

FORWARD IN CHRIST

January 2001

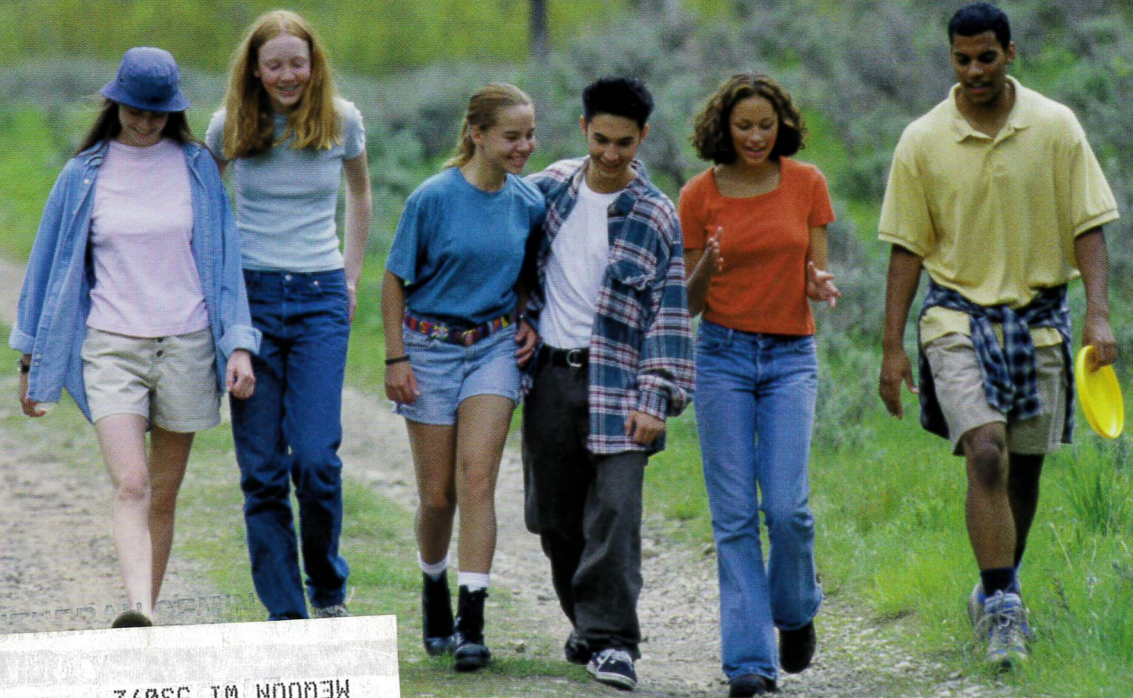
Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

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Resolve to
know nothing

Protect your
paper bags

Learn how to
love—perfectly



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Why do teenagers stray?

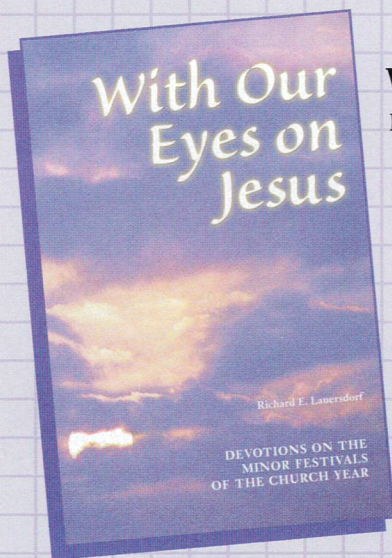
✓ Mark Your Calendar

They are the minor festivals of the church year, but what do you know about them? In your desire to focus on Christ and his saving work, have you observed the days of the saints and other festivals? Did you know that some of these minor festivals are the oldest fixed dates in the calendar and liturgy of the church?

In a new devotional book, **With Our Eyes on Jesus**, Richard Lauersdorf helps us meditate on these festivals and other special days. Each devotion has a foundation and discussion rooted in Scripture and includes a comment on an everyday situation.

Lauersdorf, a popular author from his many years as a contributing writer for *Forward in Christ (Northwestern Lutheran)*, has written these 35 devotions in an easy-to-read style that you'll enjoy.

Use these devotions to celebrate the festivals as they occur throughout the year, and enjoy meditating on the experiences of the early Christians.



With Our Eyes on Jesus Devotions on the Minor Festivals of the Church Year

by Richard E. Lauersdorf
Papercover. 148 pages.
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**1
January**
*The Name
of Jesus*

**18
January**
*The Confession
of St. Peter*

**24
January**
*St. Timothy,
Pastor and
Confessor*

**25
January**
*The Conversion
of St. Paul*

**26
January**
*St. Titus,
Pastor and
Confessor*

God's plans for you

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11*

Paul M. Janke

Do you have plans for the new year? Many of us do. Written or unwritten, we've got our expectations for how the next 12 months ought to unfold. Typically the threshold of a new year is a time of optimism. The new year stretches before us like a blanket of fresh snow. All it needs is our imprint. We'll buy. We'll build. We'll travel. We'll change this and that for the better.

Not everyone regards the coming year with optimism, however. Some people have no realistic expectation of improved physical or financial health. Family problems seem intractable. The job seems barely tolerable. The next year looks to be more of the same—or worse.

Whether we're brimming with optimism or brooding in pessimism about the year ahead, it's good for us to take a look at God's plans for us.

Our plans are filled with uncertainty

It's wise to plan. Many a noble intention has failed for lack of a plan. But do we really know what lies ahead of us? Not with any certainty. James had sharp words for those who plan without acknowledging that the Lord may choose to dispose of the plans. “Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14).

The hymn writer noted that our circumstances can be altered dramatically in a moment:



2001

“The world that smiled when
morn was breaking
May change for me ere close
of day
For while on earth my home
I'm making
Death's threat is never far away.”
(*The Lutheran Hymnal* 598:2)

The world was about to change dramatically for the people of Judah. Their ill-advised rebellion against their Babylonian masters would be crushed. After a bloodbath in battle there would follow the isolation of exile. Optimism would seem like insanity. Planning would seem foolish. What hope, what future could there be for such objects of God's wrath?

The Lord's plans are filled with grace

The book of Jeremiah fairly bursts with God's threats upon a willful and

disobedient nation. Yet, included in Jeremiah's prophecy is a letter that gave the exiles a solid source of hope. The “weeping prophet” conveyed the Lord's pledge to Judah: “I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.” Through Jeremiah the Lord promised that the exile would last 70 years. By virtue of God's everlasting love revealed in the righteous Branch from David's line, hope was restored. The future was once again bright with promise.

Take a look over God's shoulder at his plans for you. They were written in the distant past. Before he formed you, he knew you. All the days ordained for you were written in his book before one of them came to be. God chose you in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Jesus took human flesh for you. He died bearing the punishment for your sins. He seized his life again so that you, too, can live. The culmination of God's plan for you will endure forever in heaven.

So go ahead and plan, always acknowledging that God can veto or ratify your plans. And know that you step into the uncertainty of the year ahead with this great certainty: God's plan for you in Christ means hope and a future.



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

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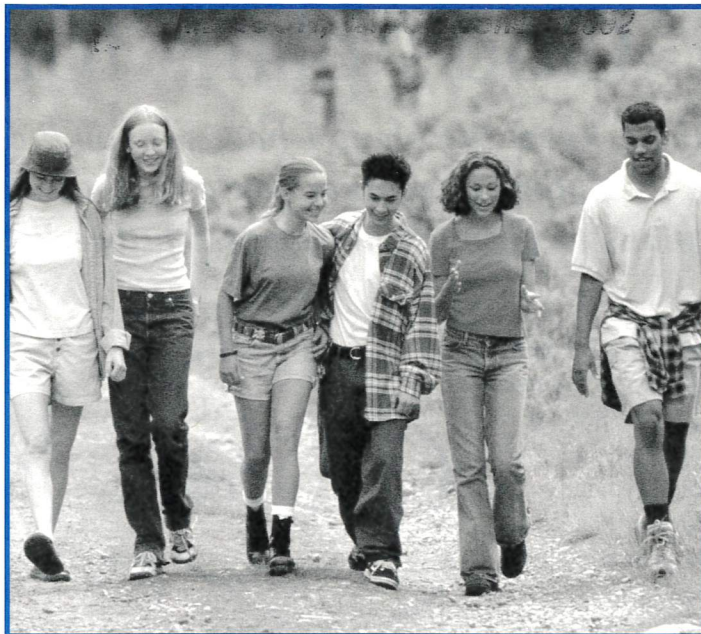
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Cover photo by PictureQuest

Explore what forces can negatively shape and affect the hearts and minds of Christian teenagers.

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bits & pieces



It's January again. A time when many may promise to break a bad habit or to begin a more productive one. Do you have a resolution for 2001?

- Many resolutions focus on learning a new skill or trying something different. But perhaps the hardest resolution to keep is the resolution to know or learn nothing except Christ. Eric Hartzell explains more and shares how Jesus can help (p. 10).

- Maybe you promised to spend more time with your teens or with the youth in your church. Understanding what's going on in their lives may be the first step in helping you deal with their challenges. Jerry Kastens helps by listing worldly influences and sharing encouragement (p. 8).

- One writer encourages us all to make the resolution to pray for and encourage our called workers and to appreciate the message they bring. Her message, "Protect your paper bags" is on p. 31.

- For those of you who want to do more personal Bible study this year, we started a new theme for our interactive Bible study. Check out "Soul care" to discover how healthy your soul really is (p. 32).



Paul Wendland ends his series on loving your neighbor this month. Read his article for an insightful look at the familiar story of the good Samaritan (p. 16).



You may notice a department missing this month. "Your question, please" will not be seen on our pages until fall, partly due to lack of questions. See p. 26 for more details.

—JKT

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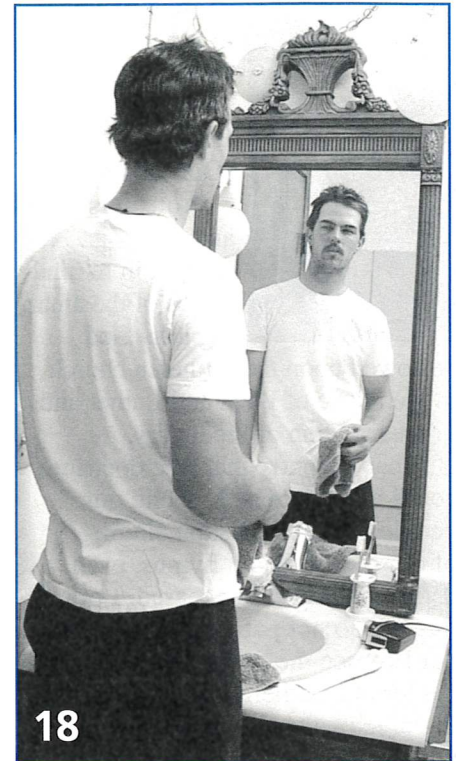
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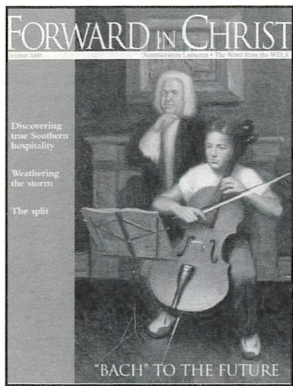
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On the subject of hate



Comments on “Life and Legacy of a Lutheran from Leipzig” and “We now Implore” [Oct. 2000].

Professors Tiefel and Hartwig . . . do well in reminding us of the amazing gifts God

bestowed upon the Lutheran church in the music of Bach and Luther and in preservation of the liturgy.


I read recently that true doctrine could be maintained among our people through constant singing of our old Lutheran hymns, even if faithful preaching ceased. I pray that we do not put this to the test, but I do see the point.

Our old Lutheran hymns proclaim the precious truths of God’s Word with a clarity that is unmatched. More and more I find myself drawn to the hymns of Rist, Luther, and Gerhardt. I am drawn just as strongly to the music of Bach and Schutz.

I admit, “I Am Content!” is not exactly ear candy. Singing the liturgy is work. Translating, performing, and, yes, even listening to Bach’s music is work. Surely no one who hears and understands the faithful proclamation of God’s Word in these old works can deny the value of the effort involved.

Pastors, lead us and teach us! Persistently feed us with nourishing food, even when we beg for candy. Organists, continue your faithful hard work. Thanks for the Bach in the pre-service music! Fellow parishioners, please be a little more patient! If we persist and think about the hymn’s message, we will be rewarded.

William D. Miller


 *Indianapolis, Indiana*

I appreciated James Tiefel’s article on Bach [Oct. 2000], but wanted to comment on a statement he made

to support the idea that Bach may be outdated. He states that a church performance of a cantata “met with silence” while a gospel hymn “elicited spontaneous and enthusiastic applause.”

In fact, applause following performances of “contemporary” music is equivalent to the silence following performances of Bach. Both responses are conventional, and for a majority, perfunctory. For every congregant who is honestly moved by a gospel hymn there is at least one who is similarly moved by Bach. The difference is not in the power of the music but in habit and customs.


Jon Siegler

 *Monterey, California*

The article listing WELS ministerial schools’ enrollments [Dec. 2000] was in error.

The opening enrollment for Luther Preparatory School (LPS) in 1999-2000 was 561, not 581. LPS enrollment showed an increase of 3 percent, rather than the 1 percent decrease shown. This is the fourth consecutive year of record enrollment at LPS, a blessing that we will want to recognize and acknowledge.

LPS President Mark Schroeder

 *Watertown, Wisconsin*

I enjoyed reading Mary Heins’ article, **“Two halves of a complementary whole” [Aug. 2000]**, and I think she was right on target. The Lord made men and women differently. He indeed created two genders. As Heins pointed out, understanding these differences—especially in communication—helps both women and men, in our professional and personal relationships.

Never does one model of behavior fit all. Many of us cross the bridge of communication into the other gender stereotypical traits. However, research clearly backs up the principles in the article. One

example is the work of Dr. Deborah Tannen, professor at Georgetown University, who has researched the subject extensively and written several books based on her findings.

I would like to see more of these kinds of articles in *Forward/NL*.

Susan A. Zwieng

 *Canyon Country, California*

“Church Shopping” [Nov. 2000] was a good and interesting article.

