of

a crown of thorns he wears the splendid crown of a king.

Another tale claims that Fortunatus was moved to compose his cross hymn by a festival in France that celebrated the reception of what people believed to be a genuine fragment of the cross. Veneration of relics had crept into Christian communities since the second century. Once begun, this cult mushroomed into the extravagances we hear about at Luther’s time. It’s another case of how a devotion, once well-meaning, rusts into something worthless, even harmful. As Luther wrote of relics, “even if there were some good in them, they should long since have been condemned. They are utterly unnecessary and worthless.”

Whatever the reasons for its writing, Fortunatus’ hymn is a lovely work of Christian poetry. According to the custom popularized by Ambrose 200 years earlier, it closes with the standard doxology to the Triune God. “Unto God be praise and glory; To the Father and the Son, To th’ eternal Spirit honor Now and evermore be done—Praise and glory in the highest While the timeless ages run.”

Theodore Hartwig is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.





Inter-Act

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

Introduction

- anticipation
- expectation
- concentration
- celebration

What comes to mind as you read the four words above? Do you see them as connected in some way, suggesting a looking forward to a special event? Or do you simply see them as four words ending with "-ion"?

The suffix "ion" means "state of being." Anticipation, for example, means "being in the state of giving advance thought to something."

Many theological words end in "-ion." Words like creation, election, redemption, justification, reconciliation, and sanctification. In the next few Inter-Act Bible studies we will examine the meaning of each of these words and learn how they are used in Scripture. This month we consider the word "creation."

I. Text

Read Romans 8:18-21.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

II. Questions

1. What is the "glory that will be revealed in us?" How does Paul help us understand something about this glory?
2. To what does the word "creation" refer (Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 11:3)?
3. The apostle personifies creation. That is, he ascribes personal qualities and characteristics to it. Why does creation wait "in eager expectation" (8:19)? What is Paul's emphasis in this section (8:23)?
4. For what is creation waiting "in eager expectation?" When and how will this happen (Matthew 25:33,34)?
5. Why does Paul speak of creation as being frustrated (Genesis 3:17,18)? Why did God curse the earth though it didn't have this coming (Genesis 3:19)?
6. What does the future hold for creation? What will liberation from the "bondage to decay" mean for creation? To what does "the glorious freedom of the children of God" refer?
7. Paul's way of speaking leads one to think that creation will be restored. What do 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 21:1-4 suggest lies in store for creation?

III. Applications

1. Our future life in heaven will be glorious because sin and its consequences will be gone forever. Make a list of some things that will be absent in heaven (Revelation 21:4).
2. Mention something for which you are waiting with eager expectation. Why are you eager about it? What parallels do you see with your eagerness for heaven?
3. Agree/disagree: "Sons of God" are all those who are honorable and upstanding.
4. Give an example of a frustration experienced by nature. How would you answer someone who says it is unfair that creation should suffer for the sins of mankind?
5. Explain how these words of Scripture can help you deal with daily sufferings and frustrations. In what sense are we already enjoying the "glorious freedom of the children of God" (John 8:32, Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 3:17)?
6. Look again at the four words with which we began this lesson. What application does each "state of being" word have regarding our glorious future?

IV. Prayer

Father, I confess that I sometimes concentrate on my sufferings and frustrations rather than on the glorious freedom you have given me in Christ. Help me put everything in perspective. Cause me to see in the bondage to decay all around me that this world is not my true home. Fill me with eager expectation for the glories of life with you in heaven. Keep me steadfast in the faith until that day when you reveal publicly that I am yours because you have purchased me with the precious blood of your Son, my Savior. It is in his name that I bring this prayer. Amen.

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



Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Mequon, Wis.

At the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation service on May 24, 37 graduates received their Masters of Divinity degrees.



Anthony A. Allard
Kimberly, Wis.



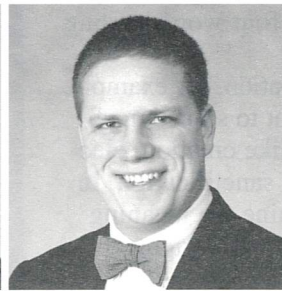
Jason E. Baldwin
Silverwood, Mich.



Benjamin W. Berger
Iron Ridge, Wis.



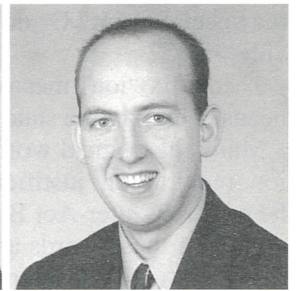
Matthew J. Brown
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



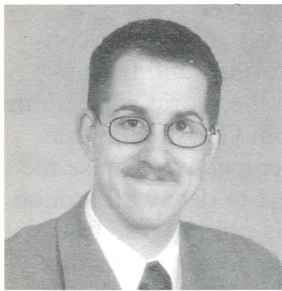
Daniel L. Cole
Canby, Minn.



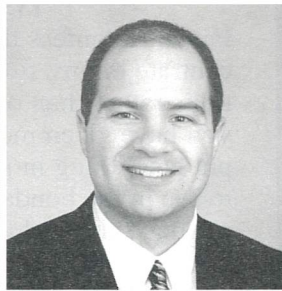
Brady E. Coleman
Detroit, Mich.



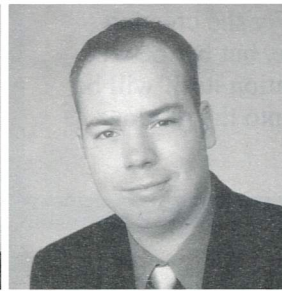
Matthew P. DeNoyer
Waukesha, Wis.



Christopher S. Doerr
Milwaukee, Wis.



Jeffrey A. Duquaine
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.



Christopher M. Esmay
Shaw Center, Singapore



Andrew D. Fix
Madison, Wis.



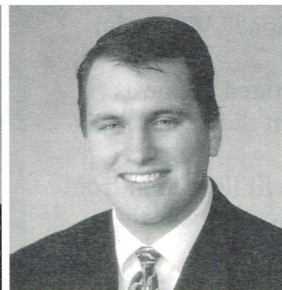
Steven P. Gabb
Plano, Tex.



Michael F. Gorte
Manitowoc, Wis.



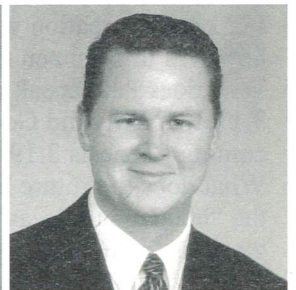
James D. Grabitske
Arlington, Minn.



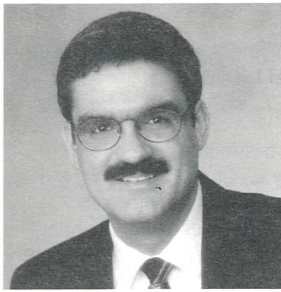
Troy D. Jacobs
Tomah, Wis.



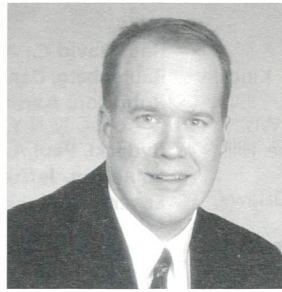
David E. Koehler
Leland, Mich.



