

FE 26 '01

FORWARD IN CHRIST

March 2001

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

Jesus Day
in Mexico

Who is Jesus?

Christ made a
decision for us



WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY
 Library
 1000 W. WATKINS CIRCLE
 MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53092

*****5-DIGIT 53092
 01 000595100 00001 2103 0803
 WISCONSIN LUTH SEMINARY LIBR
 6633 W WATBURG CIR
 MEQUON WI 53092-1530

88/3

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth

Most Lutherans and Catholics Agree?

Catholic Church and Lutheran Federation Sign Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

On October 31, 1999, in Augsburg, Germany, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation took a huge step toward bridging the nearly five hundred-year divide between them. For years these two church bodies have been divided on the central article of faith, justification by faith alone. The document hasn't brought a full agreement in doctrine or practice, but it speaks of a "convergence" in doctrine.

This is how it is recorded in the declaration's preamble #5:

The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church . . . are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.

What do we believe where this issue is concerned? What do we as Lutherans confess? In a nutshell, to be justified means that God sees (or regards) us as righteous in his eyes. Justification offers believers in Jesus assurance that they will spend eternal life in heaven.

Essentially, there are two aspects of justification, objective and subjective. Objective justification is the teaching of Scripture that when Christ died, he

really did take away all the sin of the world, and that when he rose from the dead, God declared all sinners to be justified, or forgiven, of all their sins. Objective justification holds true whether anyone believes or not. Subjective justification is the act of God using his power, by his grace, to bring faith to our hearts to receive forgiveness of sins.

Faith is the only way we receive justification from God. Our faith itself doesn't make us righteous, but it simply receives God's verdict of righteousness through his Son. Our faith in the message of the gospel allows us to receive this justification.

Rolf Preus, in a recent study on justification, examines why justification is such a dividing issue among churches. He makes clear the differences between what Lutherans and Catholics believe. He explains that Rome has not changed its teaching on justification but that the two church bodies have decided to agree on the words used and that they continue to assign different meanings to those same words. That is why each side could in good faith sign the Declaration, because each was only agreeing on a statement and not on the teaching of justification.

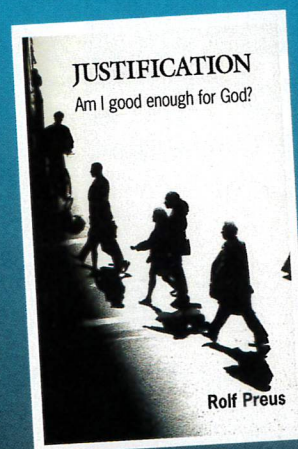
Are you interested in reading more about this subject and the issues surrounding it? Would you like to have an easy resource to refer to when defending your beliefs about justification to your Catholic friends and relatives? Or perhaps you haven't examined confessional Lutheran beliefs since your catechism instruction classes, and you want to review

how you are "good enough" in God's eyes to be justified? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then check out *Justification: Am I Good Enough for God?* This 32-page booklet, written in an easy-to-read, easy-to-understand style, is available from Northwestern Publishing House today.

Justification

Am I Good Enough for God?
by Rolf Preus

Papercover. 32 pages.
LU15N0681 . . . \$ 2.75
save 15% on 10 or more



Order online anytime at
www.wels.net/nph
or call 1-800-662-6022
(Milwaukee area 414-475-6600)
8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. weekdays.
Discover, MasterCard, and Visa accepted. All orders are subject to shipping and handling costs and sales tax where applicable.



Northwestern
Publishing House
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

For joy

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2-4

Eric S. Hartzell

“**V**ia Dolorosa” is a sad song: the way of sorrows. Jesus staggered on this way to his cross. Isaiah called him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Lent is—it can be—a sad time. But if it is only sadness, we have missed something. In fact, if it is only sadness, we don’t properly understand what Jesus did.

Sin ruins joy

The writer to the Hebrews saw joy around Jesus’ cross. Joy was there. It wasn’t just the kind of joy that tolerates a miserable experience in view of some future happiness, like a boy in a dentist chair anticipating ice cream when he is done.

Adam and Eve were happy as long as they were obedient to the God they loved. When they sinned they lost not only their innocence, but their joy. Life became a drag: something heavy they had to carry instead of something light and happy that carried them. Jesus knew the joy of obedience to his Father on his cross. “Not my will but yours be done,” he said (Luke 22:42).

Our joyful Jesus said, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:10,11). This joy says,



“Your every wish is my command.” It is the joy of obedience, the joy of love. It was there at the cross.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me,” Jesus promised (Matthew 5:11,12). “Blessed” can also be translated “happy.” The disciples, with their backs beaten bloody, rejoiced “because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). Love understands how it is possible to be glad in the face of blows suffered for loved ones. For the joy set before him, Jesus endured his cross.

Love restores joy

Arm wrestling at the time of gift giving spoils the giving. A sacrifice given unwillingly and unhappily is really robbery and not sacrifice. Jesus stressed many times that he gave his life willingly. He said about his life, his gift to us, “No one takes

it from me. I lay it down, and I take it up.” For the joy set before him! He who loves a cheerful giver himself cheerfully gave. We who receive the benefits of his sacrifice are happy when we know that Jesus made the sacrifice for us willingly.

Jesus went to the cross with joy out of love for us. Love is fertile soil for joy. Even when we disappoint him and break his heart, his love keeps on loving, waiting for the day when we, like prodigals, come back home—and forgiveness and love can once more rejoice and sing.

Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, once said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Luke 10:21). Jesus’ joy is that we, his little ones, finally understand. He rejoices when we look at his cross and see the reason for all sorrow and the reason for all joy and happiness.

The joy was set before him, and his joy makes us happy too.



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

FORWARD IN CHRIST Northwestern Lutheran

Official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

March 2001 / Vol. 88, No. 3

www.wels.net

Editorial office

Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran,
WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

FAX, 414/256-3899

<fic@sab.wels.net>

Editor

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

<garyb@sab.wels.net>

Senior Communications Assistant

Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231

<juliet@sab.wels.net>

Communications Assistant

Nicole R. Moline, 414/256-3232

<nicolem@sab.wels.net>

Seminary Consultant

R. D. Balge

Contributing Editors

J. A. Aderman, W. F. Beckmann, J. D. Buchholz,

K. A. Cherney, R. L. Gurgel, E. S. Hartzell,

R. K. Hunter, P. M. Janke, M. J. Lenz,

A. J. Panning, T. A. Westra, P. E. Zell

Art Director

Paul Burmeister

Graphic Designer

Carianne Neu

Photographs and Illustrations

Ann Thomas, p. 8; courtesy of Gene Durfey,

p. 12; PhotoDisc, p. 16; Dan Grossmann,

p. 18; Frank Ordaz, p. 32; Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

Photography, p. 36

Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran

Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran (ISSN 1526-2529) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Rates: USA—\$10; single copy—\$1.50; large print—\$24. Canada—\$10.70; single copy—\$1.61. All other countries—air mail \$34; surface mail \$26. Postage included, payable in advance to NPH. Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. For single issues, Wisconsin add 5% sales tax; Milwaukee County add 5.6% tax. Also available on audiocassette from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Ave, St. Paul MN 55107.

Subscription Services

1-800-662-6093. Milwaukee area 414/475-6600. Or write NPH, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran, c/o NPH, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

©2001 by Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran. Printed in the USA.



Cover art by Ann Thomas

8

In the quiet of Lent, reflect on the God who loved and saved you.

bits & pieces



This March, sit down; relax; pull out your Bible, hymnal, or *Forward/NL*; and reflect on the Lenten season.

- The season of Lent doesn't offer up sales or trees or shopping as Christmas does. Daniel Balge reminds us to take this quiet time to reflect on our faith and on what our Savior did for us during Lent. Read "A festival undisturbed" (p. 8).