There is one part that I would like to see expanded. Near the end Raasch says, “That means the smart ‘shopper’ must practice doctrinal discernment. . . . It requires a person to ask questions and search the Scriptures for answers.” He doesn’t say how this is to be done or where to start.

The reality is that the average person probably doesn’t have a clue as to what “doctrinal discernment” is, how to search the Scriptures, and how to sort out the competing claims of the hundreds of church bodies that dot the American landscape. We pastors assume that judging a church’s teachings will take some work, when in reality it is a daunting task for many.

It would be helpful for such people if they had some pointers. Concordia Publishing House has a helpful tract called “How to Choose Your Church.” A nonobligatory adult instruction course would be helpful too, especially if members would accompany inquirers to the class. Hopefully, WELS members will also be more open in telling others about what they believe and why they believe.

Pray that those who are “church shopping” will find a church that is a Christ-centered, Bible-believing one.

Ronald Winter

Wausau, Wisconsin

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <fic@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*.



WELS generalizations?

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Are you a collector? Humorist James Thurber tried collecting deringers, snowstorm paperweights, and porcelain dogs, until he found a more interesting hobby. He began collecting “a certain kind of Broad Generalization, or Sweeping Statement.” “All you need to start a collection of generalizations like mine,” he said, “is an attentive ear.”

Just listen to the people around you, and you’ll be picking up new items for your collection all the time. The generalizations in Thurber’s collection ranged from the highly subjective (“Peach ice cream is never as good as you think it’s going to be”) to the downright false (“There are no pianos in Japan”) to the ridiculous (“You never see foreigners fishing”). Generalizations like these are pretty harmless, of course, aside from the fact that they make the person who utters them look a little silly.

Inspired by James Thurber, I’ve started my own collection. I’m limiting myself to generalizations about my church body. Here are some recently acquired specimens:

- “Our pastors don’t really want to involve lay people in ministry.”
- “WELS people don’t pray with passion.”
- “WELS people don’t share their faith.”

You get the idea.

Like most collectibles, generalizations aren’t very useful. They usually tell you more about the person who utters them than they do about reality—in this case, about the people of WELS. For instance, I was amazed to hear that someone really believes he knows what goes on in the prayer closets of WELS people—all 400,000 of them! I was surprised to hear from someone else who believes that, when our pastors say they desperately want help with the work of ministry, they really don’t mean it.

But my prize specimen is that last one—“WELS people don’t share their faith.” To say this, too, is to presume to know what is completely unknowable. But the truly amazing thing about this generalization is its durability. To survive, it’s had to overcome a mountain of evidence that WELS people do share their faith—evidence you’ll find in this magazine, on *WELS Connection*, and in personal testimonies from people all around the world.

I’ll admit it: I’m not sure I should leave the generalizations in my collection lying around. Unlike Thurber’s, mine aren’t harmless. They hurt. They’re unkind to God’s people. Like all generalizations, they skew our view of reality. They predispose us to notice evidence that supports them and to ignore evidence that doesn’t. Maybe it’s time I—we—just got rid of them.

Actually, I’ve got a better idea. How about taking these generalizations and applying them personally? How about changing “we” and “WELS people” to “I” and “me”?

The result might be statements like:

- “Lord, I want to do more to share my faith. Help me!”
- “Lord, I want a better prayer life. Help me!”
- “Lord, I want a greater role in the spread of your kingdom. What can I do?”

True, it’s not as easy as making sweeping generalizations.

But it’s a whole lot more likely to get us somewhere.

Ken Cherney is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

Generalizations aren't very useful. They usually tell you more about the person who utters them than they do about reality.



Why do teenagers stray?

Understanding what's going on in Christian teens' lives may be the first step in helping you deal with the challenges facing them.

Gerald F. Kastens

In his book, *The Wounded Parent*, Guy Greenfield tells Susan's story. Susan, a pastor's daughter, became romantically involved with Chuck. Susan soon became pregnant. Her parents were stunned when Susan announced that she intended to have an abortion. Over her parents' objections, the abortion was performed. Susan's rebellion and ultimate abandonment of her childhood values caused grief, pain, alienation, and left Susan's parents wondering "What went wrong? To what extent are we responsible for the rebellion of our daughter?" This was not the life that they envisioned for her.

Susan's parents won't deny that an unprecedented number of teenagers are rebelling against authority—most painfully against their parents. Their plight raises

daunting questions for Christian parents: "Why do teenagers rebel and walk away from God's Word? Whose fault is it when teenagers abandon the faith of their youth? What forces negatively shape and affect the hearts and minds of Christian teenagers?"

Understanding what's going on in Christian teens' lives may be the first step in helping parents deal with the challenges facing their children.

Peer groups: Susan's parents didn't know her friends very well. Friends have a powerful effect on an adolescent. Susan didn't suddenly one day "fall away" from the values she had been taught. She drifted gradually until her friends' values and lifestyles meant more than what her home and parents could offer. Sex, profanity, alcohol, and excitement

were major ingredients of the lifestyle of the girls Susan called friends.

Too much world: The poet William Wordsworth once wrote, "The world is too much with us." If that has ever been true in any age, it's true today. The world attractively packages what it has to offer youth. Good looks, wealth, sex, alcohol and drugs, sports, music! Although Christians may profess not to love the world, many of us flirt with it. Like it or not, little sister and big brother are watching.

A desire for independence: My younger brother was old enough to know that gasoline and matches are a deadly combination. Yet, once when my parents were at work, he burned himself severely. No matter how much parents inform, warn, plead, and pray, youth want to learn

things for themselves. The search for independence can lead teens to some unwise behavior. Sometimes the lessons are painful. This desire for independence is natural, and it sets the stage for conflict between parent and child.

Poor teaching: It's only natural for parents to punish themselves when things go badly. The answer to "What did we do wrong?" may be "nothing." On the other hand, if our actions are not consistent with what we tell our children, we are guilty of poor teaching. Teens are quick to pick up on inconsistencies. It's a matter of "I hear what you are saying, Mom and Dad, but then I see what you are doing." Poor modeling is a significant factor in determining why teens abandon their faith.

Negative churches: When young people grow up in a church that's remembered for its fusses, divisions, name-calling, negative behavior, and an atmosphere of complaining, we shouldn't be surprised that they distance themselves from the church when they become adults. When church leaders fail to model love and compassion, it's no wonder that teenagers judge churches as places where hypocrites hang out.

Furthermore, less than 50 percent of WELS congregations provide a Bible class for teenagers. When churches fail to provide Bible study and activities for teenagers, adults shouldn't be surprised that their teenagers disappear.

Education and academics: In his book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Alan Bloom observes that in the thinking of the majority of today's college undergraduates, moral absolutes have been replaced by relativism. Today's intellectuals reject the notion that an unalterable body of truth like the Bible exists. In

other words, "We make up truth as we go." Today public opinion polls measure what's right and wrong, and the media swear by the results.

Influence of media: If you could choose a full-time "companion" for your children, what sort of a person would you want: someone who openly opposed values you hold near and dear? If you could select a full-time tutor for your children, would you want the person to weaken or delay their academic growth and ability to think? Sound ridiculous? It is incredibly naive thinking that television, videos, music, and computer use don't influence youth. The real question is: "Do the public media affect our youth negatively or positively?"

Split homes: The negative effects and the immensity of the problems caused by divorce, especially in fatherless homes, is alarming. Sociologist David Popenoe claims in *Life Without Father* that children who grow up in homes where divorce has occurred experience lower school achievement, less empathy and other virtues in a child's character, and higher rates of sexual activity, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, and violence.

Today's parents are also frequently divided over the matter of religion. Parents who are divided or uncertain about where they or their children should go to church cause confusion and raise the probability that their teen will become inactive.

It's a heart issue: It's devastating when children rebel so strongly that all seems lost. Remember that God once created two perfect children and placed them in a perfect environment. Yet they chose to rebel. Rebellion is plainly a heart issue, now a condition of our sinful nature.

It involves humans saying "no" to God, his ways, and his precepts

(Romans 3:18). It is foolishness that is bound up in the heart of a child (Proverbs 22:15). It is the absence of wisdom ruling the moment (Proverbs 1:7, 26:12). It is plainly a condition of our fallen humanity (Psalm 51:5).

Hanging in there

Do you find yourself discouraged because things are not going the way you would like them? Hang in there. As a parent, do you sometimes feel like quitting? Please don't. Are there days you are pessimistic about the final outcome of all your efforts? Roll up your sleeves and go at it some more. When it comes to your teenager, do your tomorrows seem like nevers? Is your day framed with sorrow and disappointment?

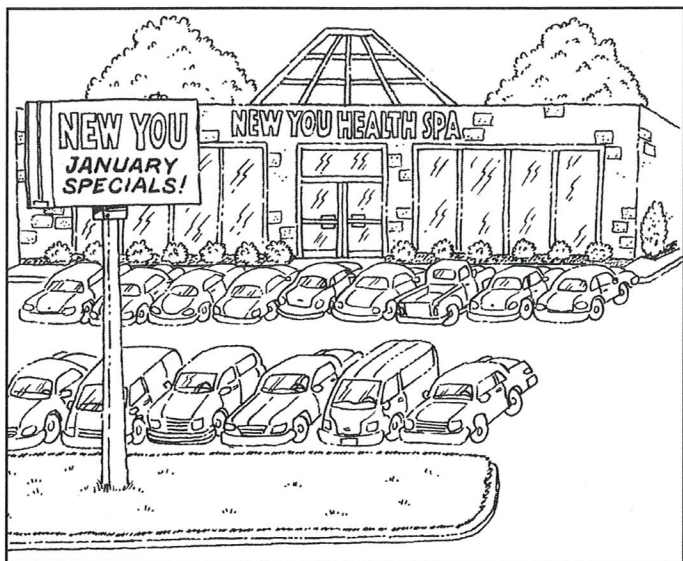
Then it's time to return to Calvary and stand in the shadow of the Savior's cross. Stop and listen. Jesus draws in a deep breath, pushes his feet down on the nail, and cries, "It is finished!" A cry of defeat? Hardly. A cry of fulfillment. A cry of victory over sin, death, and Satan. There's reason to hope. Didn't he say, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)? You are loved and forgiven by a gracious and loving heavenly Father. God hasn't given up on you or your teen.



Gerald Kastens is the minister of discipleship at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

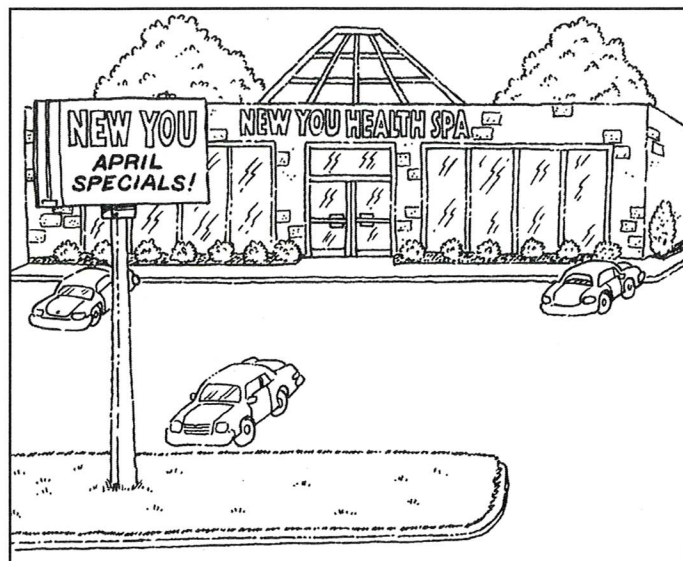
Solomon said, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6). To evaluate what is happening to a child on the basis of here and now is to underestimate the long-term influence of God's Word. Next we'll consider "What can I do when my teen strays?"

THE RESOLUTION



The challenge to all our resolutions in the new years of life is not that we know much but that we know nothing except Christ crucified.

Eric S. Hartzell



Check out the fitness places these first days of the new year. You'll see cars. Many of them. Parked outside in the same different array as their sweating owners inside. Big cars. Small cars. Rich cars. Poor cars. Ordinary cars. Extraordinary cars. All of them outside the place of exercise waiting for owners who made a resolution to get in shape this new year.

Too many things to do

From our safe places of relative inactivity, we can smile and know what is going to happen to most of these well-meaning resolvers. The day will dawn cold, and the bed will be warm.

There will be too many things to do, and one day will be missed and then another. The exerciser will start off too ambitious and get sore and tired and quit. It will cost more than anticipated. People will look at themselves in the mirror and realize that they really don't look that bad after all. Whatever the reason the people will not keep their resolutions made in a well-meaning flurry on New Year's Eve.

So we get suspicious and leery of resolutions. We have broken our share of them, and those experiences didn't do anything good for our self-esteem. It is kind of like lying to ourselves. So to save ourselves the disappointment, we don't make any resolutions on New Year's Eve or any other time of year. Better not to set any goals than to set some and fail to reach them. That is what we might think after some new years slip by on us with their failed promises.

The challenge to do nothing

But it isn't wrong to make resolutions. It's right. The characters of the Bible made them . . . and

TO KNOW NOTHING

kept them too. The apostle Paul said to his people in Corinth, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). David said, “I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.” Daniel even resolved “to not defile himself with the royal food and wine” (Daniel 1:8) while he was in captivity in Babylon. (That sounds suspiciously like someone’s resolution to watch what he eats!)

To know nothing but Jesus and his crucifixion, this is difficult.

Notice that the resolutions of all three were to not do something rather than to do something. Paul resolved to know nothing! There were things with that resolution that he was going to labor to unlearn. He was his world’s equivalent of a Ph.D., times over. “Of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless” (Philippians 3:5,6). And his resolution was to know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The challenge to all our resolutions in the new years of life is not that we learn much but that we learn nothing. This is the goal. This is the desirable resolution. It is not difficult to learn how to pay someone back who hurts us. It isn’t hard to get all sorts of knowledge about things and how to acquire them. It isn’t beyond our doing to be brilliant in recapping our own accomplishments. There is no trick to learning how to be self-sufficient and self-dependent. (A thousand workshops and seminars will do that.) But to know nothing but Jesus and his crucifixion, this is difficult. To rid our minds and lives of all soft and aesthetically pleasing shapes and to plant a cross in the middle of our thoughts and keep it the singular shape about which our days rotate is a challenge. This truly is a noble resolution and a necessary one.