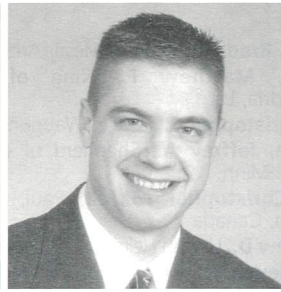
Paul J. Learman
Peshtigo, Wis.



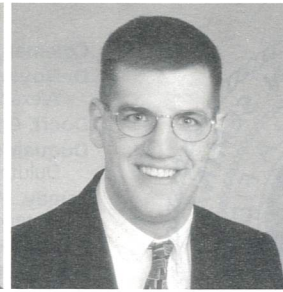
Scott A. Muske
Mequon, Wis.



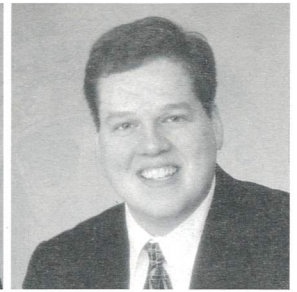
Scott E. Pearson
Hanover, Minn.



Brian R. Pechman
Oshkosh, Wis.



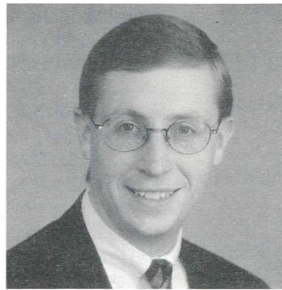
David C. Rau
Neenah, Wis.



Daniel J. Rautenberg
Fond du Lac, Wis.



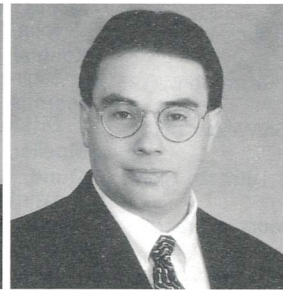
Aaron T. Robinson
Milwaukee, Wis.



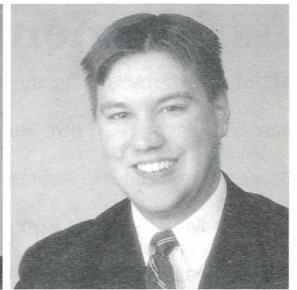
Paul A. Rydecki
Stevensville, Mich.



Jeffrey L. Samelson
Milwaukee, Wis.



Daniel H. Scharp
Watertown, Wis.



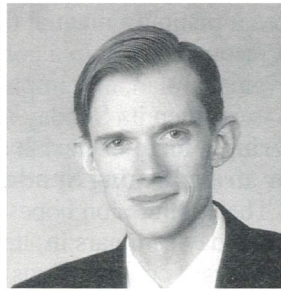
Peter T. Schmidt
Coon Rapids, Minn.



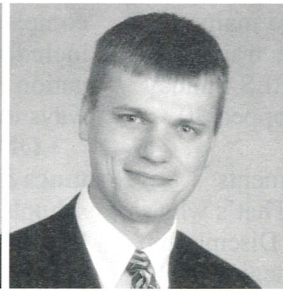
Michael A. Schroeder
Saginaw, Mich.



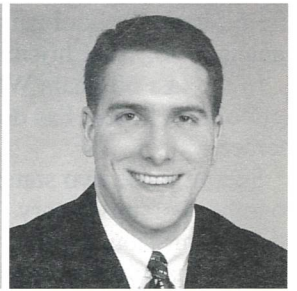
Paul M. Seager
Milwaukee, Wis.



Joshua E. Stahmann
Gainesville, Fla.



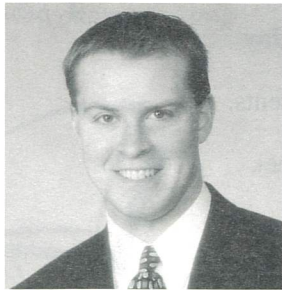
Joshua D. Sternhagen
New Orleans, La.



Nathan E. Wagenknecht
Fort Worth, Tex.



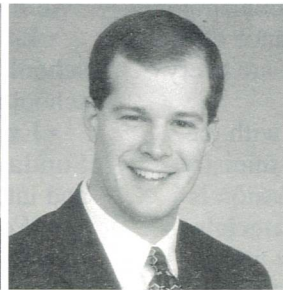
Aaron T. Weber
Mequon, Wis.



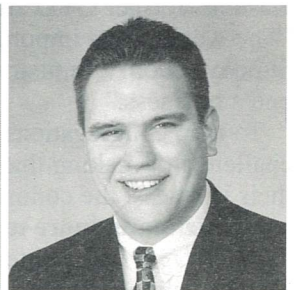
John P. Werner
Belle Plaine, Minn.



Timothy J. Westendorf
Mequon, Wis.



Chad E. Wright
Mequon, Wis.



Jason A. Zahn
Indianapolis, Ind.



Assignments

Allard, Anthony A., Trinity, Hillrose/Zion, Ft. Morgan, Colo.
Baldwin, Jason E., Faith, Huron/Willow Lake, Willow Lake, S.D.
Berger, Benjamin W., Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.
Brown, Matthew J., exploratory outreach, Clarksville, Tenn.
Butler, Heath D., assistant to the South Central District President, Cypress Springs Village, Tex.
Cole, Daniel L., Our Savior, Burlington, Iowa

Coleman, Brady E., Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
DeNoyer, Matthew P., King of Kings, Alexandria, La.
Doerr, Christopher S., Grace, Waupun, Wis.
Duquaine, Jeffrey A., Shepherd of the Hills, Duluth, Minn.
Esmay, Christopher M., St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Fix, Andrew D., Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa
Gabb, Steven P., exploratory outreach, New York City, N.Y.
Gorte, Michael F., Zion, Akaska/St. Paul, Mound City, S.D.
Grabitske, James D., Cross, Charles City/Prince of Peace, Mason City, Iowa
Heiderich, Daniel F., assistant to the Nebraska District President, Plymouth, Neb.
Jacobs, Troy D., St. Matthew, Butterfield/St. John, Dafur/St. Paul, St. James, Minn.
Koehler, David E., Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Learman, Paul J., assistant to the Michigan District President, Midland, Mich.
Mueller, Adam R., Faith, Kokomo, Ind.
Mund, Scott C., New Hope, Racine/Abiding Word, Somers, Wis.
Muske, Scott A., Trinity, Omak, Wash.
Pearson, Scott E., exploratory outreach, Appleton, Wis.
Pechman, Brian R., Abundant Life, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Rau, David C., Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.
Rautenberg, Daniel J., Open Bible, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Robinson, Aaron T., exploratory outreach, New York City, N.Y.
Rydecki, Paul A., missionary to Puerto Rico
Samelson, Jeffrey L., Christ, Columbia, Md.
Scharp, Daniel H., Zion, Valentine, Neb.
Schmidt, Peter T., Crown of Glory, Orlando, Fla.
Schroeder, Michael A., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Schwartz, Matthew E., Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Seager, Paul M., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Stahmann, Joshua E., missionary to Tokyo, Japan
Sternhagen, Joshua D., St. John's, Antigua, West Indies
Wagenknecht, Nathan E., missionary in the Caribbean
Weber, Aaron T., Peace, Loves Park/exploratory outreach, Roscoe, Ill.
Werner, John P., Christ, Mindoro, Wis.
Westendorf, Timothy J., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Wright, Chad E., Good Shepherd, Beaverton/St. John's, Gladwin, Mich.
Zahn, Jason A., Hope, Irmo, S.C.
Zietlow, Jonathan P., exploratory outreach, Lexington, Ky.