- Although Lent happens at a quiet time on the calendar, Lent is anything but quiet. Find out more about the storm of Lent from Stephen Geiger's article, "The storm before the calm" (p. 36).

- Who is this Jesus, who gave up his life for us? A new series by retired pastor John Jeske examines that question and shows us why Jesus had to be both true man and true God. His first article is on p. 18.



"Questioning Jesus," a new series by campus pastor Thomas Trapp, starts this month. Describing his series, Trapp writes: "People are still asking Jesus questions. They asked him questions 2000 years ago and continue to ask him today. . . . My prayer is that the readers will become enriched and guided by Jesus' answers." Be enriched! Catch the article on p. 32.



Two authors end series this month: Mark Braun "looking back" at the decades through old issues of *Forward/NL* (p.14) and Jerry Kastens, giving advice and scriptural insights on raising teens, a mission that truly is possible (p.10). We thank them for informing, instructing, and inspiring us through their articles.

—JKT

features

LENT

8 A festival undisturbed

In the Lenten stillness the Holy Spirit tells my heart that Jesus endured it all for me.

Daniel N. Balge

RAISING TEENS: MISSION POSSIBLE

10 Ministering to teenagers

WELS congregations work to find a solution for teen retention.

Gerald F. Kastens

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

12 Little Juan and his book of stories about Jesus

A story depicting life in rural Mexico shows how WELS Mission to the Children helps meet Mexican children's need to learn about Jesus.

Gene Durfey

LOOKING BACK

14 Looking back to look ahead

Looking back helps us understand better where we came from and how we became what we are.

Mark E. Braun



18

CHERISHING OUR HERITAGE OF HYMNS

16 O God, our help

British hymn writer Isaac Watts made Old Testament David sing like a New Testament Paul.

Theodore J. Hartwig

CHRISTOLOGY—AND YOUR FAITH

18 Who is Jesus?

In Jesus Christ a human and a divine nature are inseparably joined.

John C. Jeske

CONTINUING EDUCATION

20 Professional development is not a luxury

More and more congregations are realizing the importance of professional development for both pastors and teachers.

Karl S. Peterson

QUESTIONING JESUS

32 Born a second time?

Conversion is God's merciful decision to choose us, not our decision to choose him.

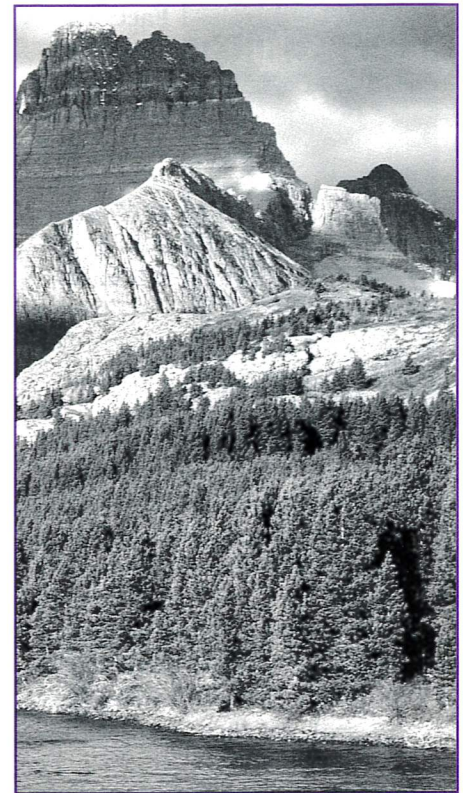
Thomas H. Trapp

LENT

36 The storm before the calm

The Lenten storm of our sinfulness and God's unrelenting law must come before the Easter calm of knowing that Jesus conquered sin for us.

Stephen H. Geiger



16

departments

3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY
For joy

6 READERS FORUM

7 EDITORIAL COMMENT
Needed: role models

22 WELS NEWS

28 WORLD NEWS

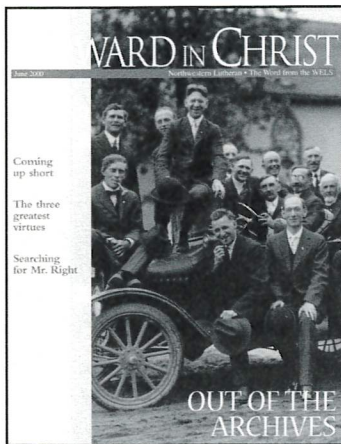
29 BULLETIN BOARD

30 BIBLE STUDY
The LORD, our comfort

31 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

33 POTLUCK

34 EDITOR'S PEN
Temptation islands



Fact: The pastor on the upper left corner of the June 2000 cover is my father—Rev. J. H. Schwartz. At the time the picture was taken, he was pastor at St. Paul,

Menomonie, Wis. I have a photo of him of earlier years to attest that it is he. When my sister saw the photo on the magazine, she excitedly asked me if I saw the picture of our father.

Fact: The pastor below, sitting on the hood of the car, is my Uncle Herb—Pastor Herbert Schaller was serving St. Katherine, Beyer settlement, at the same time.

Both the above pastors were members at the Chippewa Valley Conference and the number of pastors in the picture corresponds to the amount of pastors in that day, which leads me to conclude that the photo was taken of the Chippewa conference. My Uncle Herbert Schaller's hobby was photography as long as I can remember. Most likely he was instrumental in taking the picture. The date of the picture is about 1920.

*Mark Schwartz
Watertown, Wisconsin*

While in theory I agree with Pastor Victor Prange ["A Missing Link," Dec. 2000] that all members of WELS churches should celebrate Holy Communion as often as they are comfortable, **I disagree with celebrating Holy Communion on Christmas and Easter when we typically have our largest visitor populations.**

Prange states, "... it would seem to be important to offer the sacrament to our members who desire to commune on Christmas and Easter." We

are not only serving our WELS members, we are serving a community of unchurched individuals, who sometimes feel excluded by our practices.

While visiting another WELS church at Easter, I observed an usher talking to someone whom I assumed was a visitor attempting to take Holy Communion. After the two spoke for a moment, the woman took her purse and left. To reach out to the unchurched does not mean that we give up the sacraments that are important to us, but rather that we offer other services, such as the Sunday before Christmas, Maundy Thursday, or Good Friday, as the services that celebrate Holy Communion. I think that the Word can stand alone and be sufficient, especially in a service where we are using all our outreach tools to bring the unchurched the Word.

*Debbie Carroll
Columbia, Maryland*

I always enjoy each month's FIC magazine. **But I enjoyed November's so much I just had to tell you.**

What meant the most to me were the three "insights" features. Kelly Koepsell's "Bull's eye!" hit the target for me. He so clearly expressed, in real-life terms, the daily struggle we face as Christians. Laurie Biedenbender's "Mary and Martha and me" struck me so profoundly that I am still contemplating its rich content. I really appreciated Robert Raasch's "Church shopping." This one-page article succinctly said, non-offensively, what needs to be said to our prospects. I have already mailed several copies.

Thank you for your efforts in putting together such a valuable magazine that is so meaningful and helpful to our everyday challenges. May God continue to richly bless you as you have us with your publication.

*Jude Peck
Irmo, South Carolina*

I enjoyed reading your series "A visit to the districts." After reading the series, I can better appreciate the blessings of having several WELS churches within 10 miles. In several districts, the nearest WELS church may be 200 miles away and the nearest area Lutheran high school much further. Before the series, some of us knew much more about foreign missions thousands of miles away than about neighboring districts in North America. Learning how other districts handle concerns such as retaining members may help in one's own district.

*Steven Steuck
St. Louis Park, Minnesota*

What a great article [Heaven's children, heaven's child, Dec. 2000]! For some years now, all the "hoopla" surrounding the "secular interpretation of Christmas" has gotten me the reputation of being "the inventor of BAH HUMBUG!"