The means to do something

We should know that this one who resolved to know nothing summed up his own ability with resolutions (and every Christian’s innate ability to keep resolutions) with the exasperated sentence, “For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” (Romans 7:18).


So are we doomed to eventually witness an empty parking lot in

front of the fitness place? Is that the way it is going to be with all good resolutions? Will we fail at learning nothing but Jesus and him crucified?

Jesus came to die to take care of all the broken resolves of mankind. But Jesus also comes to work in us to will and to do his good pleasure. When that happens, we can look back at the year and know that by his strength, we kept the resolution. We can see how Jesus caused us to triumph and succeed. He was with us in our resolution. He wanted it too.

Jesus teaches us to say “no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:12-14).

The resolution to know nothing but Jesus is a resolution made possible because of the resolution he made to know nothing but us.


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

Turning discards into dollars



Thrift stores aid Lutheran secondary education.

Janet Klann

Ray Bernier puts away stock for the next season at the Thrifty Nickel, West Bend, Wis.

Americans have too much stuff. Our attics, basements, and garages are overflowing with sports equipment, toys, appliances, clothing, and furniture. A booming economy encourages us to replace and discard a mountain of household goods. In Phoenix, Ariz., for example, these discards totaled 90,000 tons last year, a 50 percent increase from 1991. In most cities this bulk trash gets hauled to landfills that are running out of space.

But many WELS families have found a better way. They donate their used items to one of 16 thrift stores whose sales have resulted in \$4.5 million for area Lutheran high schools.

The blessings

"Our country is very wasteful," says Millie Romberg of Appleton, Wis. "If we have something we don't need any more, someone else can probably use it." Romberg grew up during the Depression and credits her parents with teaching her good stewardship.

When Peggy Orosco cleans out her closets and garage, her usable discards end up at the Evergreen Thrift Store in Kent, Wash. "I believe in recycling," says Orosco, "and I want to support the store and the high school."

The stores also recycle. Clothing that is not good enough to be sold at Twice is Nice in Jefferson, Wis., is sent to Milwaukee for distribution to the inner city homeless. Wool is sold in bulk to be made into rugs, shoes are sent to a Baptist mission for overseas use, and the Jefferson County Highway Department buys cotton rags for its truck maintenance shops.

These thrift stores also provide a service to the community. They offer clean, gently-used clothing and household goods at reasonable prices.

Joe Turany feels the HELP Store in Phoenix is a special blessing to people in the low-income neighborhood nearby. "Everyone ought to work down here for a week and meet the people who come in to shop," says Turany. "Many of them

have so little, and most of us have so much. It really makes you count your blessings."

Many of these shoppers also are people who may never walk through the door of a WELS church. But they are still part of our mission work.

Evelyn Turany views her mission at the HELP Store as "showing God's love to every person who walks through that door." It might be just a smile and a kind word, "but God sent that person here today for a reason." Each thrift store provides a setting and opportunity for Christian workers to bear witness to the saving love of Jesus Christ to all they meet.

The workers

These stores could not operate without hundreds of volunteers. Workers in the back of the store dig through boxes of donations, sorting clothing by season, testing appliances, discarding items that are not salable. On the sales floor, volunteers wait on customers, stock and straighten shelves, and sweep the floor.

Why do they do it?

Althea Kubl has worked at Twice is Nice since the 1980s. She says “the friendly camaraderie” keeps her coming in every Thursday, plus knowing that she is “supporting Christian education.”

Many volunteers are retirees who like to keep busy. Seventy-five-year-old Hazel Stein says working at Good Stewards, Inc., in Watertown, S.D., “gets me out of the house and lets me help the high school.”

Some of the workers have a more direct connection to the Lutheran high schools: their children and grandchildren. Marianne Kettelhut, who works at The Lighthouse Attic, has two grandchildren at Michigan Lutheran High School in St. Joseph. Ken and June Johnson, who work at the HELP store, have four grandchildren at Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA). Their son, Dan, graduated from ALA in 1984 and is now the school’s principal.

Bill Bartholomew, operations manager of the two Bargain Centers

in Milwaukee, states, “Our workers in the Bargain Centers go about their work for the Lord quietly and efficiently. They do not seek recognition or attention for the work they have done for Christ’s kingdom.”

However, Bartholomew sees a serious problem ahead. “The average age of our volunteers is about 73.” These older workers are dedicated, but many have health problems or do not wish to drive anymore. If the stores are not able to recruit younger volunteers, Bartholomew wonders “whether the Bargain Centers will be viable in five to 10 years.”

Other stores face the same problem. Betty Gabert, of Evergreen Thrift in Milwaukie, Ore., says, “Ten of our 14 volunteers are over 70 years old. They travel from 16 to 65 miles to work at our store. The store manager, Anna Salzwedel, is 83 years old and still works two to three days each week.”

Where the money goes

Most of the money raised by these thrift stores goes to the high schools for their operating budget, building fund, or debt retirement. The two Dime and Dollar stores in Wausau and Merrill, Wis., for example, contributed \$70,000 in 1999 to Northland Lutheran High School. What would the school have done without those funds? Principal Rick Grundman replies, “I’d hate to think about it. There’s no doubt we would have to cut back on some of our educational programs.”

Some of the money goes to special projects. Funds raised by the Bargain Garden in Appleton, Wis., paid for the sign at the main entrance to Fox Valley Lutheran High School as well as for furniture for the commons area.



Adrienne Siffring waits on a customer at the HELP store, Phoenix, Ariz. Siffring and her husband, Roy, have worked at the HELP store for over 10 years.

Other church-related organizations also receive monies. Significant amounts are given to WELS Lutherans for Life, the Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association, Jesus Cares Ministries, WELS elementary schools, and Wisconsin Lutheran College.

A blessing to many

Scattered across the country, these Lutheran-run thrift stores are a blessing to many. Inside these stores, an abundance of material goods is redistributed to those who are less prosperous. Christian workers have an opportunity to witness to community members they might not otherwise meet. Revenue provides critical support for area high schools and other WELS charities.

The people who work at the stores also count their blessings: fellowship and camaraderie, a feeling of usefulness, and support for their high school.

Why not share in these blessings? Take your useable discards to the nearest thrift store, shop there, and, better yet, volunteer to work there. Become part of the team that in 1999 raised over \$700,000 for Christian education, a true story of “rags to riches.”



Janet Klann is a member at Shepherd of the Valley, Surprise, Arizona.

The 16 WELS thrift stores

Bargain Center–North,
Milwaukee, Wis.

Bargain Center–South,
Milwaukee, Wis.

Bargain Garden, Appleton, Wis.

Dime and Dollar, Merrill, Wis.

Dime and Dollar, Wausau, Wis.

Evergreen Thrift, Milwaukie, Ore.

Evergreen Thrift II, Kent, Wash.

Good Stewards, Inc.,
Watertown, S.D.

HELP Store, Phoenix, Ariz.

The Lighthouse Attic,
Stevensville, Mich.

Thrifty Nickel, West Bend, Wis.

Treasure Haus, New Ulm, Minn.

Twice is Nice, Jefferson, Wis.

Wise Penny, Buffalo, Minn.

Wise Penny Resale Shoppe,
Racine, Wis.

Wise Penny Thrift Store,
Red Wing, Minn.

The "new" Northwestern Lutheran

Issues discussed in the magazine mirrored issues faced by Lutherans in the 1980s.

Mark E. Braun

When *The Northwestern Lutheran* (TNL) began publishing in 1914, its target audience was the English-reading lay members of the Wisconsin Synod. TNL continued the tradition of the *Gemeindeblatt*, initiated in 1865 and lasting into the 1960s.

TNL was still being published for lay readers in 1981, but clearly it was not being written by them. Pastors and professors authored more than 95 percent of its articles that year. Fewer than one percent were written by women.

In 1982 a new editor took over the magazine—James P. Schaefer, Milwaukee pastor, synod stewardship counselor, and public relations director. While pledging unconditional commitment to Scripture and the Confessions, Schaefer promised—or, maybe, warned—that changes lay ahead for *The Northwestern Lutheran*. "It is a different world we live in. Different questions are being asked."

New authors and more questions

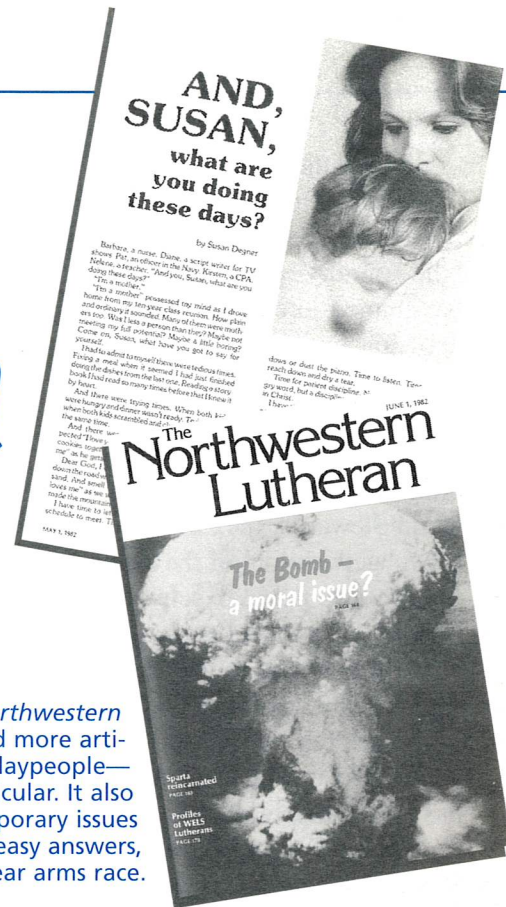
And different voices were enlisted to offer answers. Soon a reflective piece on motherhood appeared, written not by a clergyman but by a mother. Then came a presentation of how cable TV could be employed to spread the gospel, authored by a husband-wife videotape production team. "We are always looking for good writers—lay or clergy," Schaefer reported in 1984.

A question-and-answer column (answers provided by Pastor Paul Kelm) revealed that synod members were wrestling with issues never before addressed on these pages.

"ALANON, which counsels the relatives of alcoholics, recommends withdrawing all material support from the alcoholic until he hits bottom and desires treatment. Does this contradict our Lord?"

"What does the Bible teach about gluttony?"

"Why do our college students, pastors, and professors grow beards



The "new" *Northwestern Lutheran* included more articles written by laypeople—women, in particular. It also discussed contemporary issues that did not have easy answers, such as the nuclear arms race.

and long hair? Doesn't the Bible tell us that long hair is a shame to men?"
"Why won't the Wisconsin Synod make use of lay preachers?"
"What is the Christian view of vasectomy?"
"What is the Bible's view on transsexuals?"

Readers' opinions

Most controversial was the introduction of a letters column, which, Schaefer explained, would provide "the opportunity for another point of view in matters where that is possible, and some opportunity for reader reflection." Ground rules were established, correspondence invited, and in came the mail.

"I feel that the article on 'The Bomb' has no place in a church publication," wrote one reader in 1983. Said another the next year, "I have mixed emotions about the strident writings in my *Northwestern Lutheran* on prayer in public schools and our President's wish for a Year

of the Bible.” The issues readers raised mirrored those facing Lutheran Christians in the 1980s—changing worship formats, availability of previously unheard of technologies, and greater involvement of women in the life of the church.

Schaefer never ducked controversial issues. After the 1983 convention approved development of a new hymnbook, all viewpoints were welcomed. “I cannot see any justification for a new hymnal,” wrote one reader. “Let us be content with our fine hymnal,” said another. “I still love the King James Version and there are lots and lots of things about our *Lutheran Hymnal* that I dearly love.” One correspondent objected that WELS lacked “the necessary time, money, and expertise” for such an ambitious project.

Others supported a new hymnal: “The language needs updating. We would favor lowering the pitches of chants and hymns to a more comfortable level.” One writer likened the attachment to King James English to an earlier generation’s reluctance to abandon German. “Certainly, we can all agree that it was the thing to do.”

Some chided the “new *Northwestern Lutheran*” for divulging such disagreements. “Until the Synod has spoken its mind,” Schaefer countered—on the hymnal and on other subjects—“the pages of *The Northwestern Lutheran* will welcome all responsible expressions of opinions from all quarters.”

Critics lobbied for the demise of the letters column. Privately, some grouched that the magazine should be renamed *The WELS Ladies’ Home Journal*. But the editor refused to yield. “I am still convinced,” he wrote in 1987, “that our people, especially

the laity, should have a forum for the public expression of their opinions.”

To those who feared the letters column projected a “wrong” image of the synod as “contentious and divided,” Schaefer replied, “I don’t know why anyone would believe that the Wisconsin Synod laity is an army of sheep.” The synod’s members willingly heard and heeded Scripture, but they were “not at all reluctant to question the word of any mere mortal.”

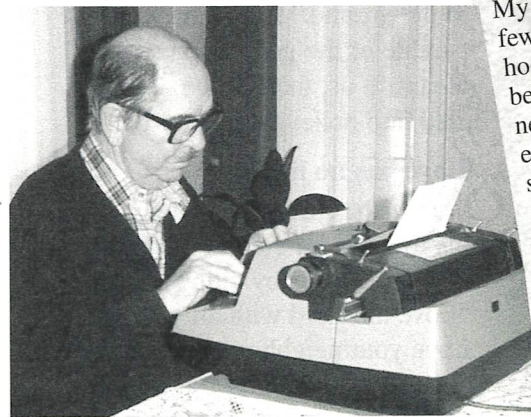
In his own writing, Schaefer went for the heart, but he made his readers think too. His “from this corner” editorials consistently revealed concerns ranging far beyond WELS. He seldom advocated predictable or easy solutions for an increasingly complicated world.

A plaque on his desk urged, “Crucify the Old Adam—don’t bore him to death.” James Schaefer brought that attitude to the “new” *Northwestern Lutheran*.



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

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James “Jeb” Schaefer at home with words. Jeb reshaped *The Northwestern Lutheran* in the 1980s, including adding a letters column.

Sept. 15, 1982: “As readers of *The Northwestern Lutheran* for many years, we find the new format much more related to laity interest. While we have always respected the views, reports, and information of past issues, they often seemed to have been written by pastors or at a theological level above the average reader.”