Making Sunday schools stronger

For nearly 60 percent of WELS children, Sunday school is the main means of formal Christian training.

In the last 30 years WELS Sunday school enrollment has dropped 30 percent.

Seeing those two statements together is a little scary. That's why the Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) has made strengthening Sunday schools a key thrust, especially during the past six years.

"Sunday schools are an integral part of every congregation's children's ministry efforts," says Jerry Kastens, former CYD administrator. "The welfare and importance of the Sunday school's ministry are everyone's business."

To help congregations with the challenge of making that ministry their business, the commission is

- **Developing more materials.** "Christ-Light was written with Sunday school teachers in mind," says Kastens.

The commission also recently completed a planning manual that includes resources to help a congregation evaluate, plan, and implement ways to strengthen its Sunday school.

- **Offering a form of parish assistance for strengthening Sunday schools.** The commission hopes to have 20 one-day seminars in the next year. Six to eight congregations would analyze their Sunday schools and then send a planning team to the workshop to discuss what they discovered.

"They would come with a purpose and leave with a plan," says Kastens. "We'll help them with the plan."

- **Establishing regional Sunday school workshops** for Sunday school teachers and superintendents.

- **Exploring new models of Sunday school**, such as mid-week and intergenerational programs.

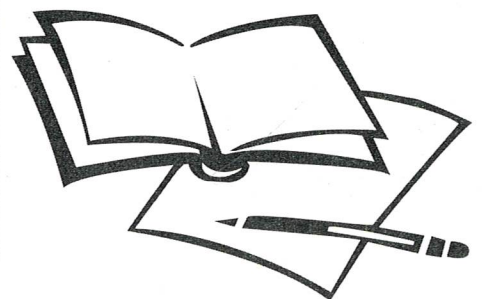
- **Working with congregations one-on-one.**

To help implement these programs and do follow-up, the commission has

called David Zubke in a two-year pilot program as assistant for strengthening Sunday schools. Zubke, a former Lutheran elementary school teacher, began work researching for the commission two years ago. He started in this position in March.

Says Kastens, "We're praying that God will bless this initiative to strengthen our nurture of children and create a wide base of support and enthusiasm for children's ministry."

For more information about these programs or to order materials, contact the CYD at 414/256-3274; <mateskeb@sab.wels.net>.



Obituaries

Susan C. Johnson 1946-2000

Susan Johnson was born June 4, 1946, in Wonewoc, Wis., and died Mar. 21, 2000, in Madison, Wis.

Johnson served at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

She is survived by her mother; her husband, Gerald; two stepchildren; four stepgrandchildren; one brother; and three nephews.

Ada E. Sievert 1902-2000

Ada Sievert was born July 14, 1902, in Watertown, Wis. She died Apr. 24, 2000, in Watertown.

A 1922 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC), New Ulm, Minn., Sievert served at St. Paul, St. James, Minn.; St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.; DMLC; and Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.

She is survived by many nieces and nephews, other relatives, and friends.

Hertha A. Sievert 1907-2000

Hertha Sievert was born Oct. 16, 1907, in New Ulm, Minn. She died Apr. 26, 2000, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1928 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., Sievert served at St. John, Fairfax, Minn.; Trinity, Watertown, Wis.; and St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

She is survived by many nieces and nephews, other relatives, and friends.

John D. Weimer 1951-2000

John Weimer was born Apr. 23, 1951, in Martin, S.D. He died Apr. 14, 2000, in Muskego, Wis.

A 1979 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., Weimer served at St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

He is survived by his parents; his wife, Joy; two daughters; two sons; three brothers; and one sister.

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

	Three Months Ended March 31, 2000						
	Total Subscription		Offerings Received				
	Communicants 12/31/99	2000	Year to Date Projected	March Offerings	Three Months Offerings	Percent of Subscrip tion	Annulz Ave Per Commun
Arizona-California	17,808	\$1,053,434	\$217,943	\$84,001	\$234,960	107.8%	\$52.78
Dakota-Montana	9,121	451,567	66,053	24,610	63,518	96.2	27.86
Michigan	36,334	2,191,120	433,551	211,749	467,244	107.8	51.44
Minnesota	43,184	2,479,623	399,301	146,981	389,598	97.6	36.09
Nebraska	10,414	629,355	94,039	49,440	112,218	119.3	43.10
North Atlantic	4,116	360,014	77,468	37,256	78,509	101.3	76.30
Northern Wisconsin	60,948	2,689,766	500,242	205,716	518,911	103.7	34.06
Pacific Northwest	5,133	278,700	50,843	20,091	54,424	107.0	42.41
South Atlantic	7,060	536,797	119,562	40,291	117,252	98.1	66.43
South Central	4,710	479,885	93,026	43,467	104,581	112.4	88.82
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,211	3,430,462	548,175	231,670	522,461	95.3	36.53
Western Wisconsin	59,598	3,232,908	554,834	213,891	577,007	104.0	38.73
Total - This Year	315,637	17,813,631	3,155,037	1,309,163	3,240,683	102.7	41.07
Total - Last Year	315,355	17,355,617	2,986,450	1,400,146	3,214,906	107.6	40.78

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities			
	2000 Actual	1999 Actual	2000 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
<i>Revenues:</i>			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$13,215,713	\$13,019,014	\$13,216,400
Gifts and memorials	2,777,115	2,394,802	3,848,400
Bequest/planned giving	907,445	876,423	791,800
Tuition and fees	8,289,078	7,424,756	8,250,200
Other	111,325	176,003	128,300
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	-	-
Transfers-endwmt earnings	257,618	240,880	216,000
Transfers-gift funds	8,433,417	5,895,387	8,605,900
Transfers-continuing programs	2,765,754	3,168,829	2,902,200
Transfers-other	-	-	-
<i>Total revenues</i>	<u>36,757,465</u>	<u>33,196,094</u>	<u>37,959,200</u>
<i>Expenditures:</i>			
Home Missions	7,394,383	7,380,456	7,970,700
World Missions	6,357,757	6,343,696	6,623,600
Ministerial Education	17,105,895	15,798,734	17,585,000
Parish Services	1,376,279	1,358,702	1,616,700
Administrative Services	3,964,881	4,147,763	4,741,800
Administrative Services	189,380	-	255,100
<i>Total expenditures</i>	<u>36,388,575</u>	<u>35,029,351</u>	<u>38,792,900</u>
<i>Changes in unrestricted net assets</i>	368,890	(1,833,257)	-
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	-	-
Bequest/planned giving	-	-	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	-	-
<i>Change in temp restricted net assets</i>	-	-	-
<i>Net assets - beginning of year</i>	<u>4,170,081</u>	<u>5,939,285</u>	-
<i>Net assets - end of period</i>	<u>4,538,971</u>	<u>4,106,028</u>	-