I took the liberty of modifying the paragraph on p. 9, "the joy of the moment," and made a poster, which I hung in a prominent location both in my office and on my refrigerator at home.

Now I am going to prayerfully endeavor to completely change my Christmas attitude to a joyful one!

Thank you for a great reminder of what we are really celebrating.

Karleen Wolff

Corrections: In the article "Turning discards into dollars" [January 2001], Althea's last name should read "Kuhl," not "Kubl."

Dorothy Justman graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College in 1972, not 1990 [February 2001, p. 27].

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.



Needed: role models

Armin J. Panning

Although February is the shortest month of the year, it has again given us the opportunity to stop and reflect on two great leaders of our country. Annually we observe the birthdays of President George Washington and President Abraham Lincoln. One is the “father of our country.” The other championed the cause of unity at a time when the issue of slavery touched off the tragic war between the states. Both men were heroes in their own right. Both deserve to be remembered and looked up to as models.

But in practical terms, it’s not easy for people to see themselves following in the footsteps of great national leaders. Generally, people tend to follow other, and decidedly less worthy, heroes and models.

Perhaps foremost in catching the attention of the young and impressionable are pop music artists and athletes. While there are certainly many decent, hard-working, and honest representatives of those occupations, many individuals, unfortunately, are a distinct disappointment and a negative influence.

Pop music performers all too often tend to be part of the drug culture and advocates of alternate lifestyles. Pampered athletes all too often come to feel they’re above the rules and thereby alienate fellow players, defy their coaches, and even get into serious scrapes with the law. Perhaps the crowning indication that they’ve given up their role of being models is the growing practice of enriching themselves at the expense of their admirers by selling their autographs to fans in order to pad already obscenely high wages.

Better models are needed—and they’re readily available, but in decidedly less glamorous positions and occupations. Unquestionably, the best and most influential models are Christian parents. Quietly,

day after day, perhaps without knowing it or being consciously aware of it, fathers and mothers exert tremendous influence on their children. And to the extent that the family unit is unfortunately breaking down, Christian teachers and pastors are becoming ever more important models and molders of character.

But where do these models get their strength? Who serves as a model for them? The Lenten season we are once more entering gives us the answer. In writing to the Philippians Paul says: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who . . . humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8).

In looking to Christ, however, it is absolutely essential to remember that he is much more than just a model for us. He didn’t just give us an example and then put us on our own. No, he did it all for us. He became our substitute. He was the sacrifice and payment required for our many sins and shortcomings. He did for us what we could never have done for ourselves.

Appreciation for what Christ did for us enables us now, in a small way, to reflect his love in our life of love and unselfish service to others. That’s the “attitude” Paul was looking for in the Philippians, and it’s also the kind of attitude that underlies the modeling that’s needed from us today.

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

Unquestionably
the best and
most influential
models are
Christian
parents.

A festival undisturbed

In the Lenten stillness
the Holy Spirit in his
Word and in hymns
tells my heart that Jesus
endured it all for me
and took away my sins.

Daniel N. Balge

We still own Lent outright. Let me say that again, but less baldly: Lent remains one season in the festival half of the church year (Epiphany is another) that is virtually untouched by outside influences. To be sure, not every believer understands it perfectly or observes it faithfully or proclaims it accurately, but the emphasis of Lent remains, nevertheless, overwhelmingly Christian.

A quiet time

Secular songs have not intruded. Worldly customs have not invaded. Animated cartoons do not annually distort the reason for this season beyond recognition. Oh, yes, the world makes much of the bookends on either side of Lent. It revels in a pagan Mardi Gras and peddles a secularized Easter, but it leaves Lent alone. I have yet to hear Lenten elevator music or to see a Lenten reindeer or to read that Lenten retail sales are up (or down for that matter). I hope I never do.

I hope instead that Lent remains undisturbed by the world, safe in this “tween” time between (in my latitude



at least) hard winter and warm spring. Let Lent lie quiet in the gray gap between white and green. Let her stay unpolluted by worldly interpretations and innovations.

Now please don't misunderstand. I said "undisturbed," not "unnoticed." I don't intend "quiet" to mean "not talked about." By saying "unpolluted" I am not hanging a "Christians only" sign on Lent. I do not want to hide Lent or to hog it for myself. On the contrary, I wish I were better at sharing it with those who don't know it as I do.

The Lent I know happens at a quiet time. It has room on the clock for thoughtful, careful contemplation, when—with apologies to accountants, tax attorneys, and fans of college basketball everywhere—things are less busy, not quite so hectic. Lent is snugly harbored in relative silence, moored in a stillness between the Christmas rush and summer's dash to relax. Early or late or neither, Lent takes place in a relatively calm spot on the world's bloated schedule of diversions. It opens up a niche for thoughtful meditation on the basics of my faith.

Of course, the world is not keeping the noise down out of remorse for what it has done to Christmas and Easter. It is just that Lent is a tough fit for stores and parades. The story of the tortured death of God's Son for the sins of every soul does not bring in shoppers, and it rains on parades. It runs far past all human expectation of what God should be and of what he ought to do. This is not how God acts, says their—says my—sin-warped reason. And if that is indeed how he acts, that is still just too sad for sales or celebrations.

A time to listen and ponder

So it's a quiet time. We can think

without distraction. Without distraction we can read and have read to us the story of Jesus' passion. We can listen to what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record of the Savior's suffering and death. We can be reminded that God's Son willingly endured hell for the world that God so loved. In the Lenten stillness the Holy Spirit by his Word tells my heart that Jesus endured it all for me and took away my sins.

The hymns help me— they make me—watch again as a Lamb "goes uncomplaining forth."

And in the quiet we hear the Lenten hymns so much better. We get to hear and sing and reflect on hymns that have no secular competition. The Lenten hymns, serious old friends who faithfully visit us every year, sing Scripture's central truth, the story of how God saved us. They do it in a way that enhances our worship and redirects our attention to the Word. Their tunes grip us; their lyrics penetrate our cluttered brains. They focus our faith on its core.

Once heard, can you shake off—would you want to shake off—a phrase like "If for me he slays his Son, God must have compassion" (*Christian Worship* 98)?

Imagine, and only by faith can you imagine, that this Father hands over his only Son, the perfect Son with whom he was "well pleased," to the cruelest death—and that he does it for a world that hates him. What Father's love could allow that? What Son's love could go through with that? For my soul? "What wondrous love is this!" (CW 120) answers another hymn.

The hymns help me—they make me—watch again as a Lamb "goes uncomplaining forth" and "bears shame and stripes and wounds and death, anguish and mockery and says, 'Willing all this I suffer'" (CW 100). Suddenly Isaiah's prophetic poetry comes alive, fleshed out and fulfilled. Suddenly he speaks to me across 27 centuries. Now I see what he saw in a Savior "stricken, smitten, and afflicted" (CW 127).

Isaiah occupies my thoughts until another hymn broadens the perspective with details. My faith's eyes turn toward the "sacred head now wounded" (CW 105). Now my heart views every feature of a battered Savior's face, sees a head that for me was punched by professional soldiers and for me was pierced by needle thorns. I am vividly reminded again that for me Jesus, the Son of God, "himself has freely given to shame and blows and bitter death" (CW 113).

All through this quiet, nourishing, comforting season the unstoppable playback of Lenten anthems keeps spooling in my memory's ear. They blessedly interrupt the thoughts that usually seem so important. They give new meaning to my workaday existence. They invigorate the routine of my ordinariness. The hymns gently force me to listen and to look again with renewed appreciation for the God who loved and saved me. The Word they contain restores my soul.

The world doesn't make much of Lent. I don't mind. I have seen what it's done to some of our other precious seasons. Besides, I like—no, I need—the quiet.

"Jesus, I will ponder now."

Daniel Balge is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.



MINISTERING to teenagers

WELS congregations work through many different approaches to find a solution for teen retention.