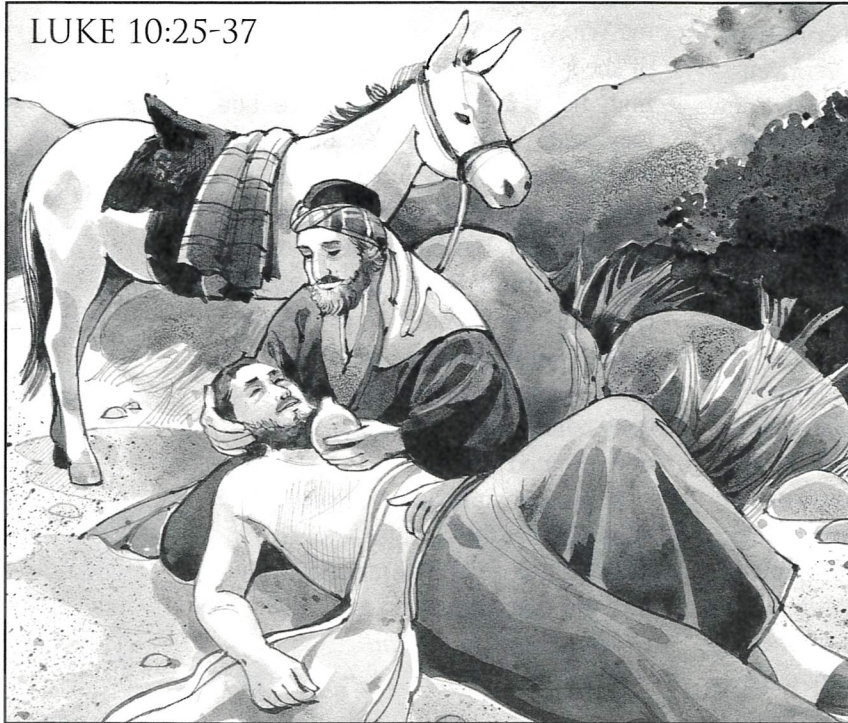
June 1, 1986: “I hope more leaders in our synod will be accepting of Christian rock or Christian contemporary music. If our leaders and members who choose to be offended by this music had lived in Bach’s time or Luther’s time, would they have been discouraging of these beloved musicians? Do the critics of Amy Grant and Petra forget that we have ‘non-Lutheran’ hymns in our hymnal?”

May 15, 1987: “I have long felt that women do not desire authority over men in keeping with 1 Corinthians, but do want the opportunity to work with all other believers as co-workers in the kingdom of God. . . . Women are allowed—and expected—to bring monetary gifts and prayers to the feet of Jesus, but we have so much more to offer.”

Feb. 1, 1984: “I was considerably taken aback by a letter entitled ‘The evils of Santa Claus.’ My brother and I, for a few years in our childhood, were staunch believers in him; but neither we nor our elders ever regarded him as a saint, fake or real. He simply was a delightful character who in some magical way got down our chimney, then up again, and filled our stockings with welcome gifts. Had anyone quoted Matthew 6:24 to my parents or grandparents, they would have been shocked. Of course no man can serve two masters. Our family never did.”

DO THE RIGHT THING

LUKE 10:25-37



Love isn't something we can calculate and plan. Love is either free and unsparing, or it's nothing.

Paul O. Wendland

Jesus tells a story about a man who's lying motionless in a ditch. He's half-dead, beaten up by robbers. Three other men come along. The first two, a priest and a Levite, see the crumpled heap and hurry on. The third, a foreigner, stops, comes closer, and figures out that the man is still alive. He bandages his wounds, loads him up on his donkey, and carries him to a place where he can be nursed back to health. Then the foreigner heads off again.

What is the story's important point? Think carefully before you answer. The story prompts us to think, "How heartwarming! Love

shown from stranger to stranger. Another stereotype comes crashing to the ground." But if that's all the parable of the good Samaritan means to us, then we've been dazzled into believing a petty lie.

Love has no limits

Jesus has just asked a lawyer what his formula for eternal life is. The lawyer answers by citing the law: "Love the Lord with all your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself."

But even as he's reciting those words, the lawyer begins to realize what a tall order they are—especially when his eternity depends on how well he obeys them. He figures that

he has to bring love down to a more manageable level. So he asks Jesus who his neighbor might be. You can hear the wheels spinning, "Love would be a whole lot easier if you could always calculate the right thing to do. Besides, you can't love everybody. I mean, you can't expect me to love people I don't like, can you? There have to be some limits. We need guidelines! Without them this whole thing could get out of hand."

"Right!" you say. "So Jesus breaks apart the lawyer's little pigeonholes by telling the parable of a foreigner who does the right thing, while people who should know better don't. End of story. Moral? Do the right

thing. Don't get hung up on stereotypes. Be a good Samaritan! Don't be a hypocrite."

But wait. It can't be as simple as that. Remember, eternal life is at stake. We'd better be sure about our answer, or we're headed for trouble. And if eternal life depends on us being like that foreigner, then we're in big trouble. Because none of us does the right thing. Nobody offers a perfect love to strangers seven days a week, 365 days a year.

We can't love perfectly

Jesus is clearly telling us more than "Put away your calculators when it comes to neighborly love." His parable takes away our comfort zone completely. Suddenly, we're no longer at the center of our own worlds, figuring out how far our precious little loves might extend themselves.

Instead, like the commandment, Jesus puts our neighbor front and center, and tells us to go out into the world and find him. "Do this, and you will live," he says. Once he says that, the parable no longer warms the heart, but sends a chill down our spines.

Let's come to this same point a different way. Good stories like this invite us to put ourselves inside them. Ask yourself, "Whom do I identify with in this parable?" I asked my son and daughter, and both said, "With the priest or the Levite, because I don't love like I should." My wife said, "When I was younger, I wanted to be the Samaritan. Now I feel more like the guy lying there helpless, needing mercy."

So what about the lawyer? How did he see himself? For a guy who liked to put things into neat little boxes, he sure found himself boxed in, didn't he? Jesus had asked, "Which of the three was a neighbor

to the man in need?" The "right" answer was obvious, but it seemed wrong. So wrong, it almost got stuck in the lawyer's throat. He couldn't identify with the priest or the Levite. He sure didn't want to identify with the foreigner. That would mean admitting a foreigner could be more righteous than a Jew. Even more: that a foreigner could offer a neighborly kind of love—and to a Jew at that. To believe those things would be to explode more than a few boxes. It would shatter the lawyer's whole world.

Which is just the point. Our tiny human worlds need to be shattered so that we've no earthly hope left. They must be shattered by God's radical demand to love. That's how the change of repentance begins. I need to see my lawyer-like calculations as an index of my own desperate need. You can't calculate love. Love is either free and unsparing, or it's nothing. What does it say about me that I'm always trying to put my love for others in a box? It says that I'm a sinner, lying half-dead at the side of the road.

It's hard for me to learn this, and once I learn it, it's hard to hang onto! Sin beats me bloody every day. Most times I'm so puffed up and ignorant, I don't feel a thing. The road is strewn with my best intentions. My little self-chosen plans have accomplished nothing except to leave me lying here half-dead. And if ever I should do the right thing, make good on a good intention, I'll dream on in my coma-like state that I've become some exalted being—Mr. Wonderful himself—instead of a heap of human wreckage. Will my love ever cease to be self-centered? Or will I always be so full of me?

Jesus' love breaks down barriers

It's better to give than to receive. But I need to receive before I can give. And all I can do when Jesus shows me again—as he does in this story—is cry out, "Help, Lord!" And when I'm in that desperate state, often there comes one more temptation—as bad as the pride that preceded the fall: "Lord, how can you possibly love someone like me, someone so twisted in on himself?"

That's when I must fill my eyes with Christ, and reread the parable. "See this Foreigner from heaven who comes down to be more than a neighbor to me. He will serve me as my Brother, holding nothing back. He comes down this road where I've wandered off by myself again. He comes to one who doesn't love him well, or even much at all. And he helps me. He binds my wounds with his unconditional grace, and he lets me drink from his boundless love until I can be filled with all its measure. How can I explain it? This love is so unknown, so far beyond the range of all human calculation. I can only receive it. In receiving from him, I revive. And in his giving, I learn how to love."

Will we—can we—hold onto a lasting love for each other? It depends on how well we keep listening to what Jesus tells us in his Word. Love your neighbor as yourself. See your own need first in that command, and then let Jesus break down with his love every barrier in your heart. His love will teach you to be forgetful of self, and mindful of him in every stranger's face you see.



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

THE FACE IN THE GLASS

The desire to change the one staring back from the glass must be coupled with determination, discipline, and self-control. The power to change must come from the Lord.

Carl R. Henkel

When Bill Parcells resigned as coach of the New York Jets, he read this poem¹ to his team:

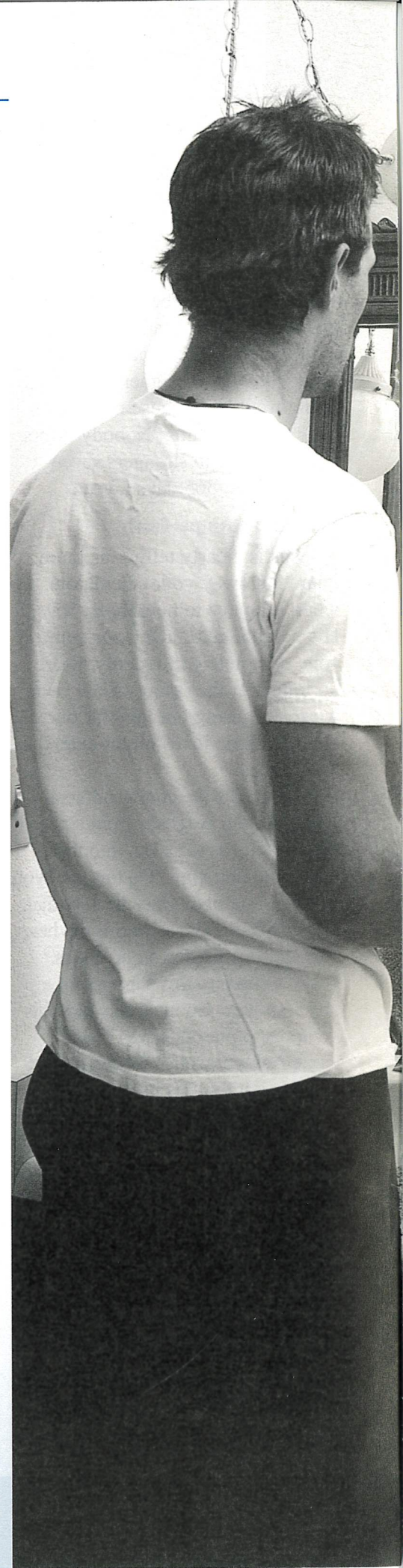
When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what "the man" has to say.

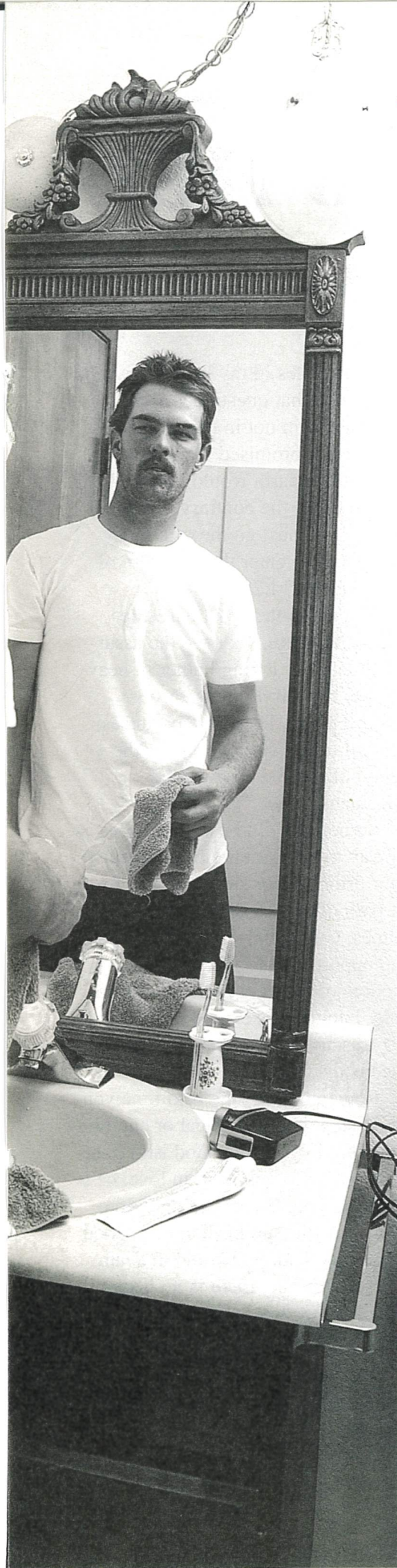
For it isn't your parents, your children, or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you a straight-shooting chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the guy in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind the rest,
For he's with you clear up to the end.
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.





Shows all imperfections

Is the man (or woman or boy or girl) in the glass your friend? Are you pleased with the one looking back at you? Can you look him straight in the eye and say, "I've done my best to serve and obey the Lord"?

Maybe the opposite is true. You have a hard time looking at the face. You remember your many mistakes and recall your miserable failures. You are haunted by your sins and wonder how the Lord could possibly love something as repulsive and hideous as the face in the glass.

God's holy Law serves as a mirror. As a mirror, it uncovers our sins and makes us aware of our disobedience. God's Law, like an x-ray, searches beyond our layers of skin and exposes our deep down sins of thought, word, and deed. The Law of God does not make us feel good but rather forces us to recognize the ugliness of our sin.

What do you do when you look in the mirror and see that the face looking back at you is dirty and the hair disheveled and unkempt? You bathe your face with soap, lather your head with shampoo, dry and comb your hair. If you're a man you get out your razor, if you're a woman maybe your makeup. You use the mirror to improve the appearance of the face gazing back at you. In other words, if you don't like what you see, you change it.

Can be changed

If you don't like what you see in your relationship with the Lord, change it! Bathe yourself in the righteousness of Jesus. Soak your heart in his pure, cleansing blood. Ponder your washing in the baptismal waters of forgiveness and new life and recall what this

now means. "It means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever" (Luther's Catechism).