Statement of Financial Position

	March 31, 2000	March 31, 1999
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,065,697	2,158,238
Due from other funds	64,707	47,833
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	125,250	102,250
Other accounts receivable	207,564	151,732
Contributions receivable	3,454,400	3,027,800
Mortgage note receivable	11,764	12,787
Allowance for doubtful accts	(47,300)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	87,100	14,425
<i>Total assets</i>	<u>5,969,182</u>	<u>5,423,065</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	1,391,329	1,208,488
Accounts payable	38,882	105,549
<i>Total liabilities</i>	<u>1,430,211</u>	<u>1,314,037</u>
Unrestricted	1,084,571	1,081,228
Temp restricted	3,454,400	3,024,800
<i>Total net assets</i>	<u>4,538,971</u>	<u>4,106,028</u>
<i>Total liab. and net assets</i>	<u>5,969,182</u>	<u>5,420,065</u>

Mark Meissner, director of finance



Happy hearts

In the spring of 1999, Diane Jackson and Denise Rhoads were inspired by the words of Proverbs 15:13: "A happy heart makes the face cheerful." Responding to this verse, these two friends from Shepherd of the Hills, Tucson, Ariz., organized a volunteer group known as Happy Hearts. Happy Hearts exists to "bring a little cheer and Christian fellowship to those going through difficult times in their lives," explains Rhoads.

Members at Shepherd of the Hills help make Happy Hearts a success. Every week, members donate useful items that can be arranged into baskets to deliver to the sick. Many handmade items are given as well. Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran

Women's Missionary Society also helps by donating a percentage of its monthly collections to purchase items to fill the baskets. One congregation member makes cheerful tags for the baskets, another mails birthday cards to the growing list of those who have been visited. And every two weeks, Jackson and Rhoads, along with Elizabeth Kuhn, visit those on the list provided by Shepherd of the Hills' pastor, Alan Eckert.

After its first year, Happy Hearts is going strong. The group has made over 100 visits to homes and hospitals and delivered dozens of baskets. What started with two has now grown to involve many in the church.

As Rhoads says, "These are the



Elizabeth Kuhn and Diane Jackson brighten Alvin Steffenhagen's day with flowers and friendship.

best days of the month for all involved. We are sharing time with people who are lonely. They can't go to church anymore. We share our faith, encourage one another, and gain a closer sense of fellowship."

Contact Diane Jackson or Denise Rhoads at 10590 N Thunderhill Pl, Tucson AZ 85737 for information on starting a Happy Hearts group in your church.

Offerings help spread the Word

Information about the upcoming *Forward in Christ (FIC)* thank offering has recently been distributed to all congregations. The stewardship emphasis of the thank offering is intended to provide needed financial resources for our congregations and also to support the worldwide mission of our synod. Three synodical projects have been approved: *Mission projects (and scholarships)*, a *chapel project at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.*, and the *WELS Heritage project for an expanded archives*. In a series of articles we will explain more about each of these projects.

When you have good news, you want to share it, and Christians have the best news of all—we're saved through Jesus Christ. As we go forward in Christ during this 150th anniversary, we want to tell others that news.

That's why two-thirds of the thank offering the synod receives is planned to be used for mission outreach. This way others can hear our good news.

"We can't just sing Alleluia and Thank you, Lord," says Richard Lauersdorf, vice president for mission and ministry. "We need to respond with our treasures, particularly when

it leads others to share what we've had for 150 years."

Nine different outreach methods will help spread the Word. This list of projects was put together with input from each area of ministry—world missions, home missions, ministerial education, and parish services.

Between \$9 million and \$15 million will support "**mission teams for Christ**"—a way to expose a cross-section of WELS members to outreach.

Individuals or teams of pastors, teachers, laypeople, professors, and students will take sabbaticals of three months to a year to work in a mission setting.

"This is not to send more home and world missionaries," says Lauersdorf, "but to send people into home and world mission settings to help make missionaries out of them."

All involved will benefit: the lost, the congregations, and the mission teams.

"We need to show them [mission teams] the souls that are out there and help them catch a passion for those souls," says Lauersdorf.

Mission outreach

\$19.5 million to \$31.6 million

Martin Luther College chapel project

\$8 to \$10 million

WELS heritage project

\$2.1 to \$4.2 million

These mission teams aren't meant to be a one-shot deal. To coordinate and work with these teams, an FIC outreach administrator will be hired for a four-year period.

The other mission outreach projects include:

- **Campus ministry and cross-cultural training center**—Here students, campus pastors, lay leaders, and parish pastors can have more personal training and support for cross-cultural work. The center would be located in a cross-cultural urban setting with a university.

- **Cross-cultural fund**—This fund would enable WELS to set up more cross-cultural congregations, which cost more than our regular home mission openings.

REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

In this section, you'll hear news from missionaries that came via e-mail. We hope you enjoy these tidbits from our missions.

From the Bey family, missionaries to Bulgaria:

Thanks be to God, this past Wednesday evening [March 29] we had our first worship service in our new Varna Bulgarian Lutheran Christian Information Center. We had 22 in attendance: 17 adult Bulgarians and a small child, a visitor from Finland, and our

family. Greg [Bey] confirmed our first member, Radoslav, at the beginning of the service. Radoslav later read the Bible readings.

We sang a shortened liturgy plus two hymns. This is new for the Bulgarians in Varna so Greg had me play just the melody on the electric piano first, then he sang the first verses in Bulgarski by himself, and finally the entire group joined in.

Afterwards, we had refreshments: soda, coffee, cookies. A woman named Veska made a beautiful round traditional Bulgarian welcome bread, probably 20 inches in diameter with a bread cross and flowers decorating its center. Next to the bread were plates of tradition-

al spiced salt, called "shareno sol." The bread was broken and distributed to each guest as they in turn dipped it into the salt to eat.

The CIC itself is small but in a good central downtown location with lots of foot traffic. Regular worship will be held Wednesday evenings and English as a Foreign Language and Bible classes on Thursday evenings. In larger cities like Varna, Bulgarians often return on weekends to their village, so a midweek service may be a good alternative.

We pray that many of our first visitors will return and continue to hear the word of the Lord.



Lisa Nyden volunteers in Russia through WELS Kingdom Workers. Forward in Christ mission offerings will help fund volunteers for "mission teams for Christ."

• **Mass media assisted evangelism**—A media campaign via television, radio, and print ads was launched during the three-week period before Easter. Participating congregations are doing follow-up locally.

• **World mission translation and publishing effort**—Monies would help speed up translating and publishing efforts by allowing WELS to hire native translators to translate Bible commentaries, theological materials, devotions, etc., into native languages.

• **Faculty/student development fund**—This fund would help the faculties of our four ministerial education schools continue their professional growth through sabbaticals for study or sabbaticals in other ministry set-

tings. Monies would also pay students preparing for the public ministry for wages lost if they spend their summer working for the church instead of a secular employer.

• **Home missionaries conference**—In July, all the home missionaries, their spouses, and mission board members will gather to focus on gospel outreach in the new millennium. About 800 people are expected to attend.

• **Area Lutheran high school assistance**—Since area Lutheran high schools provide many young men and women for the ministry, this program will provide grants to help the high schools with training and recruiting.