Gerald F. Kastens

There's the sound of pounding feet outside our homes and churches these days—the sound of teenagers running away from the Christian beliefs that parents and the church have taught them. Some studies estimate that less than one-third of WELS elementary students will remain active after they graduate from high school. If ever there was a time for Lutheran churches to get involved in ministry to teenagers, it is today.

Teen retention is a complex issue, and any attempt to find a solution requires multiple approaches. Here are ways that WELS congregations are responding to the need for ministering to teenagers.

Strengthening parenting efforts

Pastor James Mattek, Trinity, Watertown, Wis., feels that the crisis in ministering to youth in today's church has little to do with programs and everything to do with families. Mattek's advice is to "start early by establishing a cradle roll that provides parenting helps and nurturing resources."

He continues, "We are using the new *Christ-Light*® cradle roll curriculum to launch our congregation's parenting effort. Our intent is to follow through on our parenting

initiative by offering parenting classes for the different stages of parenting.

"Our goal right from the start is to show parents how they can comfortably and confidently teach the truths of Scripture and know the joy of teaching their children who God is and how sure his promises are."

Practicing evangelical admonition

At Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis., Pastor Michael Turriff is implementing an elders' program for teens. Turriff feels that when it comes to teenagers, many congregations fail to practice evangelical admonition.

"Teenagers who neglect Word and Sacrament after confirmation have a spiritual problem," says Turriff. "Our goal is to have spiritually mature teenagers call on their peers. We seek to lead the individual high school youth to continue to be faithful in Word and sacrament. A high school age youth would be disciplined only if despising of the Word became evident."

Involving teens in ministry

For several years, Bloomington Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., has stressed the importance of bringing people of all ages together for Bible study, fellowship, and ministry. One exciting result, says Staff Minister Gene Martens, "is the appreciation

our teens and older members have developed for one another."

Bloomington's adults and teens recently participated together in mission and service projects in Ottawa, Ontario, and Whitewater, Ariz. Martens observes that "when teenagers are given meaningful opportunities to serve the Savior, they are quick to respond. Put teenagers together with adults, and everyone benefits."

Creating a Bible study curriculum for teens

Mike Pfeifer, WELS Administrator for Youth Discipleship, believes that the low number of teens attending Bible class is the result of parents and teens not understanding the meaning of confirmation. Pfeifer believes that "it is time for churches to stress that Sunday school is for the entire family. Now that the new *Christ-Light* high school courses are becoming available, congregations will be able to offer a wealth of current relevant Bible study topics to encourage teen participation."

Attending youth gatherings

One way that Trinity, Brillion, Wis., keeps its teenagers involved and interested is by participating in synod and district youth gatherings. Pastor Ross Henzi says, "Preparation

for attending youth rallies and service events can become the glue that holds the interest of your teens.”

Establishing a mentoring program

“Today’s teenagers need adult companionship. Not every family situation today is ideal. That’s one of the reasons St. Paul initiated a youth mentoring program for ‘at risk teens’ in eighth-grade confirmation,” says Pastor John Covach, Winneconne, Wis. The pastors at St. Paul teach confirmation classes, but volunteer adult members serve as weekly mentors who listen to memory work and review weekly lessons.

Covach noted that one side benefit is that “adults and teens often become Christian friends who keep track of each other through high school and beyond. It helps keep young people connected to their home congregation.”

Making ministry to teenagers a congregation priority

The members of Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla., recognize teens as a part of their mission field. Several years ago they encouraged their pastor, Todd DeNoyer, to accept a coaching position at the community high school near the church. DeNoyer’s high school contacts and the congregation’s enthusiasm for outreach through a youth ministry have result-

ed in membership growth. If you visit Good Shepherd after school or on a Saturday night, you’ll find teenagers and adults in the youth room or actively involved in recreation somewhere on the church property.

Calling a full-time youth minister

After considerable study, St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., decided that the best way it could address ministry to teenagers was to call a full-time youth minister. According to John Parlow, one of St. Mark’s pastors, “Every ministry effort begins with careful planning.”

He continues, “Today in WELS, there are three classes of youth—the privileged, the neglected, and the ignored. The privileged are those youth who attend Lutheran elementary schools and area Lutheran high schools. This group gets the lion’s share of the budget and attention in our parishes. The youth and families who attend Sunday school and then attend public high school tend to get neglected in WELS congregations. The third group consists of the unchurched and erring, who are typically ignored because we lack the energy and commitment to create strategies and develop resources for reaching the lost. It is imperative that congregations develop plans and allocate resources for reaching

out to every youth of the congregation and community.”

In Christ the future is bright.

It’s time to recognize and meet the challenges and opportunities for ministry that God placed before us. We cannot simply mark time with the wonderful blessings that God bestowed on us in the past. Ours is a complex society that calls for a complex ministry: a ministry that requires intentional effort, planning, and innovation—a ministry that can provide an avenue for reaching out to families and touching youth.

Yet God provides simple answers to complex problems. Take heart, people of God, and be assured that “the Word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12).

As we look to the future, there is much unknown. Yet we know the One who holds the future—in him the future is bright. We who know that the cross of Christ wasn’t a tragic accident can see a future for Christian teens who have grown into adults who are “rooted and built up in Christ.” If God wills it, God can do it. If we will it, God can do it among us.



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

WELS baptized babies confirmed: 67%



WELS homes that have daily Bible study or devotions: 6%



Number of 2001 confirmands that will become inactive by the first Sunday after Memorial Day: 40%



WELS teens who attend formal Bible study: 6%



WELS members who attend church on Sunday: 45%



Adult WELS members who attend formal Bible study: 15%



WELS congregations (514) that offer teen Bible class opportunities: 42%



Statistics taken from the 1999 WELS Statistical Report and Parish Services.

Little Juan and his book of stories about Jesus



A story depicting life in rural Mexico shows how WELS Mission to the Children helps meet Mexican children's greatest need—learning about Jesus.

Gene Durfey

One of the boys in Mexico that Mission to the Children serves. Families receive food, clothing, medicine, Bible, and other exposure to God's Word through Mission to the Children

Little Juan was sitting on a rock outside his house, warming himself in the morning sun. It was November. The night had been cold, and the fire had gone out in the tiny fireplace. He had huddled on the dirt floor, together with his mother and father, his brothers and sisters, under their one threadbare blanket, trying to keep warm. But the chilly night air had crept in from the desert through the cracks between the broken bricks, licking at his hands and feet and face. When the neighbor's rooster woke him shortly after dawn, frost was on the ground and on their blanket. He was shivering cold. But now he was sitting in the sunshine, eating a tortilla filled with beans, and feeling better.

Then the thought came to him. Today was Saturday. Jesus Day! Juan let out a yelp and ran into his

tiny one-room house, bubbling with excitement, to remind his mother. Of course, she had already remembered. She was trying to get the wrinkles out of his little sister's only dress, which she had washed by hand the day before.

An hour later everyone was ready. They walked to the road together, Juan holding his older sister's hand. There they waited for a ride. The meeting place was in a village more than 15 miles away. They went every Saturday to learn about Jesus. But today was special because the gringos, who came twice each month, would be there, too.

Juan was happy. The sun warmed his back, and the tortilla had warmed him inside. He'd known hunger pangs most of his young life. Sometimes they were dull, sometimes sharp, but always present. For the

last year, the gringos gave food to the neediest families of the area twice a month. Now he usually had at least one meal every day, and the stomachaches had stopped.

The truck finally appeared, already overstuffed with families from Saric. They bounced down the badly paved road and soon came into Cerro Prieto. Finally, the little house came into view. The gringo's red Suburban was already there, people milling around, adults visiting, children laughing, chasing, playing.