The desire to change the one staring back from the glass must be coupled with determination, discipline, and self-control. The power to change must come from the Lord. His power goes to work within us as we in faith and trust surrender our wills to Almighty God. "Take my will and make it Thine; It shall be no longer mine . . ." (*Christian Worship* 469:5).

The above poem says that the face in the glass is "the fellow to please, never mind the rest, for he's with you clear up to the end." But there's more, isn't there? As Christians, we want to please the Lord who, by the way, is also with us clear up to the end—and beyond! And Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15).

We are saved by grace and only by grace. This is gospel truth. The lives we now live under God's grace are reflections of our love for him.

Now take a good, long look. Is the one staring back from the glass a reflection of love and obedience? If not, you know what to do!



Carl Henkel is pastor at Mount Olive, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

¹ Peter "Dale" Wimbrow Sr. wrote the original poem, "The guy in the glass," in 1934. The version read by Parcels differs from the original on several points, but the main message of self-esteem remains intact.

IS GOD PUNISHING ME?

Problems don't come into your life because God is angry with you. Rather, he is training you to put your life into his hands.

Robert F. Raasch

“**T**he doctor says it's cancer.”
“They've eliminated my job.”

“My spouse is having an affair.”

When storms like these come into our lives, even the most stoic person may wonder, “Why is this happening to me? Is God angry with me? Is he somehow punishing me?”

God isn't punishing you

Actually such a reaction is not illogical. If we assume that God is all powerful (i.e., he controls everything in the universe) and that God is just (i.e., he hates sin), then it is only natural to assume that when troubles and hardships enter our lives, it happens because God is sending them to punish us for our past sins.

Unfortunately, that line of logic ignores one important component in God's judicial system: Jesus. Even though God Almighty has every right to punish us for our sins, he chose to send a substitute in our place. God laid all our sins on his sinless son. When Jesus cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”, he testified that he was enduring the most excruciating punishment possible, namely, absolute separation from God—hell!

So what does Jesus' death mean for our lives? It means that God cannot and will not punish us for our sins—because he has already punished Jesus in our place. The apostle Paul says it, “There is now



no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

As long as we cling to Jesus as our Savior, we can be sure that God will continue to pour out his love on us. Again, Paul makes that point: “[God] who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

God cannot and will not punish us (believers) for our sins—because he has already punished Jesus in our place.

God is training you

Yet, maybe that still raises a question. “If God is not punishing me, then why am I experiencing all

these troubles in my life?” The short answer to that question is simply “because I'm not in heaven yet.” God never promised that the believer's life on earth would be a bed of roses. Quite the contrary. Scripture says, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Yet, no matter what hardships Christians face, we have the assurance that our loving Father in heaven will use all of them for our eternal good. The Bible promises, “In all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28).

Sometimes God uses hardships as a way to get our attention, readjust our priorities, or steer us away from a path of self-destruction. Other times, God simply wants to give us an opportunity to lean on him as our source of strength in times of trouble. In either case, God's purpose is to “discipline” us, that is, “train us as his disciples.”

Remember that the next time you are faced with a physical or emotional storm in your life. God isn't punishing you for sin. But, in love, he is training you. He is training you to put your life into his hands, in good times and bad, in life and in death.

Rest assured, there is no better place to be than in the hands of your loving Heavenly Father.

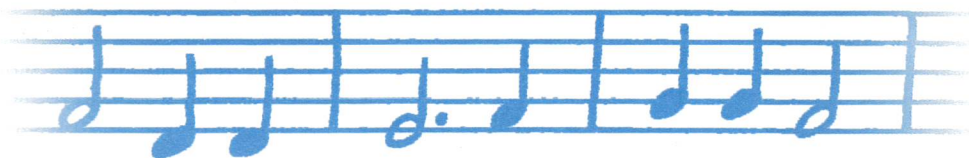


Robert Raasch is pastor at Mount Olive, Appleton, Wisconsin.

O Jesus Christ, your manger is

Although Paul Gerhardt had a hard life, his hymns show where his trust lay—in the cross of Christ.

Theodore J. Hartwig



No overview of our hymn heritage would be adequate without recognizing a contribution by the prince of Lutheran hymn writers.

The writer

Through much of his 70-year life in the 1600s, he experienced the horrors of a religious war that ravaged Germany with sword, famine, and pestilence. After graduation from the University of Wittenberg, he waited almost 20 years, the war now ended, before assignment to pastorates in the region of Berlin. Here he won admiration for both his sermons and hymns. The security of a steady income enabled him, at 48, to contract a marriage blessed with five children.

Then tribulation struck more personally. His ministry was terminated because he would not compromise his Lutheran confession for the sake of a superficial fellowship with Reformed Protestantism. Reduced to poverty, he and his family had to live on the charity of others. At this time also he buried his wife, four children having preceded her into the grave. Eventually he was granted a pastorate south of Berlin. Here he labored seven years until his death in 1676.

His name is Paul Gerhardt.

The life of this faithful Christian bears out a German proverb that, in free translation, says that crushed spices are wonderfully fragrant. In other words, hard knocks can bring out the best in people. Gerhardt exhibits this truth with his poetry. “Why should cross and trial grieve me?” he asks in one of his hymns, and then, as a good Bible theologian, puts his trust in the cross of Christ.

Gerhardt’s hymns, unlike Luther’s, focus on Christian devotion to God. They move from earth to heaven, from the believer to God, as one hears in “O Lord, how shall I meet you” (*Christian Worship* 18).

The hymn

Many of Gerhardt’s 17 hymns in *Christian Worship* are much admired and much used. It would be a credit to our worship practice if another of his hymns, much neglected, won its deserved place in the sun. It is the Christmas chorale “O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is” (CW 40).

On reading this hymn no one can fail to notice its childlike quality and its focus on the central truth of Christmas: God coming into human flesh. The excellence of the text is matched by a tune of calm, confident serenity that was composed by Gerhardt’s friend, Johann Cruger.

Any commentary on the first stanza simply gets in the way of its beauty: “O Jesus Christ, your manger is My paradise where my soul is reclining. For there, O Lord, we find the Word. Made flesh for us—your grace is brightly shining.”

The second stanza tells how the eternal God condescended to our low estate. The third stanza sings of the comfort gained from Christ’s birth. The fourth raises this comfort to the higher bliss reserved in heaven.

The final stanza bids each believer to turn away from this world’s distractions and keep heart and mind fixed on Jesus. It’s a matchless meditation: “The world may hold her wealth and gold; But you, my heart, keep Christ as your true treasure. To him hold fast until at last A crown is yours and honor in full measure.”

We should be grateful that the world has not added this hymn to the roster of carols blared from loudspeakers at scores of shopping centers. When the world touches holy things, it unfailingly cheapens them. Praise God that we possess this hymn exclusively as our own.



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



Moving wall moves thousands

In honor of Veterans' Day 2000, the Wisconsin Lutheran High School (WLHS) Student Council sponsored The Moving Wall from Nov. 7-12,

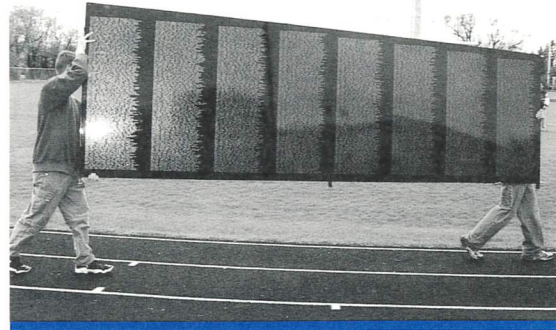


Arnold Brown salutes the American flag during Wisconsin Lutheran High School's Veterans' Day worship service. Brown graduated from WLHS in 1961. He is in the Honor Guard of the 440th Airlift Wing of the Milwaukee Air Force Reserves.

2000. The Moving Wall is a half-size replica of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C., that travels through the United States, spending about one week at each site.

The wall was open for public viewing at WLHS in Milwaukee 24 hours each day. A public opening and closing ceremony, a worship service, and a breakfast were held to honor veterans and to thank God for the blessings of freedom enjoyed in the United States. Over 5,000 people visited WLHS to view The Moving Wall and to attend these events.

This project was driven by WLHS students. Social studies students developed informational war displays. National Honor Society students guided tours of grade school children. Student council members fed the Vietnam veterans who volunteered to guard the wall. The band



Wisconsin Lutheran High School students help assemble the traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial on their athletic field.

participated in the public ceremonies, the choir in the worship service.

Robin Kolosovsky, student council president, was moved by the gratitude of the veterans and remarks, "The importance of the wall to the veterans is what made it important to us. . . . They don't get thanked enough."

In addition, she says, "It's extremely rewarding knowing that you're showing that Christ is in you, and other people can see that."

Speak up!

"Our purpose," stated Bob Fleischmann, national director of WELS' Christian Life Resources (CLR), "is . . . not outlawing abortion, euthanasia, or physician-assisted suicide. Our purpose is to glorify God."

These words refocused and reenergized the 726 people who attended the Christian Life Resources Convention on Oct. 21, 2000. CLR is devoted to proclaiming God's Word on the value of human life. Their convention, held at the Olympia Resort and Spa in Oconomowoc, Wis., emphasized the theme, "Speak up!"

And people did speak up. Throughout this daylong event, questions were asked, concerns were raised, and opinions were given. Workshop presenters aimed to interact with audience members so that topics of concern could be analyzed.

Receiving top billing at this year's convention was the need for political

activism and how to react to current ethical dilemmas encountered in stem cell research, genetic testing, and other scientific areas. Although many times presenters admitted that the answers are not black and white, the encouragement to search Scripture and pray about these issues was appreciated.

Perhaps the most important benefit that attendees received was the opportunity for fellowship with other Christians who volunteer their time and money to further the pro-life cause. Being surrounded by over 700 people working toward the same goal inspired a sense of teamwork among attendees.

Another inspiration was the presence of children. In addition to their events for adults, CLR's convention provided events for children in kindergarten through 7th grade and for teens, emphasizing that you are never too young to begin valuing life.



Charlie Sykes was the featured speaker at the 2000 Christian Life Resources Convention. As an author, radio talk show host, and political commentator, Sykes provides a conservative viewpoint in the media. He encouraged convention attendees to stand by their convictions with courage. "Do not let yourself be defined by the mainstream media or mainstream culture," Sykes advised. "They will ignore you." You should speak up on behalf of life anyway, Sykes encouraged, because you know that valuing human life is important.

Becoming stewards of technology

A fully-equipped computer lab filled with 27 computers and at least three computers in every classroom are technology items you'd expect in most high schools.

But what about in a grade school?

St. Matthew Lutheran School, Winona, Minn., has these things and more, all so its students can become better stewards of God's gift of technology.

"The computer can be compared to a pencil and a slate or the marker and the whiteboard of years past," says Robert Klindworth, principal of St. Matthew. "It is a tool that will be part of [the student's] future."

Although students learn keyboarding, the main use for the computers is to support the school's curriculum. Computer programs and the Internet reinforce what students learn in class and let them do further research.

Teachers at St. Matthew are required to take 40 hours of training to help them become better end users, teachers, and network administrators.

"We need to have our teachers be enthusiastic about technology and about how to use it so the program will be effective," says Klindworth.

While a general Web site introduces

the community to the school, a password-secured site, containing a school calendar, the principal's newsletter, the lunch menu, classroom updates, and any "hot news," further connects the school with the parents.

When St. Matthew first started its program in 1995, Klindworth contacted all 127 school families to discuss what the technology future of the school could be and what had to be done to get there. "We have a real solid group of parents that support our efforts," says Klindworth.

Parents not only support the program philosophically; they support it financially. An annual technology fee of \$30 helps maintain the computers and the Internet work at the school. An initial grant from a local businessman paid for the computers and much of the internal networking.

Are all this fuss and all this expense really worth it? According to Klindworth, they are. "I think it's important for children to have some level of exposure to technology so that they're prepared for the future that the Lord will lay before them," he says.

A future that constantly will be changing and advancing.

Obituaries

David J. Kiecker 1946-2000

David Kiecker was born Feb. 6, 1946, in Appleton, Wis. He died Oct. 16, 2000, in Shiocton, Wis., in an automobile accident, which also claimed the life of his wife, Audrey.

A 1973 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Kiecker served Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev., and Immanuel, Black Creek, Wis.

David Kiecker is survived by three daughters and one brother.

Joyce E. Rydecki 1940-2000

Joyce Rydecki was born April 27, 1940, in Ann Arbor, Mich. She died Oct. 22, 2000, in Stevensville, Mich.

Rydecki taught at St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich.

She is survived by two sons and three brothers.

Norma D. Dodge 1908-2000

Norma Dodge was born July 21, 1908, in Milwaukee, Wis. She died June 23, 2000, in Pewaukee, Wis.

Dodge taught at St. Lucas, Milwaukee.

She is survived by nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Leonard W. Engel 1928-2000

Leonard Engel was born Sept. 30, 1928, in Brillion, Wis. He died June 25, 2000, in Sussex, Wis.

A 1950 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., Engel taught at Jerusalem, Milwaukee; Zion, South Milwaukee; and Trinity (ELS), West Bend, all in Wis.

He is survived by three daughters, one sister, and three grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Arleen, and three brothers.

Questions, anyone?

As mentioned in bits and pieces, "your question, please" is not included in this issue. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor Richard Gurgel will be the new author of this department, beginning in the fall.

Recently, though, the number of questions sent to "your question, please" has declined. The editorial staff is hoping you can help. If you have questions that you'd like answered or ideas about what direction this column should head, contact *Forward/NL*, 2929 N

Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222, <fic@sab.wels.net>.

Beginning in March, Thomas Trapp, pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel and Student Center, Madison, Wis., will address inappropriate questions. Inappropriate questions? Well, at least in polite society. See how Trapp takes questions that polite people supposedly don't ask—questions that were asked of Jesus—and explores the answers for our lives.



Meet the editorial staff—uncut

Ever ask yourself, “Who are these people who write for Forward/NL?” Through this series you can find out. Read on:

Today’s thoughts on Paul Janke
“Quit” is one word that isn’t in Pastor Paul Martin Janke’s vocabulary. This attitude keeps him busy, but happy.