• **Administration sabbaticals**—To give them a more balanced view of WELS and to renew their spirit and zeal, those in administration will be able to take sabbaticals to serve in parishes or world missions.

So many people need to be told the good news. Let's do what we can to help.

Interested in participation in "mission teams for Christ?" Contact the president's office at 414/256-3202; <usr18@sab.wels.net>.

Look for a special four-page addition to the fall Mission Connection that will use examples of outreach to depict some of the special FIC outreach projects.

Where the money goes

There are four different ways you can give to the Forward in Christ thank offering. You can give funds undesignated, where your offering will be distributed among the prioritized list of projects. You can also designate your gift to one of the three projects—mission outreach, MLC chapel, or WELS Heritage project.

To help you understand the principles behind your Christian stewardship, the Commission for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS) produced a 17-minute video, *Forward with Thanks Giving*. Every congregation received a copy. For free additional copies, contact CCFS at 800-827-5482; <lyorkey@sab.wels.net>.

District news

Northern Wisconsin

Emily Favorite, a student at Emanuel, New London, Wis., is a state champion in the National Handwriting Contest. Her entry is now competing for national honors.

Students at Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA), Fond du Lac, Wis., have earned a variety of academic awards. Brittany Poehlman, Terrah Paul, Michelle Pucci, and Laura Shaw earned second place in Quiz Bowl 2000 at the University of Wisconsin-Fond du Lac. WLA's math team won the 2000 Flyway conference math meet. The forensics team won the Lutheran Invitational Forensics Tournament. The forensics team also earned its 12th state "Excellence in Speech" award at the state tournament, which puts WLA's forensics team in the top 5% of teams in Wisconsin.

Michigan

St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich., has been a training ground for nine world missionaries. The inner city congregation still holds German services every week and requires men who are gifted in learning languages. Their most recent pastor, Timothy Buelow, left to become a missionary to the Lutheran Confessional Church in Sweden.

Western Wisconsin

Immanuel, Globe, Wis., dedicated a new organ on Palm Sunday.

Pacific Northwest

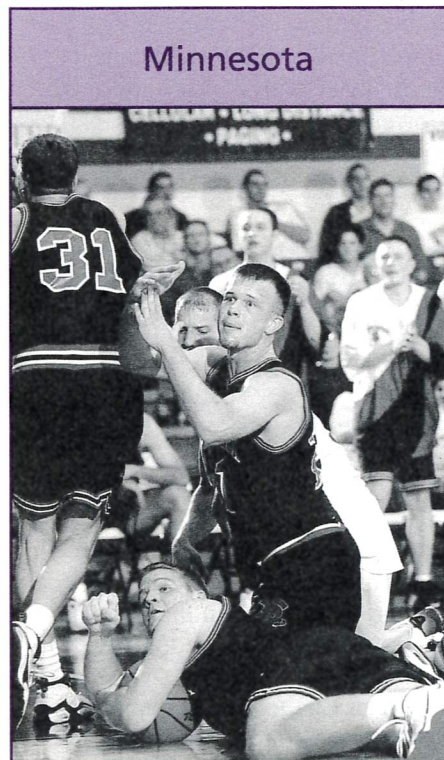


Standing on top of three feet of snow, members of Grace, Kenai, Alaska, broke ground for their new sanctuary.

Arizona

Randy Alsenay, a senior at East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz., was selected to play at the USA Junior National Basketball Tournament. Alsenay will be on a team representing Arizona that will play in Madison, Wis., in July.

Members of **Messiah, White rock, N.M.**, found shelter at **Peace, Rio Rancho, N.M.**, while fires raged in May. No homes of WELS members were damaged by the fires.



Minnesota

Martin Luther College Knights Aaron Bauer (#31) and Mark Jacobson signal for a time out as fellow Knight Jeff Loberger gains possession of the ball. The Knights played number one seed Mid-America Nazarene (Kansas) at the NAIA Division II National Tournament in Branson, Missouri. The Knights trailed by only two points with 1:53 remaining in the game, but eventually lost by a score of 93-82.

Minnesota

A chapter of **Jesus Cares Ministries** opened in the Minnesota District, providing another resource for individuals with disabilities and their families.

South Atlantic

Members of **Abiding Peace, Greenville, S.C.**, are recording progress on the construction of their new church by posting pictures and updates weekly on their church Web site, <www.abiding-peace.homepage.com>.

Happy Anniversary!

MI—Fred Adrian, Holy Trinity, Wyoming, Mich., observed his 25th year in the pastoral ministry on June 4.

MN—Emanuel, Hudson, Wis., is observing its 25th anniversary this year.

WW—Members of St. John, Neillsville, Wis., celebrated **Sharon Nemitz's** 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry.

A service of celebration was held June 11 for the 25 years **Charles Iles** has served in the pastoral ministry.

Minnesota



Four generations of this family attended the Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women in Rochester, Minn., in April. From left: Verna Gerdes, Carmen LaSater, Tracy Barum, and Garrison Barum.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Kenneth Pasch; MI—Geoff Kieta; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Mark Haefner; WW—Elton Stroh.



Bible still world's hottest selling book—The Bible still leads the planet in sheer number of sales. From The Top 10 of Everything 2000, the top five selling books during the 1900s include

The Holy Bible
2,000,000,000

Quotations from the Works
of Mao Tse-Tung
800,000,000

American Spelling Book
100,000,000

The Guinness Book of Records
81,000,000

The McGuffey Readers
60,000,000

American Family Association
Journal, February 2000, as written
in USA Today, 12/29/99

Judge rules against Ohio's "God" state motto—Deciding that the state motto of Ohio expresses "a uniquely Christian thought" and is a government endorsement of Christianity, a federal appeals court declared the motto unconstitutional in April.

In prohibiting Ohio's use of the motto "With God, all things are possible," the appellate court decided that U.S. District Judge James Graham should not have granted Ohio permission to use the motto with the stipulation that the phrase's biblical origins could not be cited.

The state said it intends to challenge the appeals court's ruling.

Reform rabbis vote to allow gay and lesbian unions—The Central Conference of American Rabbis, the world's largest group of Reform rabbis, voted at its annual meeting in March to allow its clergy to bless gay and lesbian unions.

The resolution states that Jewish same-sex couples are "worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual."

The resolution does not, however, mandate such ceremonies. It leaves

it up to the individual rabbi to decide whether to perform a gay union.

Although the vote was overwhelming, it was not unanimous.

Orthodox Jewish leader Rabbi Kenneth Hain, president of the 1,100-member Rabbinical Council of America, said that the vote by Reform rabbis to bless same-sex unions is "another tragic assault on . . . the sanctity of our people" and may threaten the unity between America's three major Jewish branches.

Upcoming TV show featuring Dr. Laura sparks controversy—

An upcoming syndicated television program featuring popular radio talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger has met up with protests from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Schlessinger has openly stated her belief that the homosexual lifestyle is wrong, using Scripture to underscore her point.

At a March rally protesting the program, Joan M. Garry, director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, urged Paramount executives to take the show out of its schedule because she believes Schlessinger has defamed gays and lesbians.

"There is a difference between opposing viewpoints and a defamatory expression of those views which encourages prejudice and discrimination," she said.