Soon Juan sat down on the ground with 10 or 12 other children his age and his teacher, who was one of the mothers of the village. The children grew silent as the woman told them about Jesus stilling the storm on the lake. Jesus truly was the Son of God! Little Juan thought about the powerful storms that swept across the desert and lashed at his house with pounding sheets of rain, blinding flashes of lightning, and ear-splitting thunder. He imagined Jesus standing in the rain outside his house, holding up his hands, and saying, "Peace! Be still!" He closed his eyes and saw the rain stop and the storm move away to the west, sunshine streaking

through the clouds.

When the teacher asked questions, all the children wanted to answer. "Jesus has strong power over the winds and the waves!" "Jesus loved his disciples and saved them in their trouble!" "Jesus loves us, too, and saves us out of our storms!" "Jesus showed his great love for us by dying on the cross to save us!"

Juan eagerly filled out his worksheet with a stubby green crayon that had the paper wrapper peeled off. He folded his hands, closed his eyes, and repeated the prayer after the teacher. Then the Lord's Prayer. Then he worked hard at memorizing the Bible passages for the day.

After the Bible story, little Juan went to play with his friends. One gringo had brought a baseball and bat. He gave his Bible lesson to his mother to hold. Juan kept all of his lessons. He was making his own little Bible. He told one gringo that he kept the lessons so that if he ever learned to read, he could read a lesson to himself every day. If he had a family of his own someday, he would read the stories about Jesus to his children.

The gringo watched as the children played baseball on the dirt road. After little Juan had hit the ball and run home, the gringo motioned for him to come over.

The gringo held out his hand, and together they walked over to the gringo's car. The gringo reached inside, brought out a book, and held it out to little Juan.

Shyly, Juan took it. "It's a Bible," the man said. "It's full of stories about Jesus. It's in Spanish. It's for you, Juan. For your children."

A big smile began to creep across Juan's face but then stopped. "But I cannot read," he answered, frowning.



Children hold up New Testaments distributed by Mission to the Children. So many people want God's Word in Mexico that the mission is unable to keep New Testaments in stock.

The gringo smiled. "One day you will, Juan. One day you will."

Juan looked at the new book, so fresh and clean, in his little hands. Tears began to trickle down his face, leaving white streaks through the dust on his smooth brown cheeks. He looked up at the gringo, who was still smiling. "*De nada*," the gringo said, nodding: "You're welcome."

A moment later, the other children had gathered. They passed the Bible around, running their hands over the smooth paper cover, looking at the bright white pages with black print. The older children would find a page and read some lines for the others. One after another, they asked the gringo, "Do you have a Bible for me too, Gringo? Is there one for me?"

The gringo smiled and nodded. He climbed into the Suburban and emerged with a large brown box. When he opened it, the children saw that it was full of Bibles, just like Juan's. Excitement rippled through the crowd of kids, drawing more children and some of the mothers. A forest of brown arms and hands reached up for the books as the gringo passed them out as fast as he could. The children ran to show their mothers their new treasures. Excited chatter and laughter were heard all around.

Soon the baseball game began again. Mothers visited with each other and with the gringos. Volunteers distributed bags of food. Activity swirled around one small boy, who sat on the edge of the Suburban's tailgate, tear streaks on his face, clutching his new book . . . full of stories about Jesus.

This story about "little Juan" is constructed from details of several different experiences that the author encountered while working with Mission to the Children in Mexico.



Gene Durfey is coordinator of the Mission to the Children program.

WELS Mission to the Children provides Bible stories every week for more than 1,000 children in towns and villages across northern Mexico and has distributed hundreds of Spanish Bibles. Extra-budgetary offerings provide funds for printing the Bible lessons and purchasing Bibles. These people love God's Word and want to read and study the Bible. For more information, write WELS Mission to the Children, PO Box 42223, Tucson AZ 85733; 520/575-0492.



LOOKING BACK TO LOOK AHEAD

Looking back helps us understand better where we came from and how we became what we are. It may also help us say something about our future.

Mark E. Braun

Whatever else can be learned from reading old issues of *Northwestern Lutheran* (NL), one lesson becomes clear: even outstanding church leaders have not necessarily been good predictors of the future.

One professor, for example, expected in 1936 that for at least “another generation or more” many churches would demand German worship services and “actually stand in need of them” because members would not receive comparable spiritual blessings from English sermons.

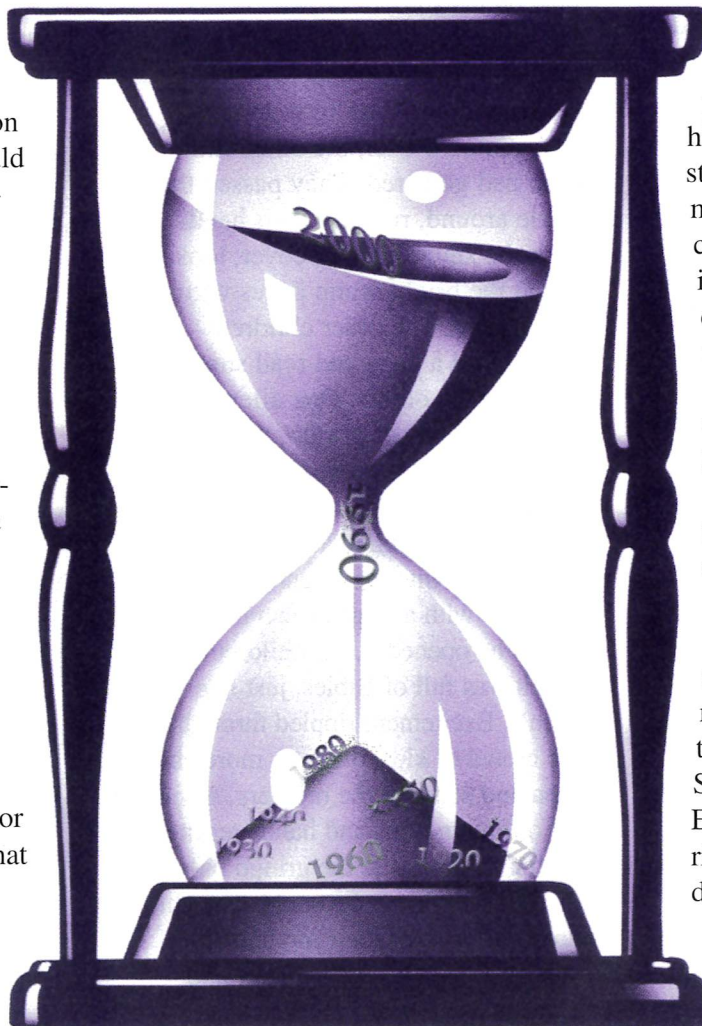
It took until 1960 for our seminary’s faculty to change the title of its theological journal to the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, though it retained its German subtitle. “In our own circles,” insisted editor Paul Peters, “the German name ‘*Quartalschrift*’ will undoubtedly still and always be used.” Only eight years later, however, new editor Armin Schuetze announced that “*Quartalschrift*” was being dropped because “a bilingual title if the periodical is not bilingual can be confusing.”

Looking back on decades of the last century helps us understand better where we came from and how we became what we are. Looking back may also help us say something—cautiously—about our future.

Men

Time reported late last year that male enrollment in higher education dropped steadily during the 1990s, and men now make up only 44 percent of undergraduate students in the United States. Possible causes include “a dearth of male role models among schoolteachers” and “a culture that promotes anti-intellectualism among boys.” One caption read, “Men sit quietly in this University of Georgia class as women dominate discussions.”

It has often been regarded as a truism that “women are more religious than men.” Writing for the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* in 1991, Edward H. Thompson summarizes numerous studies on gender differences in spirituality: “Among women, religion appears to be more salient to everyday activities, personal



faith is stronger, commitment to orthodox beliefs is greater, and involvement in religious ritual and worship is more common than among men."

Leon Podles, author of *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*, concludes chillingly: "Despite the constant complaints of feminists about the patriarchal tendencies of Christianity, men are largely absent from the Christian churches of the modern Western world. Women go to church; men go to football games."