Janke’s tenacious spirit was evident even before he was a pastor. One incident that may cause some to rethink their goals only managed to solidify his.

He says: “When I was a vicar I came to a dead stop in the middle of a sermon. I couldn’t remember what came next. I thought that was the end of plans for the ministry. Actually, it served in a strange way to make me more comfortable in the pulpit because I experienced the thing I feared the most and survived it.”

God continued throwing new experiences into Janke’s life. In 1998, Janke became the district president for the Arizona-California

District, a position he holds on top of serving as pastor at St. Peter, Modesto, Calif. As district president he helps congregations fill called worker vacancies, serves on the Conference of Presidents and the synodical Assignment Committee, and chairs district conventions.

But his responsibilities don’t end there. In 1999, St. Peter opened a one-room school, of which Janke serves as part-time principal and his wife, Carol, serves as teacher.

With all this, he still finds time to write “Thought for today” for *Forward/NL*. But he really couldn’t get out of that. “Pastor Baumler [*Forward/NL* editor] told me I couldn’t quit. (He was my Greek professor in college, and I still do what he says.)”

He considers writing to be a hobby, along with walking, reading, and yard work. He also enjoys traveling with his family and fishing with his friends. “Each spring for



Pastor Paul Janke and his family. Clockwise from center: Pastor Paul Janke, Jenny (senior at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.), Peter (6th grade), Carol, Erik (4th grade), and Jessica (sophomore at LPS).

the past six years I’ve gone trout fishing in the Sierra with my friend, Ed Cribari. It’s just four days or so of fishing and camping, but it’s a great getaway,” says Janke.

Although “quit” isn’t in his vocabulary, the word “blessed” definitely is. Says Janke, “God has been so amazingly gracious to me. My family, my congregation, my synod, my colleagues in the ministry are all great blessings from God that I’ve not come close to deserving.”

500 corroded pennies and a love for God’s Word

A recent experience reinforced the power of God’s Word and the effect it can have in the hearts of people.

Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis., wanted to purchase a used bus to remove the transportation obstacle for students living a great distance from school,

When I conveyed this desire to individuals and groups within our 23 federation churches, several people raised the question “What if?” “What if we would join together to buy a new bus instead of a used one?” “What if we asked others to share in this venture so even more students could be served?”

I then asked the question myself. “What if people were given the opportunity to really make a difference in the lives of young people?”

“What if people would be given the chance to give back to God some of the financial blessings he had given to them?”

One Sunday, after worship at St. John, Burlington, Wis., I addressed the church members. I explained that an elderly woman from another congregation had given five dollars to help purchase a bus. Her instructions were, “See what the Lord can accomplish with my gift.” I took her words seriously and told congregation members that they would each receive a portion of her gift. A penny was placed into each of 500 envelopes, which were distributed to the adults and children. People were encouraged to return the envelopes and add their own gift. I said, “Let’s see what God can accomplish with 500 corroded

pennies and a love for his Word.” I had no idea what the results might be.

At that congregation alone, more than 70 people—adults, students, and children—joined to bring an offering of over \$21,000. Additional donations were received from individuals and members of other federation congregations. When the project was complete, Shoreland had received enough gifts to purchase three new buses. What tremendous things God can do.

Paul Thierfelder



Continuing to celebrate Forward in Christ

• Dark, threatening skies and rumbling thunder did not deter people from coming to the WELS anniversary picnic in Fort Atkinson, Wis., on July 9, 2000. Instead of the outdoor setting, the service was held inside St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, with the lunch following at the church's school. Chairs were set in the aisles to accommodate the 497 people who attended this celebration hosted by the Blackhawk Circuit of the Western Wisconsin District. Lay volunteers from area churches coordinated the event.

• St. John, Red Wing, Minnesota's, desire to offer something to the public as a part of its Forward in Christ celebration led to its hosting a cemetery walk on Sept. 17, 2000. The history of the town is reflected by the cemetery because over half the people buried in St. John's cemetery were not members of St. John and the cemetery includes historic gravesites of local significance.

• On Oct. 15, 2000, members of St. Paul, Prescott, Wis., celebrated WELS' 150th anniversary the "old-



To advertise its special service, St. Paul, Prescott, Wis., displayed mannequins with original turn of the century clothing. The mannequins were borrowed from Lorraine Eichman (right). Also pictured (left to right): Dorothy Harding and Cindy Durow.

fashioned" way by duplicating customs of 100 years ago. Customs observed included a Scripture lesson and hymn verse spoken in German, the offering taken with a bag on the end of a long-handled stick, and the men and boys sitting on the right

side of the church and the women and girls sitting on the left side. Richard Durow, pastor at St. Paul, remarked, "We can be especially grateful that while customs change, and generations come and go, God's Word remains true forever."

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 Missionary Tedd Wendt in Russia:

Sometimes strange things happen here. Take, for instance, one of our Saturday evening Bible classes. We were discussing the life of Abraham. Suddenly I heard talking in the corridor. I asked a student to see who it was. He looked out and said that Lena had just come in. Since Lena is habitually late, we continued our discussion.

Suddenly Lena came running into the classroom. "Pastor Wendt," she said, "there's a man lying on one of the benches outside, and he's not moving! I think that he might be dead!" . . .

We were about to watch a video, so I asked two of the students to go with her. I put the tape in the video player and went outside. It was dark, and it took me a while to find them as I checked the benches near our center. Finally I saw them.

They stood looking at a man about 30 years old who was indeed dead. One student remained there while Lena and the other student called the police, and I returned to my Bible class.

I thought about this quite a bit that night. The bench on which the man

died was in a dark part of the courtyard, but it was still near one of the main paths. Children were playing there, but they had not approached the man. Some (perhaps all) of the adults passing through the courtyard must have seen the man, but none of them stopped to see if he needed any help. Only Lena stopped.

Like the Good Samaritan, she left the path and went to see if she could assist this man in any way. She was too late, of course, but at least she tried to help. That says a lot for her faith. Her love for God showed itself in her concern for another person. She was on her way to study a Bible class lesson, but instead she taught a Bible class lesson.



District news

Southeastern Wisconsin



As part of the Southeastern Wisconsin District Forward in Christ celebration, over 700 called workers and spouses gathered for an evening of fellowship, food, and music at Milwaukee's Grain Exchange building on Oct. 22, 2000. Here Nathan Pope (right), pastor at First Evangelical, Racine, Wis., presents District President David Rutschow and his wife, Pauline, with gifts of appreciation for their service.

Minnesota

Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minnesota's, football team played in the Metrodome on Oct. 27, 2000. The MLC Knights finished the season with a 62-6 victory over Trinity Bible College.

Southeastern Wisconsin

In November 2000, **WELS Web site heaven sent postcards** were named the "top click" of the week by the Internet expert on Wausau, Wisconsin's, Christian radio station, 89.5.

Martin Luther College student **Renee Schiller** was chosen to play on a 14-member softball team that played in Belgium and the Netherlands during the summer of 2000. The Division III all-star team even played against Belgium's Olympic team.

South Central

Risen Savior, Austin, Tex., began offering English as a Second Language (ESL)

courses in 1999. One person from Brazil has since been confirmed and three Hispanic children baptized.

Happy Anniversary!

DM—Agnes Sukut began playing the organ in church at the age of 15. The year 2000 marked her 50th year of playing. She currently plays for Shining Mountains, Bozeman, Mont., and Salem, Circle, Mont.

MI—At the beginning of the 2000 school year, Trinity, Jenera, Ohio, thanked **Julaine Boehm** for her 40 years in the teaching ministry. Boehm spent all 40 years of service at Trinity.

MN—Members of **Immanuel, Buffalo, Minn.**, celebrated the church's 110th anniversary on Oct. 27, 2000.

SEW—Lutheran Pioneers began its 50th year of providing a Christ-centered program of youth ministry on Sept. 10, 2000.

Robert Gurgel and Jonathan Rupprecht have served in the pastoral ministry for 25 years. Members of St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis., celebrated these milestones on Nov. 5, 2000.

Western Wisconsin



Approximately 5,800 worshipers gathered at the University of Wisconsin Field House in Madison on Oct. 29, 2000, for the Western Wisconsin District Forward in Christ Reformation service. Over 1,200 musicians participated in the event, including youth and adult choir members and instrumentalists.

California



King of Kings, Garden Grove, California's, original wooden cross rotted and was removed six years. Recently, the cross pictured above, looking like a dove flying heavenward, replaced the first cross. Except for the cost of materials, the project was entirely the result of volunteers.

These Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School teachers' anniversaries in the ministry were observed on Sept. 10, 2000: **Ted Nommensen** (40 years), **Rev. John Moldenhauer** (25 years), **Darwin Schramm** (25 years), **Margo Semon** (25 years).

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: CA—Hermann John; DM—David Wendt; MI—Geoff Kieta; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

DEFINING RELIGION

Pietism: a movement that began among German Lutherans in the late 17th century as a reaction to a perceived spiritual deadness in the state church. Pietism tends to emphasize sanctification rather than justification, deeds rather than creeds, and subjective, human, religious experience rather than the objective truths of God's Word.

Symposium looks back to point forward in Christ

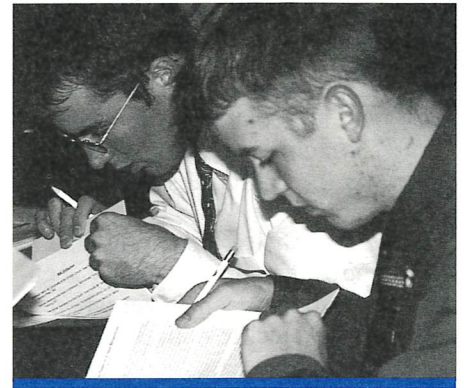
Seminary students and pastors came together for study and fellowship. They came to “renew their understanding” of God’s role in the history of his church and in the spread of his gospel. They were to “strengthen their resolve” to continue proclaiming the message of Christ worldwide as part of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

It happened at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s “A Reformation Symposium” Oct. 30-31, 2000. About 325 students and pastors from all across the country heard three essays under the theme “Forward in Christ at the Dawn of a New Millennium.” A part of the synod’s anniversary celebration, the symposium

called attention to the beginning of three millenniums, starting with the early Christian church and finally challenging us at the start of this millennium.

Essayists Joel Prange of Redding, Calif., Keith Wessel of Marietta, Ga., and Paul Wendland of New Ulm, Minn., led the group in understanding the changes affecting each period and how the unchanging gospel has prevailed and will. Participants were challenged to think of how we will address the changes and share Jesus across the cultures of our own day.

The symposium stretched over two days, with a banquet the first evening to allow for added interaction between participants.



Joel Neumann (back) and Clint Baer, students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, concentrate as the essays were presented at the Reformation symposium. About 325 students and pastors attended the event.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Gilbert Fischer writes: “I sent this letter to my four great-grandchildren, ages 13, 10, 8, and 6. My son, their grandfather, informed me that the 13-year-old had difficulty accepting the news that his great-grandmother had died after a bout with lymphoma.”

Dear Dustin, Nicholas, Brandon, and Michaella,

The most important thing for me to do today is to write you, my four great-grandchildren, a letter telling you that what just happened to your great-grandmother is really the most wonderful, glorious, joyous thing that can happen to a Christian. It is the beginning of an eternal life (a living of happiness that will have no ending) in heaven.

Jesus tells us the place is so beautiful and peaceful and full of joy that no words can even begin to describe it. It is a place where we will receive everything we want and need, and we will want and need only that which is good for us. There will be no pain, no sorrow, no sadness, no evil thinking, no bad talking, no mean doing or acting.

Great Grandma is there now, and she is waiting for all of us to join her when the time comes. Time means nothing to her in heaven. Waiting for years to join her may seem long to us, but it will not seem long at all to her.

God is giving us some more time to learn about Jesus, that he is God’s son (true God) who was born a human child (true man). He came into this world to be obedient, to be punished for our sins, suffer, be rejected by God in our place, and die on the cross for our sins. But, on Easter Sunday he came back to life gloriously and lived among the people for 40 days. Then he went up to heaven to get our place and the places of all who believe in him ready. The Holy Spirit makes us believe this even though our minds cannot understand it. We thank him for all he has done and continues to do for us. We ask him to forgive our sins and to take us to heaven when the time comes. I know that Great Grandma will be waiting there with open arms and a big smile on her face, ready to join Jesus in welcoming us to our wonderful eternal home in heaven.

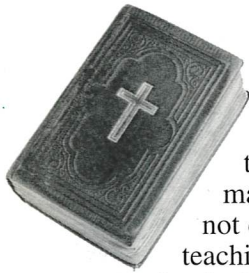
Believe this all your lives. Study more about this by reading the Bible daily and joining regularly with

other believers in your church services and Bible classes. Ask God to forgive your sins and to keep you from sinning more, and you will have nothing but joy waiting for you as Great Grandma has experienced the moment she left this sinful world with all its evil.

People often say, “She’s better off now than she was.” When we really think through those words . . . then we really know that she is better off now, and we look forward to the day when we will be better off with her in heaven. . . . We’ll quickly make up the time we lost with her between now and then, and we’ll all have many good times together forever. Now we thank Jesus for what he has done for Great Grandma, and we pray daily that he will do the same for us and all his children.

As I think of what I have written here to you I have a very good feeling inside me that God put the words into my mind. I pray you have that same good feeling as you read and think about what the letter says. . . .

I love you very much,
Great Grandpa



Survey: teenagers and religious faith—

Although 86 percent of teenagers claim that they are Christian, many of their beliefs do not coincide with biblical teaching, according to a survey by the Barna Research Group, Ltd.

Three out of five teens state that they believe the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches. Yet when asked about specific beliefs, they believe things that are inconsistent with the Bible.

- Sixty-five percent believe the devil is not a living being but a symbol of evil.
- Sixty-one percent think that if a person is generally good or does enough good things for others during his life, he will earn a place in heaven.
- Fifty-three percent think that when Jesus lived on earth, he committed sins like other people.

Although confused about teachings, most teenagers have positive impressions of Christianity and faith. Eight out of ten claim that religious faith is important in their life.