Meanwhile the president of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), an association of more than 1,250 Christian television and radio organizations, wrote to Paramount Television, urging its president to withstand protests by gay activists.

"In these days of political correctness, anybody who dares to say some decisions are right and some decisions are wrong will be subjected to a barrage of criticism," he wrote.

Lutheran leaders reject opposition to agreement with Episcopalians—

In a series of resolutions, leaders in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

America (ELCA) said the church's 65 synods are not free to reject the proposed "full communion" agreement with Episcopalians.

The council said ecumenical relations are adopted by the entire church and are not "legislated on a synod-by-synod basis."

The agreement will allow both churches to recognize each other's clergy and sacraments and share in joint mission projects. The agreement, approved by the ELCA last year and expected to be approved by Episcopalians this summer, will go into effect Jan. 1, 2001.

Opponents within the ELCA object to a provision that says Lutherans must recognize the historic line of bishops within the Episcopal Church, specifically in regard to ordinations. Opponents say the "historic episcopate" goes against Lutheran tradition and downplays the role of the laity.

House supports ban on late-term abortions—The House of Representatives voted in April to ban a controversial late-term abortion procedure known as "partial-birth abortion."

The vote came despite a promised veto by President Clinton, who has twice vetoed similar legislation.

Both vetoes have been overridden by the House, whose bipartisan 287 to 141 vote again provides the two-thirds majority needed to override a presidential veto.

But the Senate, which approved a companion bill last fall, has sustained Clinton's vetoes each time and is expected to do so again.

Most news reported in this section is derived from Religion News Service. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or Forward/NL.

Thank God for faithful pastors

With the help of God, faithful pastors follow Paul's example so the Lord's flock is cared for and his message spread.

Paul E. Zell

Question: Who has God called to nurture you like your mother, encourage you like your father, work night and day for your benefit, and never burden you?

Answer: Your pastor. Thank God for faithful pastors!

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. "... we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children. . . ."

Paul's faithfulness

At Philippi on Paul's first mission tour of Macedonia, he and his fellow pastors were stripped; whipped, cutting deep gashes in their flesh; then jailed, their feet fastened in the stocks.

Thessalonica had not been much easier. A mob had started a riot, the whole city thrown into a tizzy. Several believers were arrested even as Paul and Silas fled by night.

Still this visit "was not a failure" (v. 1), as the brothers in Thessalonica realized. Paul had shared the good news that God entrusted to him. No, the good news was not about what these violent sinners had to do to make peace with God. The good news was that God was reconciling a world of sinners to himself by Christ's innocent life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection.

"With the help of our God," Paul and his fellow shepherds preached throughout Macedonia "in spite of strong opposition" (v. 2). We see them being gentle

with that message, "like a mother caring for her little children." We hear them encouraging their listeners' faith in Jesus as their Redeemer, comforting them with the hope of his return in glory and urging them to love one another. The apostle dealt with these people patiently and kindly, "as a father deals with his own children."

Your pastor's faithfulness

You would love to have a pastor like Paul, wouldn't you? He had the right message on his lips, demonstrated the right qualifications in his lifestyle, even "worked night and day" among his flock "in order not to be a burden to anyone" (v. 9). Yet the Lord has placed a different pastor in your life. Do you realize that, "with the help of our God," he serves just as Paul did?

Your faithful pastor, too, insists that his message will always focus on Jesus. Even as frustrated church members might clamor for the big

stick of the law in dealing with inactive members, your pastor takes the gentle, motherly approach. Even as church "experts" advise your pastor to be the CEO of the congregation, he regards himself more as the head of a Christian household, a father dealing with his children.

Your pastor faithfully puts in hours to serve his flock: The sheep that turns up in the emergency room in the middle of the night. Another that can only come for Bible class on early Saturday morning. An unexpected funeral that cuts short his vacation. A couple that needs weekly counseling for several consecutive months. Your pastor works night and day—not for a pat on the back or for earthly reward. He is "not trying to please men but God," who has called him to proclaim his good news.

Thank God for faithful pastors like Paul. Thank God for your pastor. Once again this week he will demonstrate faith, hope, and love in Christ and will call you to the same. "With the help of our God" your pastor is a tremendous blessing to you and many other saints.

Paul Zell is pastor at Messiah, Alpharetta, Georgia.

For further study: Read The People's Bible: *Thessalonians* (p. 18-25).





CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Bergenthal, Guy R.**, to Shepherd of the Plains, Lubbock, Tex.
Boeder, John, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Brug, Paul D., to Immanuel, Marshall/St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
Ehlers, Timothy J., to Christ, Oakley, Mich.
Greschel, Eddie D., to Epiphany, Racine, Wis.
Herrmann, William E., to Heritage, Gilbert, Ariz.
Kluball, Gary A., to King of Kings, Clifton Park, N.Y.
Lenz, Kenneth F., to Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc., Milwaukee (retirement)
Nolte, Lawrence A., to retirement
Olsen, James P., to English, Viroqua, Wis.
Pope, James F., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Qualmann, John D., to exploratory, Asheville, N.C.
Schultz, David F., to Faith, Rising City/St. Paul, Columbus, Neb.
Schultz, Roger W., to East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Stratman, Paul C., to Trinity, Winona, Minn.
Tetzlaff, David A., to Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc., Milwaukee (retirement)
Zimdars, Thomas E., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Teachers

- Adams, Christine M.**, to Martin Luther, Madison Heights, Mich.
Barenz, Dawn M., to St. Paul, Mount Calvary, Wis.
Barnes, Laurie D., to Parkland, Tacoma, Wash.
Bartsch, Rita J., to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
Baxmann, Wayne W., to Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services, Milwaukee
Berg, Stephen E., to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
Biedenbender, David K., to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Bock, Suzanne E., to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
Bonow, Ginger J., to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Borgwardt, Rachel E., to St. Bartholomew, Kawkawlin, Mich.
Bornschlegl, Arlin M., to Ascension, Rochester, Minn.
Bowe, Keith R., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
Brei, Richard R., to Trinity, West Bend, Wis.
Buelow, Deborah A., to First, Elkhorn, Wis.
Busby, Vicki, to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Callaway, Susan L., to Holy Trinity, Okauchee, Wis.
Degner, Linda S., to St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.
Deibert, David K., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
Derge, Patricia A., to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
DuFore, Ruth A., to Atonement, Milwaukee
Falkner, Susan C., to Peace, Loves Park, Ill.
Fiemeyer, Gretchen L., to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
Gebhard, David, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Graf, Terrence A., to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Haeuser, Catherine, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Hagedorn, Erin E., to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
Hitzellorf, Lynn L., to East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Hilgendorf, Tracie, to First, Lake Geneva, Wis.