WELS has not escaped the problem. Pastor Wayne Mueller noted in the Sept. 1999 *Forward/NL* that home and society offer little positive definition of manhood, and male sport and entertainment figures are "generally poor role models." In our churches "many fathers and sons neglect God's voice." Though Bible class attendance has doubled in WELS congregations over the last seven years, fewer men than women attend. Most disturbing is that "elected male leaders of our congregations come to Bible classes less often than those who elect them."

A positive countermeasure has arisen in the growing number of WELS men's retreats. Participants comment favorably on practical insights gained and cross-generational connections formed as husbands, fathers, sons, and friends gather around Scripture.

NL often addressed women's role in home and church. Fears were voiced over women who might "usurp" men's authority. Isn't it ironic that churches stand to be hurt much more by men abandoning them than by women overtaking them?

Mission

"Wisconsin" remains an apt moniker for our synod. More than 226,000 of our 406,000 baptized members reside in the three districts that bear the name "Wisconsin," and another 102,000 live in the two districts immediately east and west. German is still our prevailing ethnic background. If you doubt that, scan the names in any graduating class from our colleges or the seminary.

Yet we have grown to be a national and international church body during the last five decades, and we pray and work to become more so. We can

Writers examine past, present, and future trends

• Richard Schleicher: "Twenty years ago, people were moving from the cities to the suburbs. In many ways our WELS mission program responded to that flight. The bulk of our activity since the 1970s has been in the suburbs as new churches were established to serve our ever-expanding cities. In many ways we have been quite successful in ringing these major metropolitan areas with WELS missions. . . . Should we forsake the urban centers of the United States and Canada in favor of the suburbs? Are we being faithful to the Great Commission in doing so?" [Feb. 2000 *Forward/NL*]

• Paul Kelm: "Because post-modernism has rejected reason and objectivity as any explanations for life, young adults are typically not impressed with doctrinal arguments and historical claims to be 'right.' Postmodernism treats history as merely political or religious propaganda. What young people are looking for is a genuine experience of love. . . . To a postmodern world the church itself is the first evidence of its truth, when it lives out the power and love of that truth. . . . Truth doesn't change to fit culture. But the way the church introduces people to the truth is affected by culture" [Dec. 1998 NL].

expect more stories like that of Carlos Roque, a new WELS member in El Paso, Tex., who admitted he still had "a long way to go" regarding his cultural heritage [Nov. 1997 NL].

"I still love those old cathedrals. I still want to celebrate my saint date." His "nationalistic sentiments" sometimes urge him to go back to Catholicism. But "every Sunday I go to church," Carlos said, "and the congregation, formed by people of several races, reminds me that we are all God's children." He has learned to love God because he now trusts God's love through Jesus.

Pheng Moua, Hmong Lutheran pastor ordained in 1999, learned that "keeping the culture is one thing and serving the things controlled by Satan is another. I can be a Christian and still keep my identity as Hmong" [Jan. 2000 *Forward/NL*].

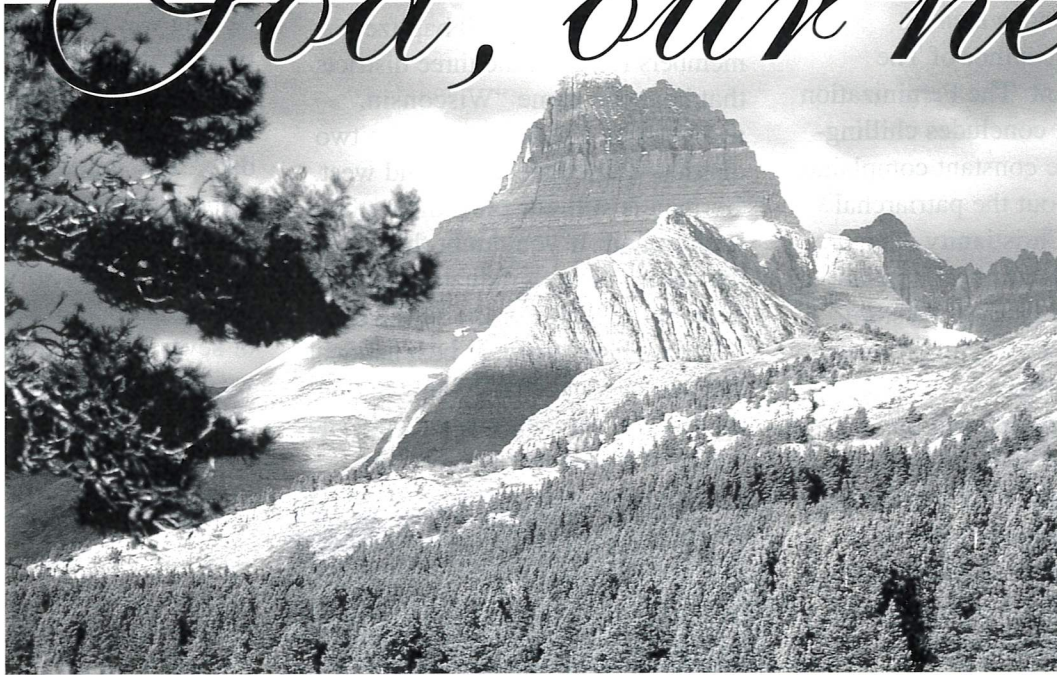
WELS may remain a predominantly Germanic church body for decades to come, and we need not apologize for that. The challenge lies in "making people more like Christ, not more like us," as one inner city pastor put it [Dec. 1993 NL]. A teacher of English as a Second Language added, "We honor other people when we make an effort to learn their language and their culture" [Feb. 1998 NL].

John Eich quoted Dr. Francis Schaeffer as writing that "the church today needs not only an orthodoxy of doctrine" but also "an orthodoxy of community" [Sept. 2000 *Forward/NL*]. Christians constitute a fellowship of forgiven men and women. As the makeup of the synod and the country itself changes, we must join orthodox doctrine with an unconditional love and acceptance of others.



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

O God, our help



British hymnwriter Isaac Watts made Old Testament David sing like a New Testament Paul.

Theodore J. Hartwig

Of the 623 hymns in *Christian Worship*, just under 200 have a German origin, just over 200 a British, chiefly English, origin.

British Protestantism grew out of the Reformation in Switzerland. Here, John Calvin's influence dominated Christian teaching and life and matters of divine worship. Calvin aimed at a totally reformed church, rid of all that smelled Catholic. Therefore, no organs, no choirs, no singing in harmony, but no chanting either. Also, songs from the inspired book of Psalms were faithful to the psalm texts but not to psalm poetry,

for that would require chanting. Rather, psalms were remodeled into the poetry of meter and rhyme.

This rigorism could not be comfortable with Luther's free treatment of Psalm 46 in "A Mighty Fortress." There was too much invention in Luther's hymn, even going so far as to include the name of Jesus. By Calvin's rules, Old Testament songs should not be clothed in New Testament dress. Humanly made poetry, not being inspired like the psalms, is liable to error. Therefore the safest, and correct, route is to stick to the inspired Scripture text.

The influence of rigorism

Based on such law-shaped theology, which treated the gospel as a new law, Calvin's reformation got off on the wrong foot. The results were predictable, because rigorism feeds on itself. British Christianity frayed into sects, bringing forth also the excesses of Puritanism, which tried to regulate all Christian life: rules about eating, dressing, speaking, recreation, and so on.

To the unknowing, rigorism and Christian confessionalism seem cut from the same cloth. But rigorism obeys God's laws for the sake of

obedience. Confessionalism, by contrast, is bound to the saving treasure of Scripture out of loving single-mindedness that the precious Word and work of Jesus be in no way darkened, diluted, or destroyed.