These findings are based upon 605 telephone interviews conducted in fall 2000 among teenagers, ages 13 to 18. Margin of error is plus or minus five percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

[Barna Research Group, Ltd., news release, 10/23/00]

Religious freedom restricted in much of world—

A recent survey by the Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom shows that about 75 percent of the world's population is subjected to restrictions and violations of religious freedom.

About 36 percent live in countries in which religious liberties are violated, while 39 percent have constraints put on their faith practices, said the global survey.

Estonia, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, and the United States were listed as countries with the best track records in the 25 percent of the

world's population living under conditions of broad religious freedom, according to the report.

Moment of silence required in Virginia public schools—

A federal court has affirmed the constitutionality of a Virginia law requiring public school students to observe a minute of silence in class each day to "meditate, pray or engage in any other silent activity."

Although the American Civil Liberties Union contended that the law violated the separation of church and state, a U.S. district judge ruled that the law had a secular purpose and did not favor religion.



Joint statement on state of marriage in the United States released—

Evangelical and mainline Protestant religious leaders and Roman Catholic Church officials issued a joint statement in November to voice their concern on the state of marriage in the United States and the need for churches to do something about it.

Officials from the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches, and the Southern Baptist Convention signed the declaration, which lists a high divorce rate and a rise in cohabitation as just some of the factors threatening the United States.

"As church leaders, we recognize an unprecedented need and responsibility to help couples begin, build, and sustain better marriages and to restore those threatened by divorce," the two-page declaration says.

A "marriage summit" for bishops and other denominational leaders is also in the works.

Poll: Whom do we rely on?—Here's how teens and adults responded to the question: Which of the following statements comes closer to the way you decide how to conduct your life:

1. You pay more attention to God and religious teachings or 2. You pay more attention to your own views and the views of others?

Teens

Pay more attention to God	38%
Pay more attention to your own views and the views of others	61%
No opinion	1%

Adults

Pay more attention to God	48%
Pay more attention to your own views and the views of others	45%
Other	5%
No opinion	2%

[Emerging Trends, September 2000]

Some election results—A look over the country and the returns from election day:

Colorado—Voters defeated a proposal that seemed like a small restriction—just requiring a 24 hour waiting period before abortions could be performed.

Maine—An initiative that would have legalized physician-assisted suicide was defeated, 51 percent to 49 percent.

Oregon—Voters defeated a measure prohibiting public school instruction that promotes homosexual behavior.

Nebraska and Nevada—Voters passed measures banning same-sex marriage.

Vermont—Many legislators who voted for homosexual unions last July lost in their election races. Republicans committed to opposing the new law made major gains in both branches of the legislature—even taking control of the lower house.

[LifeWire, Nov. 16, 2000]

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



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Bode, Douglas L.**, to New Beginnings, Denver, Colo.
- Kassebaum, Jerry A.**, to St. Mark, Duncanville, Tex.
- Kauffeld, Shawn E.**, to St. Katherine, Elk Mound/St. John, Hatchville, Wis.
- Lange, Gerald L.**, to retirement
- Lindeman, Loren L.**, to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.
- Malchow, Philip D.**, to Trinity, El Paso, Tex.
- Miller, Dallas C.**, to The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.
- Neyhart, Steven W.**, to Trinity, McCook/St. Paul, North Platte, Neb.
- Nieminen, John R.**, to Shepherd of the Valley, Terre Haute, Ind.
- Paustian, Mark A.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
- Petersen, Keith E.**, to Bethlehem, Watertown/St. John, Rauville, S.D.
- Schaeewe, Matthew J.**, to Huron Valley LHS, Westland, Mich.
- Schmeling, Arlyn L.**, to retirement
- Schneider, David P.**, to Cross of Christ, Universal City, Tex.
- Sprain, Roger J.**, to retirement
- Wichmann, Donald P.**, to Faith, Russell/St. Mark, Salina, Kan.

Teachers

- Abel, Megan**, to Faith, Oregon, Wis.
- Bode, Charlene K.**, to New Beginnings, Denver, Colo.
- Bruns, Steven M.**, to Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga.
- Natsis, Cynthia L.**, to St. John, Westland, Mich.
- Panning, Frederick H.**, to retirement
- Schwartz, Craig V.**, to retirement
- Strey, Emily R.**, to St. Matthew, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Thede, Norman J.**, to retirement
- Zech, Nicole M.**, to Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 56th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 30-Aug. 3, 2001, at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. Details will be announced later.

Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BoRaM) must be submitted to the president's office by Feb. 1.

REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY

Lic Canot, Fairview, N.J., a pastor of an independent Lutheran church has requested a colloquy for the purpose of serving in the pastoral ministry in WELS. Correspondence related to this request should be addressed to President Walter F. Beckmann, North Atlantic District, 7401 Masonville Dr, Annandale VA 22003-1656; <NADPWELS@aol.com>.

NOTICE FOR CONGREGATION TREASURERS

The cutoff date for Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 2000 offerings sent to our lock box will be credited as 2000 receipts through Tuesday, Jan. 9, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as "December" offerings on the remittance coupon. We ask that you continue to mail your offerings to the lock box. That location, our bank, will provide you with the fastest deposit for your congregation.

Mark Meissner, director of finance

COMING EVENTS

- Women's retreat**—Jan. 12-14. Montverde, Fla. Cost: \$110. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.
- Singles retreat**—Jan. 19-21. Wautoma, Wis. Doris Collins, 262/534-7852.
- Leadership development workshops**—Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers. Jan. 20, Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis. Feb. 24, Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. Lutheran Pioneers, 888-214-8225.
- LWMS Women of WELS (WOW) retreats**—Jan. 19-21, Winter Park, Fla., area. Jennifer Rosenbaum, 321/453-1000.
- Mar. 2-3, Mishicot, Wis. Kathie Wendland, 920/682-5694.
- Apr. 20-22, Williamsburg, Va. Lynette Hupman, 703/361-1419.
- WELS Christian couples' retreat**—Feb. 16-18. Green Lake, Wis. Pam See, 262/691-1989.
- Women's retreat**—Pathways to Christ Retreat, Mar. 16-18. Pioneer Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.
- Christian Woman Today retreat**—19th annual. Sponsored by Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis. Mar. 23-25. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Kathie Mueller, 262/521-1159.
- Today's Christian Women's retreat**—Mar. 30-Apr. 1. Radisson Hotel, Toledo, Ohio. Laurie, 248/391-1133.
- Holy Land tour**—June 13-22. 10-day tour of Israel sponsored by Good Shepherd, St. Peters, Mo. Michael Dietz, 636/978-6791.
- Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention**—June 22-24. Holiday Inn O'Hare International, Chicago. Shirley Billings, 714/633-1130.
- European choral/history study tour II**—Sing the music of the Renaissance and Baroque masters in Italy, Austria, and Germany. June 17-July 6. Credit available for music or history through MLC. Cost, approximately \$2,975. Roger Hermanson or Mark Lenz, 800/686-4142.
- Youth rally**—July 11-14. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Registration deadline, Feb. 15. Kris Snyder, 414/527-6854.
- WELS Tech 2001**—technology conference for pastors, teachers, and laypeople. July 15-18, Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis. Registration forms will be mailed in February. <<http://www.wels.net/welstech2001>>. To get on a mailing list, contact Debbie, 414/256-3210; <welstech2001@sab.wels.net>.

AVAILABLE

- Religious books**—dating back to early 1900s. Jane Mangold, 702 Clara Dr, Palo Alto CA 94303-3905.
- Portable pulpit, baptismal font, and communion set**—(individual wine glasses and bread plate). Free for cost of shipping. James Malmberg, 604/948-9990.

NEEDED

Music—for the song "Bless This House," <rvrwalker@maqs.net>.

SERVICE TIMES

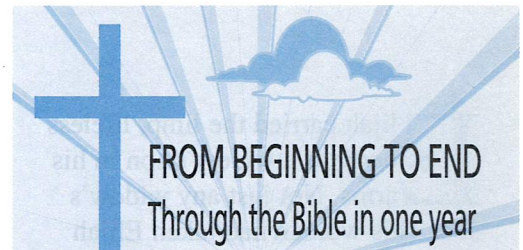
- Southwest Ocala, Fla.**—Abiding Word. Saturday worship service, 7:00 PM. Friday Bible study, 6:00 PM. Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.
- Sheridan, Wyo.**—Valley Ev. Lutheran Church. Meets at Sheridan Women's Club, 20 Tschirgi St. Sunday service, 2 PM. Sunday school and

teen and adult Bible class, 3 PM. 307/672-7599.

Yuma, Ariz.—Prince of Peace. 2500 S 8 Ave. Sunday service time for Dec.-Mar., 8:15 and 10:45 AM; Apr.-Nov., 9 AM. Alan W. Gumm, 520/726-8716.

NAMES WANTED

- Sheridan, Wyo.**—Pete Zietlow, 307/672-7599.
- Southwest Ocala, Fla.**—Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.
- Laredo, Tex.**—D. Scott Bertram, 956/727-3050.
- Japan mission field**—searching for returning Japanese who have been studying or staying abroad with whom you have been in contact. Kermit Habben, <kdhabben@cb3.so-net.ne.jp>.
- Wausau, Wis.**—Salem Lutheran Church. Roy Hoenecke, 715/845-2822.



November's readings ended the third year of "Through my Bible in three years." If you want the full listing of these readings, check out the Web site at <<http://www.wels.net/sab/firm-3yr.html>>, or contact the Commission on Adult Discipleship, 414/256-3278; <carlam@sab.wels.net>. A new one-year study follows. For a full listing, contact WELS Communication Services, 414/256-3210; <debbiek@sab.wels.net>.

January 2001

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Matthew 1-4 | 17. Gen. 8-10 |
| 2. Matt. 5 & 6 | 18. Gen. 11-13 |
| 3. Matt. 7-9:26 | 19. Gen. 14-17 |
| 4. Matt. 9:27-11 | 20. Gen. 18 & 19 |
| 5. Matt. 12-13:30 | 21. Gen. 20-22 |
| 6. Matt. 13:31-15:28 | 22. Gen. 23 & 24 |
| 7. Matt. 15:29-18:14 | 23. Gen. 25 & 26 |
| 8. Matt. 18:15-20 | 24. Gen. 27 & 28 |
| 9. Matt. 21-22:40 | 25. Gen. 29-31:16 |
| 10. Matt. 22:41-24:31 | 26. Gen. 31:17-33 |
| 11. Matt. 24:32-26:16 | 27. Gen. 34-36 |
| 12. Matt. 26:17-27:31 | 28. Gen. 37-39 |
| 13. Matt. 27:32-28 & Psalm 69 | 29. Gen. 40-41:45 & Ps. 1 & 54 |
| 14. Genesis 1-3 | 30. Gen. 41:46-43 |
| 15. Gen. 4-7:5 | 31. Gen. 44-46 |
| 16. Gen. 7:6-24 & 2 Peter | |

The Lord, our protector

The story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath shows the protecting hand of our Lord.

James A. Aderman



OUR PROTECTOR

Elijah carried the limp, lifeless body of a widow's son in his arms. Not just any widow's son. This woman had taken Elijah into her home as part of the Lord's plan to protect his prophet.

Elijah's heart staggered at the apparent unfairness. He laid the boy on his bed and cried, "O Lord my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow . . . by causing her son to die?" (1 Kings 17:20)

God protects his prophet

Permitting this death was so unlike the protecting God Elijah knew. Two and a half years before, God had whisked his prophet out of harm's way. On that day, Elijah announced to King Ahab that a drought would ravage the land until there was repentance. In an explosion of rage, wicked Ahab put Elijah at the top of his most-wanted list. His police scoured the country—and beyond. But God had safely hidden his prophet in a deep wadi called the Kerith Ravine. Ravens brought him food. The Kerith Brook provided water.

Drought seared the countryside for months. The ravens were not able to scavenge sufficient food, and the brook dried to a trickle.

But God continued his protection. He led Elijah from his hideaway on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee to a village on the shore of the Mediterranean called Zarephath. An unlikely place, Zarephath. It was under the control of the king of Sidon, the father of Ahab's queen, Jezebel, and it suffered as much from drought as Israel.

Elijah first met the widow there. She was gathering sticks for a fire. Her cupboard contained only enough oil and flour for a final meal. She intended to share it with her son. But when Elijah promised her that the Lord would continuously provide food if she would give him her last meal, she trusted him. So until the drought ended, neither her flour nor her oil was used up.

God protects us all

Yet her son now lay dead. This was not expected. Not from the Lord who protects his people from all evil—including his just punishment.

The prophet stretched himself out on the boy's body. "O Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!" he prayed. There was no change in the boy. Elijah repeated

his prayer in word and action. Still no change. Then, a third time, Elijah prayed in the same way—and the boy returned to life. The God whom King David called "my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; . . . my stronghold, my refuge and my savior" (2 Samuel 22:2,3) demonstrated that he had not changed.

"Look, your son is alive," Elijah said to the boy's mother.

Then it became clearer why the Lord allowed the boy to die. God seeks to protect more than his chosen people. The widow from this heathen culture confessed, "Now I know . . . that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For further study

1. Jesus is our good Shepherd (John 10:11-18, 25-29). From what does he promise us protection?
2. Read James 5:17,18. What does Elijah teach us about prayer?

Protect your paper bags

Becky L. Rardin

I struggle when I hear conversations about “bad” preaching. Do we have the most eloquent speakers in our pulpits? Most certainly not. If the Lord thought we needed that, I’m sure he would not have had a bunch of former fishermen tagging along with him.

I remember a sermon based on how we “have this treasure in jars of clay.” Too often we focus on the jar and not on the treasure.

As Christians living in the year 2001, we may not fully grasp what jars of clay were really all about. They were common. They were ordinary. They were not all that pretty.

Today we can probably compare them to grocery store bags. People use them for everything from carrying home groceries to packing up recycling to holding children’s little treasures. Think about what you do when you pick up that bag from your car after a trip to the market and you hear it rip. Do you just keep pulling it up? I sure don’t. I put my arms around it to protect what’s inside. My mother even repairs her favorite department store bags that need reinforcement.

Do we go that far with the “jars of clay” who bring us the best treasure every week?