- Hoffman, Paul C.**, to Trinity, Manitowoc, Wis.
Holtz, Carol M., to Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.
Jackan, Tami J., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
Jasperson, Jennifer R., to Jesus Loves Me, North Mankato, Minn.
Johnson, Dawn R., to Timothy, St. Louis Park, Minn.
Kogler, Jana L., to St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.
Kom, Cindy A., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
Krumbein, Elizabeth, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Laich, Marie E., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Lawrenz, Maureen S., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Leyrer, Dana M., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Lober, Matthew D., to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
Lowrey, Jason H., to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Maddy, Melanie, to St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo.
Makinen, Robert R., to St. Paul, Sodus, Mich.
Marquissee, Susan D., to Trinity, Kiel, Wis.
Martin, Katherine L., to Beautiful Savior, Milwaukee
McLain, Deanna R., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
McLain, Robert B., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Meyer, Faith, to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.
Mueller, Susan J., to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Neumann, Thomas G., to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
Norder, Christine R., to St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.
Pappenfuss, Paul E., to New Salem, Sebewaing, Mich.
Plocher, Jonathan M., to Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.
Plocher, Mary L., to Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.
Plocher, Kathleen M., to Zion, South Milwaukee
Prost, Matthew J., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Radichel, Nathan V., to Parkland, Tacoma, Wash.
Ross, Mark A., to Luther HS, Onalaska, Wis.
Roth, Arlene M., to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
Scherzberg, Donna C., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Schomberg, Scott H., to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.
Schulz, Laura J., to Christ, North Saint Paul, Minn.
Sielaff, Andrew C., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Spangenberg, Kathryn, to Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio
Steffen, Andrea M., to Petra, Sauk Rapids, Minn.
Stellick, Douglas L., to Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.
Stob, Leanne, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Stoll, Patricia, to St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.
Tietz, James R., to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Uhlenbrauck, Gena L., to Trinity-St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.
VonDeylen, Carolyn K., to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.
Wagner, Rebecca L., to St. John, Hemlock, Mich.
Washburn, Benjamin B., to St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis.
Weber, Daryl A., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Wiechman, Jeffery P., to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Winkler, Ann E., to Emmanuel, Hudson, Wis.
Witt, Steven C., to Holy Word, Austin, Tex.
Yerks, Troy D., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Zahn, Sandra L., to Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Zech, Donna S., to Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.

Staff ministers

- Blauert, Mark H.**, to Green Valley, Henderson, Nev.
Kastens, Gerald F., to Trinity, Watertown, Wis.

COMING EVENTS

- Bible camp**—Good Shepherd, San Bernadino Mountains, southern California. July 2-8 and 9-15. Volunteers needed. Rev. Doug Found, 805/492-8943.
Marriage conference—"What God Joins Together." Oct. 13-14. Grand Rapids, Mich. Home Improvers, 616/538-1122, <HOMEIMPROVERS.net>.
Symposium—Oct. 30-31. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. Theme: "Forward in Christ at the Dawn of a New Millennium." Price: \$50. Elaine, 262/242-8100, <lindlofe@wls.wels.net>.
Christian Life Resources 2000 national convention—Oct. 21. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. 1-800-729-9535.
Reformation service—Forward in Christ Reformation service. Oct. 29, 4 PM. University of Wisconsin Fieldhouse, Madison, Wis.

AVAILABLE

- The Lutheran Hymnal**—200 in decent condition. Joel Schulz, <www.crossoflife.net>.
Organ—suitable for smaller church or home. Dennis Stelling, 507/798-2513, <grazedrs@aol.com>.

NEEDED

- Preachers**—in exchange for lodging. July 23, 30, and Aug. 6. St. Paul, Amherst, N.H. Joel Petermann, 603/889-3027.
Preachers—in exchange for lodging. July 23, 30, and Aug. 6. St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn. Jeffrey Schaller, 218/751-6334.
Preachers—lodging available. Zion, Gainesville, Fla. Thomas Hilliard, <TomCat0624@aol.com>.
Projector—35mm carousel, Kodak preferred, auto focus. Needed to show mission work from service in Africa. Raymond Cox, 931/490-9721.

SERVICE TIMES

- Lancaster, Calif.**—Our Shepherd. Summer Sunday services, 9 AM. Bible class following. Beginning Sept. 10, Bible class at 8:45 AM, service at 10 AM.
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada—Apostles. Sunday worship, 10 AM. Bible class and Sunday school, 11:15 AM. Steve Nuss, <revnuss@aol.com>.
Mississauga and Oakville, Ontario, Canada—Cross of Life. Sunday service, 9:30 AM. Bible class 10:45 AM. Joel Schulz, <www.crossoflife.net>.

NAMES WANTED

- Mississauga/Oakville/Toronto, Ontario, Canada**—Cross of Life. Joel Schulz, 905/785-6765.
Mountain/Lakewood/Suring, Wis.—attend new preaching station. Craig Korth, 715/473-5633.

2000 YEARBOOK CORRECTIONS

- Teacher Mary L. Geiger's phone number is incorrect. Her phone number is 760/720-2887. The FAX number for St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., is incorrect. St. Peter's FAX number is 507/931-4776.

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210; FAX 414/256-3899; <usr73@sab.wels.net>. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

How should a Christian . . . ?

John F. Brug

In view of Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers," how should a Christian view being part of a union and striking?

In the ideal system of employer-worker relations, kind Christian employers would be concerned for the welfare of their workers and their families and would give them fair pay and benefits for their labor. Reliable Christian employees would give an honest day's work for their wages and have a concern for the welfare of the company. In such a relationship, the parties could discuss their needs and resources and agree on fair wages that also protected the strength of the company to compete.

A strike is always a "failure" in that it demonstrates that a relationship of trust and cooperation has broken down.

But in a world filled with sinners, such ideal companies will be rare. Because sin and selfishness are common on both ends of the employer-employee relationship, some check is needed on both ends of the relationship. Where employers have unrestrained power to dictate terms of labor, it often leads to exploitation of workers. Where workers have unrestrained power or resort to violence, it can lead to destruction of the means of livelihood. It is most likely that the

fairest results will be achieved if each side has some strength to negotiate and each side has some need to cooperate. Unfortunately, among sinners, some sort of "balance of power" is the best mechanism to regulate earthly relationships.

In their worldly relations, Christians too often must work through such mechanisms. But Christians should speak against greed, selfishness, violence, and bitterness on the part of employers and employees and should strive to promote fairness and cooperation whether they are employers or employees.

From a Christian point of view, a strike is always a "failure" in that it demonstrates that a relationship of trust and cooperation has broken down and an impasse has been reached. Whether employer or employees bear the greater blame for this or whether both are equally to blame will depend on the individual case. Like any other form of war, a strike is always a bad thing. And like a war, a strike may have victims and aggressors, plus innocent bystanders who get hurt.

How does a Lutheran properly respond to a Catholic who points to Bible passages that indicate works as a component of salvation? I am referring to portions of the New Testament such as Matthew 16:26-27, John 5:28-29, Romans 2:6-10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and Revelation 20:12-13, 22:11-12.

Certainly a person who has saving faith will do good works. Scripture

says this often. Such good works, however, are not a cause of forgiveness, but a result of forgiveness. Romans 3:20 is one of many passages that declare that good works are not a cause of forgiveness. It is through faith in Christ that we receive forgiveness.

When we look out the window, we can't see the wind. We can see the branches being moved by the wind. We can't see the faith in a person's heart. It is visible only to God. We can, however, see the works that are produced by faith. Scripture often refers to our works, which are evidence to ourselves and to others of the faith that is producing them. Jesus will point to these works on judgment day as evidence of our faith.

Certainly a person who has saving faith will do good works.

Scripture also teaches that although our good works do not earn forgiveness from God (or anything else for that matter), God will reward the good works that we do because of faith in Christ. These rewards, however, are gifts of grace, not earned wages.