As for hymn singing in British churches, it became a dreary business with its steady diet of rhymed hymns made unfailingly the same in their meter and often crabbing the poetry to keep faithful to the psalm text. Nevertheless, many resisted any tampering with the tradition—and became victims of thoughtless rote worship. Others lost all interest in worship—and in Christianity.

But some yearned for songs that glorified their Lord Jesus Christ. Not until the late 1600s did they find a champion, and a natural-born poet, in the person of Isaac Watts. This physically frail bachelor clergyman took the lead in liberating English hymn singing from its 150-year long Calvinistic confinement. Thus he became known as the father of English hymnody.

The influence of Isaac Watts

Exhibiting the conservative spirit of a Luther, Watts made no radical break from venerated British tradition. He composed hymns from the Psalms. But he wrote better poetry and, with Luther's freedom, made Old Testament David sing like a New Testament Paul.

Of more than 600 hymns written during his lifetime of 74 years, the majority drawn from psalm texts were done by 1709, just before his 35th year. All in all, they exhibit his joy in created nature, his respect for the majesty of God, his love for the name of Jesus, and his gratitude for the cross of Christ.

Christian Worship contains 21 of his hymns, more than from any

other British composer. They're based chiefly on the Psalms.

Hymn 84 shows his free way to make Psalm 72 sing in New Testament language. The psalm describes how far Solomon's rule will extend and how many nations will serve him. With Watts this becomes:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does its successive journeys run. . . .
People and realms of ev'ry tongue
Praise his great love with sweetest
song.

Watts' popular Christmas hymn "Joy to the World," made more popular by its tune from the pen of a world class composer, remodels Psalm 98. Hymn 374, "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need," on the other hand, sticks close to the words of Psalm 23. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (CW 125) expresses Watts' gratitude for his Savior's death and does it in poetry that has no superior among English hymns.

O God, Our Help

Better known and probably his most majestic hymn, supported also by a muscular tune, is "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" (CW 441). It is based on the prayer of Moses in Psalm 90, the most epic of all psalms. In Watts' hymn, the psalm's majestic first sentence, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations," becomes

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Both psalm and hymn invert the normal way of speaking. They sing not of God's living in us as his temples but of our living in God. This insight is clarified in stanza 2:

Under the shadow of your throne
Your saints have dwelt secure;

Sufficient is your arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Enlarging on the psalm's second verse, "From everlasting to everlasting you are God," stanza 3 of the hymn proclaims:

Before the hills in order stood
Or earth received its frame,
From everlasting you are God,
To endless years the same.

Watts heightens to a more radical contrast the psalm's familiar comparison of a thousand years being, in God's sight, less than a day.

A thousand ages in your sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends
the night
Before the rising sun.

In stanza 5 Watts renders the psalm's well-known description of life's brevity at 70 or 80 years into this unforgettable picture:

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Soon bears us all away;
We fly, forgotten as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

Watts turns the psalm's final prayer into two closing lines, which capture the message of the entire psalm:

Still be our guard while
troubles last
And our eternal home.

This hymn sounds a vital message for our contemporary, evolutionary-obsessed society. As in the Lord's Prayer, the name of Jesus is conspicuous by its absence. Yet this hymn, like the prayer, touches God's heart only when it comes from hearts touched by the forgiving love of Jesus.



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

Christology (kris-TO-lo-ji) is not an everyday word for most of us. It's the Bible teaching that answers the question: Who is Jesus Christ? Your answer to that question determines where you spend eternity. This series of articles will try to help you see that who Jesus is determines whether or not he can save sinners.

WHO IS JESUS?

In Jesus Christ a human and a divine nature are inseparably joined.

John C. Jeske

Some time ago a prominent American theologian was asked: “What do you see in Jesus Christ?”

He answered: “I see in Jesus Christ the kind of person I know I should be.”

Jesus is a real human being

His answer is half right. Jesus is a human being. He spent nine months in the womb of his virgin mother, taking on a body that had her genes and likely her hair color. Jesus had eyebrows, elbows, fingerprints, two kidneys, and a beating heart. He grew out of his clothes each year, as he matured from infancy to childhood to teen to adult. Just like us.

Lutheran Christology emphasizes, first, that Jesus has a human nature. He not only was, but still is, a human being, ruling over the world in a resurrected and glorified body of flesh and blood. Unlike ours, however, the conception and birth of Jesus was not the result of a union of male and female. Seven centuries before Christ was born, the prophet Isaiah foretold: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given” (Isaiah 9:6).

A special gift of God’s powerful love enabled Christ to be born to a

pure virgin. This was necessary if he was not to bring sin with him into the world, as you and I did, born of father and mother. If Mary was just another girl “in trouble,” you and I don’t have a Savior.

Jesus is God in human form

That Jesus is a human being is so obvious that nobody has difficulty recognizing him as such. It’s a different matter, however, when it comes to recognizing that Jesus also has a divine nature. Many nominal Christians are willing to call Jesus “the Son of God” but back off when it comes to calling him “God.”

The Scripture shows no such hesitation, nor does Lutheran Christology. In Psalm 45 David addresses the Messiah and says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever.” Three hundred years later Isaiah (7:14) foretold: “The virgin will . . . give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Hebrew for “God with us”). In describing the high privileges the ancient Israelites enjoyed, the apostle Paul comments: “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised” (Romans 9:5).

Two natures inseparably joined

The human nature and the divine nature of the God-Man don’t exist side by side, like two boards glued together, two pieces of lumber that have absolutely no connection to each other. Christ’s two natures are more like body and soul in a human being. Christ’s divine nature so permeates and penetrates his human nature that the two together make one person. In Jesus Christ a human and a divine nature are inseparably joined. This is biblical Christology. This is Lutheran Christology.

Satan knows something that casual observers of religion in America don’t know. This basic teaching about the person of our Lord is the bedrock on which Christian faith and hope rest. Church history makes it clear that the teaching of the personal union of the two natures in Christ (the human and the divine) was one of the first teachings to be attacked while Jesus was still on earth.

When he told the religious leaders of ancient Jerusalem: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), they picked up stones to stone him. In Bible times, that was the penalty for blasphemy, for mocking God. About

four centuries later, Arius, a church leader in Alexandria, Egypt, carried half of the church with him when he denied that Jesus of Nazareth had a divine nature. This Arius taught that Jesus Christ was only a man—so perfect that his followers called him divine—but still only a man.

Only three options

When Jesus preached and taught, some of his countrymen said, “He is out of his mind” (Mark 3:21). In plain English: “He’s mad!”

Others took an even more unflattering view. “You are demon-possessed,” they told Jesus (John 7:20). In other words, “You’re in league with the devil; you’re bad.”

But God saw to it that there were others who recognized Jesus for what he claimed to be. A week after Christ rose from the dead, the disciple Thomas confessed, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Those are the only three realistic options a person has when he or she seeks to evaluate the words and the work of Jesus. He is either mad or he is bad or he is God. But let us not

insult him by calling him “the greatest teacher the world has ever known” or “the kind of man I know I should be.” God has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to.

This basic teaching about the person of our Lord is the bedrock on which Christian faith and hope rest.