Next time you feel the need to rip on your pastor’s preaching—or when you are tempted to think that the man down the road is better than the man in your pulpit—remember my little story about the paper bags. Wrap your arms around the torn, ripped, and tattered bags that God has used to carry the golden treasure of his love, forgiveness, and salvation. He wants your attention to be on the treasure—not on the method he has chosen to use to bring it to you. Tend to the messenger. Pray for him, encourage him, and listen well.

For new pastors—know that you have people who pray for you daily, some sitting in the pew and some you have never met. Be faithful in your study. Be on your knees in thanksgiving that God uses you in his ministry. Keep in constant contact with the treasure, and trust that God will accomplish his will through your preaching and teaching.

At an installation service I attended years ago, the other pastors encouraged the new candidate. Preach the Word—in season and out—we have this treasure in jars of clay—trust in the Lord with all your heart. Thank you, pastors. Your words—that priceless treasure of God’s Word—touched my heart, and I have never forgotten them.

I owe thanks to many pastors. My fellow students and I were disrespectful of the treasure and the clay jar in Saturday morning confirmation class. You, Pastor, taught us respect. I was a footloose college student. You helped me on my spiritual walk. When my entire world seemed dark, you continually reminded me of and pointed me to the promises of God. Your faithfulness to the Word still blesses me each time I am in Bible class or in worship.

Brothers and sisters, tend to your called workers. Lift them up in prayer, encourage them and their families, love them for who they are and not what you’d like them to be. In the end, it won’t matter if the sentence structures weren’t always perfect or if he wore blue socks with a black suit. Keep focused on the treasure.

Brothers in Christ, keep preaching. God will give you the words. Treasure the treasure.

[God] wants
your attention
to be on the
treasure—not
on the method
he has chosen
to use to bring
it to you.



Becky Rardin is a member at Hope, West Chicago, Illinois.



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

Not too long ago, people went to the doctor only as a last resort or when disaster struck. Now we practice preventive medicine; we take steps today to ensure good health down the road. The gospel isn't just God's tool to rescue the lost. It's also God's tool to "keep us from falling." Health care may be the topic de jour from coast to coast, but God's plan for preventive medicine is soul care. This series of Bible studies will offer a check-up. You can take it alone or with others. How healthy is your soul?

Health factor—Time with the Word of God

God's Word

- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
- For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹²It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:11-14).

1. According to the first passage, why should we pay attention to the Bible? Name as many reasons as you can.
2. Think of a specific time when the Word of God . . .
 - taught you.
 - rebuked or corrected you.
 - trained you.
3. The second passage describes a past event ("has appeared") and a future event ("we wait for"). Describe these two events in your own words.
4. We call God's commands law. We call his loving acts on our behalf gospel. Underline the words of law in Titus 2:11-14. Circle the words of gospel.

My soul for personal check-up

1. At what times in my life have I regularly spent time reading or hearing the Bible?
2. What was my life like at those times?
3. Am I satisfied with the time I spend in the Word of God now?
4. Who might help me spend more time in God's Word? How might I ask him/her?
5. What blessings might I receive by spending more time in God's Word?
6. What people in my life could be blessed by my time in God's Word?

My church for group check-up

1. Our church values the Bible highly. How do we show that to members?
2. How do we show that to visitors and non-members?
3. What do each of us, individually, do to demonstrate our high view of the Bible?
4. What can we do to ensure that our church values God's Word in the future?
5. How can we encourage those who lead others into the Word of God?
6. What might help us spend some time each day in the Word of God?

Web-med

Intriguing Web sites to help you continue your check-up.

Traveling and need to find a WELS church? Try <http://www.wels.net/sab/welsdir/wels-frmdir.html>.

Find personal and group Bible studies on-line at <http://www.wels.net/sab/frm-bibstu.html>.

Look up passages or search over a dozen Bible translations at <http://bible.gospelcom.net/>.

Randy Hunter is pastor at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.

PRAYER FOR A LIFE OF SERVICE

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
 where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 where there is darkness, light;
 and where there is sadness, joy.
 O Divine Master, grant that I may
 not so much seek
 to be consoled, as to console;
 to be understood, as to understand;
 to be loved, as to love;
 for it is in giving that we receive,
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
 (*Christian Worship*, p. 138)

Christian networking

Welcome to

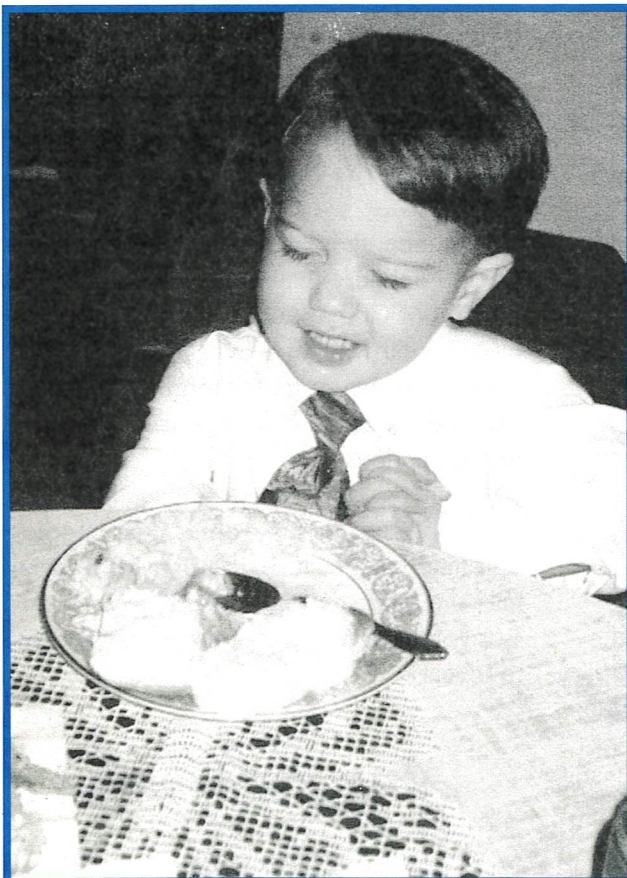
Martin Luther Church and School
 436 South Lake Street • Neenah, Wisconsin
 (920) 725-1330

Sat. 6:30 p.m.	Summer:
Sun. 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.	Sat. 6:30 p.m.
	Sun. 9:00 a.m.

If you meet me and forget me,
 you have lost nothing.
 If you meet Christ and forget Him,
 you have lost *everything*.

Members of Martin Luther Church and School, Neenah, Wis., use this double-sided business card as an evangelism tool.

Picture this



Eric Sandbakken praying before Thanksgiving dinner. Submitted by Eric's grandmother, Faith Sandbakken.

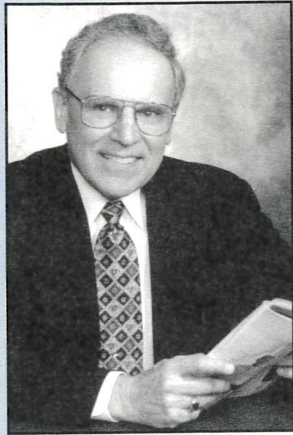
Send pictures to *Picture this*, Forward/NL, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

OBEYING LEADERS

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Hebrews 13:17

Slouching toward holiness?

“People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.” D.A. Carson (*Current Thoughts and Trends*, Oct. 2000)



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

On the subject of hate

Don't you just hate hate? I think I do. I know I do when it is aimed at me. I know I do when I see it spawn terror. I do when it darkens my own heart. But, then again, some things are hateful.

I'm not just playing with words here. The subject of hate comes up frequently in our society. We, for example, abhor hate crimes, though we seem at a loss to prevent them. In contrast, we are accused of hate when we speak out against things that are wrong.

It can all be very confusing and not a little paradoxical. Start with God. Everyone who knows a little of the Bible knows God is love. Still, he hates. God hates "all who do wrong" (Psalm 5:5). God hates "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, . . . feet that are quick to rush into evil . . ." (Proverbs 6:17,18). Jesus, too, "hated wickedness" (Hebrews 1:9).

Does that mean that God contradicts his very being? Anyone who knows the fruits of his great love knows better. In his love, God gives those he hates eternal life in glory, which means he really loves them. It all comes together and makes spiritual sense at the cross of his Son, Jesus Christ. It's a matter of (not so) simple law and gospel.

As if that's not enough to chew on, I have to deal with what this all means in my own life. If, for example, I rush into a burning house, rudely awaken a sleeping child, and save her, no one would say it was hateful to awaken the child. But if I see people whose spiritual houses are afire and try to waken those people from their sleep in unbelief and sin, I am accused of hating them.

God tells me to "hate what is evil" (Romans 12:9). "Hatred," on the other hand, is an act of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21).

Sometimes what looks like love is actually a type of hate or vice versa. God warns me that I hate my own child when I fail (supposedly in love?) to discipline him (Proverbs 13:24). God warns me not to hate my brother but still to rebuke my neighbor in his guilt (Leviticus 19:17).

I apologize if all of this sounds confusing, but I am aiming at my own confusion, society's confusion, and perhaps your own confusion in this matter. I want to tell you that there's a way out of the confusion. You'll find it back again at the cross.

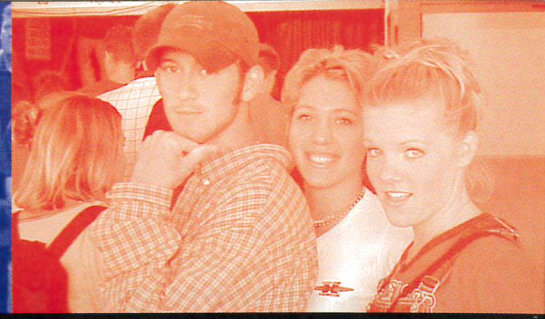
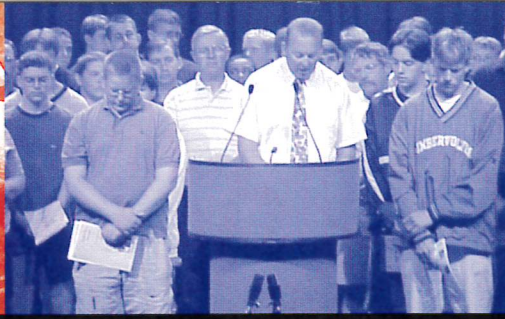
Look at Jesus on the cross and you'll know that sin has not lost any of its hatefulness, its damnable-ness. Look at Jesus, alive again after dying on the cross, and know that, in Jesus, sin has lost its power to damn and we have been freed from our need to hate.

Continue, then, to speak out against all sin and unbelief that serves only to crucify the Son of God all over again (Hebrews 6:6). In that way, hate evil. But be sure in love to tell the gospel of forgiveness to all who will listen and to let your love shine in your actions.

You may not be able to escape being the object of hate. Jesus warned that people will hate you because of him, as evildoers hate the light (Matthew 10:22, John 3:20). But you have no excuse, either, not to live in love.

Gary P. Baumler

In his love,
God gives
those he hates
eternal life in
glory, which
means he
really loves
them.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS SUMMER?

GET REAL!

WHY NOT GET REAL IN IOWA?

REAL GOD, REAL SALVATION,
REAL SERVANTS

GET REAL with 2500 friends at the
2001 WELS International Youth Rally
at Iowa State University in Ames,
Iowa, July 11-14 .

Registration forms arrived in WELS congregations
in November. Check with your pastor or
youth leader for more information. Hurry!
The registration deadline is February 15th.

Call rally coordinator Kris Snyder at 414-527-6854
or the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship at
800-884-9312 with additional questions.

Real God,
Real Salvation,
and Real Servants



GET REAL!

Heaven's camera

Old snapshots give a dying woman a chance to see the saints with whom she would soon be reunited.

Dawn J. Ferch

I wish I had a snapshot of heaven. I bet you do, too. A photo you could take out and look at when life seems unbearable. A picture you could look at even when things are going well.

In spring of 1999 Mom was dying of cancer. All of us—children, grandchildren, and one great-grandchild—visited. It was one more chance to say, “Good-bye, for now.” We went through old photos with her, reminiscing about who was pictured and when it was taken. I was making a photo album for her to keep on her bed. Whatever Mom recalled about the picture, I would write on the page. It would serve as a history of her life on earth.

Among the collection of photos we found a vintage camera, circa 1940s. It was covered in leather and folded into a slim package. When it was opened, the camera unfolded like an accordion stretched way out. We passed the camera around, and in turn fingered the case. Someone opened the camera back. My brother, Jim, noticed there was still film in the camera. He carefully rewound the old film—the paper, spool kind—and put it in his pocket. Though Jim doubted that the film was still good or that there were any exposures on it, his son took the film to the dark-room at college for development.

Only a few days before Mom died she saw those never-seen-

before photos. What wonderful photos they were! They had been taken 39 years earlier at my sister Jeannine’s confirmation. There was Dad; Jeannine, in her white confirmation gown; my grandparents; and Mom. Remarkably, they were the only people on most of the pictures.

You have to know more of the story to understand why the film was so special. Jeannine lived only seven more years after those photos were taken. She died of cancer in 1968 at age 21. Dad died suddenly only three weeks later. My grandparents passed away years later while in Mom’s care. But here they all were—as if they had never died or aged—all smiling.

Not long after viewing these lost photos of the saints who would welcome her home, Mom joined them in heaven, but not before the Lord prepared her for leaving this world with his comforting Word and Sacrament.

The Bible speaks of the Old Testament patriarchs “being gathered to their people.” This camera, which we affectionately dubbed “heaven’s camera,” helped bring that truth home to Mom



One of the photos found on “heaven’s camera.”
From left to right: Hattie Henning, Dorothy Naumann, Jeannine Naumann, Rev. John Henning, Rev. Fredrick Naumann.

and all of us in a vivid way. God’s people still live. Christ died and rose again so there would be no more aging or death for those who die in him.

And the camera? It sold in the estate sale. It served its purpose—reminding us of those who have gone before, the importance of the Christian faith they clung to, the white robe of Christ’s righteousness they wear, and the eternal joy they share.

The Lord may not give us long lost photos or family around us when he takes us home. But he has given us something even better—his personal assurance of sins forgiven and a home in heaven. It is there for all of us to view and taste in his Word and Sacrament.

Don’t let it remain undiscovered until the end of your life!

Dawn Ferch is a member at Deer Valley, Phoenix, Arizona.

Thanks to James Naumann, pastor at Divine Savior, Shawano, Wis., for his help with this article.