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

Send questions to your question, please, *Forward/NL*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <nl@sab.wels.net>.



Norman Hansen lives in Frances, South Australia. He is a member of Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis., until WELS establishes a mission in Australia. Hansen writes: "I receive Taped Services from the Taped Services Committee. My sitting room is transformed into a church, and I invite others to join me in these services. It was after one of these services in January this year that this group was photographed under my veranda. You can see they are happy indeed. They've just been refreshed with the Word of God and now also refreshed with showers of rain that the country so badly needed."

Send pictures to *Picture this*, Forward/NL, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

Adam to Eve:
"I'll wear the
plants in
this family!"

When you're finished changing,
you're finished.—Benjamin Franklin



"The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself."—Charles Spurgeon, Fall 1999 *Lifeline*, quoted in Feb. 2000 *Current Thoughts & Trends*

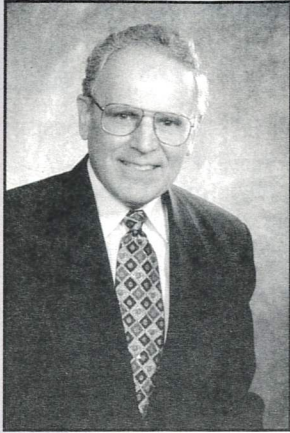
PLACEMAT ADS

If there is a popular diner (this may work best in smaller communities) in your town, you may wish to put an ad on the placemats. One church in Vermont found the cost to be about \$100 for three months for a 2x3 ad with their address, worship schedule, directions from the restaurant, and a Bible verse. Twenty thousand placemats are used there each month.—*Ideasource*, published by *Communication Resources*

Seven days of work
makes one weak.

TRIVIA TIME

- ★ In 1933, Mickey Mouse, an animated cartoon character, received 800,000 fan letters.
 - ★ There are only four words in the English language that end in -dous: tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous.
 - ★ More than 2,500 left-handed people are killed every year while using products designed for the right-handed.
 - ★ The average person will spend two weeks over his or her lifetime waiting for traffic lights to change.
 - ★ Chocolate accounts for less than three percent of Nestle's sales.
 - ★ The number of cars on the planet is increasing three times faster than the population growth.
- Feb. 2000 *The Winner's Circle*, adapted from the Useless Facts Web site and the FunTrivia.com Web site.



Gary P. Baumler is editor of *Forward/NL* and WELS Director of Communications.

The dollar god
can give you
everything
but what
you need
the most.

Greed

All right, I admit it. I want to be a millionaire. When I watch the show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" my mouth waters as contestants advance toward really big payouts.

And have you discovered the show "Twenty-one"? My pupils dilate when the host says, "Here's what \$500,000 looks like."

I even watched "Greed" for an entire episode, although the terminator part left me cold.

I'll tell you I watch those shows to see if I can answer the questions, and that's true. But what I could do with one of those big payouts!

Then there's the lottery. When the Power Ball Jackpot approaches \$100,000,000 my mind shifts into fantasy mode. Oh, I'd settle just to win, say, a quarter of a million dollars (of course I'd need to actually buy a ticket to win).

It's not all selfish. I always think of church projects I could help fund.

Shame on me! Shame on you if you're like me in this!

Have you ever wondered why God warns us that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil? Look around you. Chances are, if you are reading this article in the United States of America, you are rich already. You have more annual income than the vast majority of people in the world.

Still, you want more.

So do most people around you. How else could a game show called "Greed" make its way to prime time TV? How is it that a show like "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire" gets any viewers, let alone participants? Why does money seem to figure so much in people's happiness and

sense of well-being? What fuels crime the most if not the love of money? As the writer of Ecclesiastes notes: "Money is the answer for everything" (10:19).

This is not a new phenomenon. We're stuck with the reality of our sinful natures. "Whoever loves money," according to Ecclesiastes, "never has money enough." But, that is "meaningless" (5:10).

Yes, dollar bills beckon us. Their siren song arouses images of wonderful things. The man with money rules. The woman with money is free to do what she wants. Why, then, do so many crash on the rocks of unfulfilled lives?

Jesus has answered the question: "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." He warns, "Be on guard against all kinds of greed" (Luke 12:15).

The dollar god can give you everything but what you need the most. God our Savior gives you what you need the most and throws in everything else you need. He gave us his Son and with him the blessings of a full life. All the trinkets are window dressing that he graciously allows. You can do without them. You can even learn to share them with others.

Do you have food to eat today and clothing to wear? The Lord who gave you that and so much more says, "Be content" (1 Timothy 6:8).

I'll probably watch some of the money shows again, content just to be watching.

Gary P. Baumler

Provide...

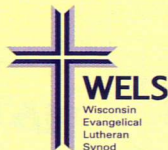


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Prayers for kings and authorities

We pray for the government to maintain peace on earth, but we also need to witness so more can have the peace of heaven. **David D. Sellnow**

Over four years ago, budget talks stalled, and the government shut down for a few days. Many may have thought that wasn't a bad idea. Why not keep the government shut down? Who needs it?

Bringing peace on earth

We tend not to appreciate government services until we need them. If my vehicle breaks down on the interstate, I'm glad to see a highway patrol car. If my house is burning, I can hardly wait for the fire department to get there. If I were lost at sea, I'd be praying for rescue by the Coast Guard. If there have been threats of terrorist attacks, I don't mind going through extra security checks at the airport. When it comes to safety, we all pray for it.

When it comes to government, we all gripe about it. We don't always see the connection between the state and our security. And we don't always show that we understand that God ordained the institution of government—as a good thing—for our earthly protection and security. We may lose that focus because the government loses its focus and does things it shouldn't. Other times we simply enjoy mouthing our disapproval of political figures and public leaders.

Rather than resenting or ridiculing those who govern us, Scripture urges us to pray for them. The apostle Paul, who had been abused, mistreated, and

locked up by various local, regional, and imperial authorities, said, "I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

We need government laws and discipline because we need protection against the evil that so easily erupts out of corrupt human beings. No government is perfect; none maintains order perfectly. Still, we are glad for what we have—a country that enables us to live peaceful and quiet lives. We pray for others who live in lands full of turmoil and unrest. These prayers are far more important than any troops we might send.

Bringing the peace of eternity

But we want to do something more to bring people peace. Peaceful, quiet life on earth is good, but what pleases



God most is something else: he wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Under our system of government, we have freedom to proclaim our beliefs openly and publicly.

We don't need to restrict our use of Jesus' name to the privacy of our homes or the insides of our chapels. Paul's train of thought in his letter to Timothy connects good government with the opportunity to do mission work. We can use political peace and freedom to speak about spiritual peace and freedom.

Even under a restrictive government, Paul was unafraid to tell of his faith. He was arrested, jailed, beaten, stoned, whipped, chased, and shipwrecked because he spoke up about the gospel in cities and in an empire that did not allow for religious toleration. Eventually, Paul gave his life for his testimony.

We do not face such severe obstacles. We are privileged to live under a government that gives us freedom. Is there any reason we should be less bold than Paul in telling others God's good news?

Pray for your country. Witness to your neighbor. This is good and pleases God our Savior.

David Sellnow is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