Logical difficulties

The minute we begin to run this through our mind, we’re confronted with logical difficulties. God born in a barn that reeked of manure and sheep? In Bethlehem the Almighty became helpless? He who sustains the universe is dependent for his nourishment on one of his creatures? Does it make you feel uncomfortable to think of Jesus as a baby who needed his diapers changed? Is it reasonable to believe that the all-knowing God had to learn his Bible passages and the

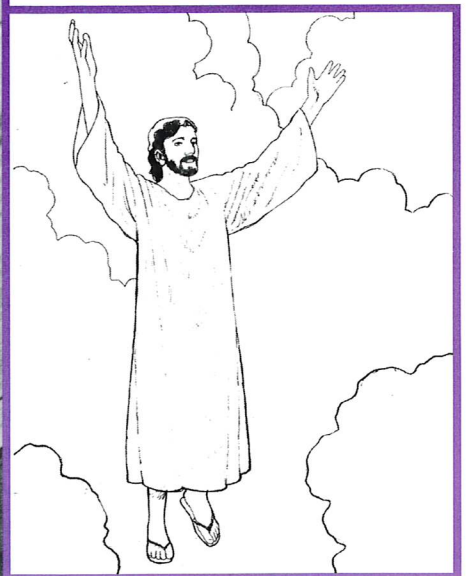
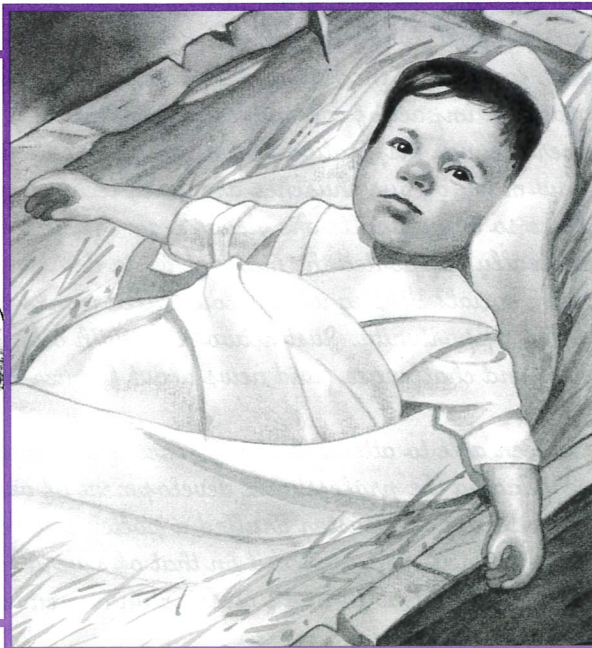
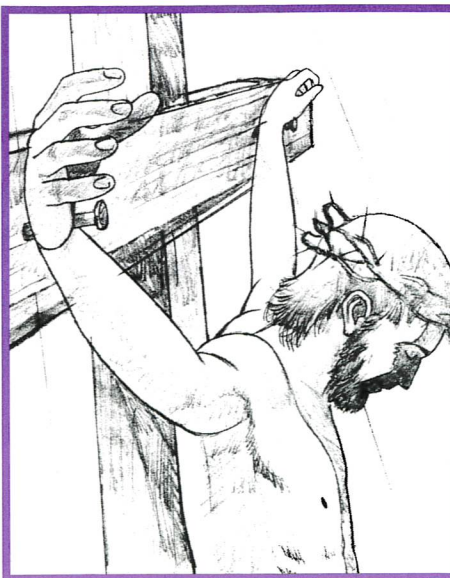
multiplication tables?

Lutheran Christology simply states the truth God has revealed to us about the God-Man without trying to explain that truth. It’s enough for us to know that it makes sense to God. We’re reminded once again that God is a hidden God, who has told us no more about himself than he feels we need to know. Is he under obligation to us to provide a rational explanation for everything he tells us? He doesn’t owe us an explanation. He doesn’t owe us a nickel. If something the Bible teaches causes problems for your reason, then remember to do, as Martin Luther suggests: “Give the Holy Spirit credit for being smarter than you are.”

In God’s great plan for rescuing sinners, there was a reason why his Son had to be both God and a human being. Jesus’ dual nature gives authority to what he says. Still more, it gives validity to the life he lived for us and to the death he died as our substitute.



John Jeske, a retired pastor, is a member at St. Luke, Watertown, Wisconsin.



Professional development is not a luxury

2001 budget	
Communion Supplies	\$300.00
Paper Bulletins	\$100.00
Meditations	\$100.00
Miscellaneous	\$350.00
Ministerial Staff Per Diem	\$200.00
Professional Development	\$3,000.00
Organists	\$2,000.00
Guest Preachers	\$815.00
Cantate Choir Music	\$400.00
Handchimes Music	\$250.00
Worship Supplies	\$650.00

Do you encourage and support your called workers in getting continuing education to help them in their ministries? The following letter from a teacher to her brother gives you an idea of the benefits.

Karl S. Peterson

July 20, 2001

Dear Jim,

I'm back home after four great days at the WELS Tech 2001 conference in Appleton, Wis. It was sunny and 76 degrees. Here it's a hot 112 degrees. What a reality check! It's too bad you weren't able to attend. I picked up several quality ideas to improve my teaching this fall. Each conference participant received a CD/ROM that includes most of the sessions. After I review it, I'll send it on to you.

Alan November, nationally known technology leader, was the opening keynote speaker. It was inspiring to hear someone from outside our circles urge us to use emerging technologies to carry out our mission. I attended sessions on designing a Web site for our school, using technology to transform teaching, and keeping young students safe while they access the Internet. Professor Ronald Buelow's keynote reminded us to give God the credit for our perfectly ordered universe and the technology originating from it, and David Walsh, founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family, gave sobering insights about the impact of communications technology on our society.

The closing worship service was inspirational! The singing sent chills down my spine. I didn't realize how many of our churches are using technology as a tool in service of the gospel. Since so many adults are visual learners, the service's PowerPoint presentation really supported the message being delivered.

Did I forget the ice cream social? Visiting with fellow called workers was encouraging since I don't often have that opportunity. Just networking with other WELS called workers, sharing our joys and challenges (and news about former classmates) made attendance beneficial.

Jim, I would not have been able to attend the conference if our church council had not adopted a policy encouraging the professional development of our called workers. Two years ago our principal and our pastor drafted a policy to present to the board of education and the church council. They based it on that of several other WELS congregations. It rests on the belief that, with God's blessing on our endeavors, we will

better serve the members of our congregation by continually increasing our knowledge and skills.

In addition to participation in our WELS conference and district sessions, additional opportunities are provided to us annually. Last year, you probably remember that I attended the American Society for Curriculum Development's national conference. As an outcome of that conference, we've improved our math curriculum significantly. The church council now has a line item (this year \$3,000) in our annual budget for called workers' professional development.

The discussion about this was intense. Our church budget has been strained the last several years. The new church roof set us back. Health insurance costs continue to accelerate. One council member stated, "After 12 years in school they should know what there is to know." When I heard that, I smiled, knowing that his citrus operation is using Global Positioning Systems for watering and fertilizing the trees.

You met Dale Watkins when you were here. He made a strong case that his company's mission would not succeed without ongoing professional development opportunities for each of his employees.

A key point in convincing the board and council to adopt and fund the policy was the accountability built into it. I will be making a detailed report on my attendance at WELS Tech 2001 to our faculty. Also, a brief written report will be provided to our board and council. It's important to share what sessions I attended, what information I gained, and how this will be used to improve teaching and learning.

In addition, I will design one application for the classroom that can be shared with the other teachers in our conference at our next district teachers' conference. That way, the benefit of my attending extends beyond our congregation.

In talking with others, it seems that more and more congregations are realizing the importance of ongoing professional development. In some congregations, rather than adding to the budget, the cost is funded by special offerings, the efforts of organizations such as the Ladies Society, or gifts and memorials. I'll send you a copy of our policy statement. Maybe that will help you open this topic again with your board and council.

Hope you're doing okay despite all the rain. I'm looking forward to Labor Day weekend and our being together. Don't give up on encouraging your board and council. Funds are tight, and some may still consider professional development a luxury. I just know my students are better served as I become better prepared. Take care.

Love,
Pis

Karl Peterson is a member at Grace, Casa Grande, Arizona.

EXAMPLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND GUIDELINES (NON-COURSE ENROLLMENT)

Policy

It is the policy of Shepherd of the Desert to budget annually an increasing amount of professional development funding for allocation among its called workers. Budgeted funding not used in the current cycle will be carried over into the next budget. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Administrative guidelines

Eligible participant(s) (next in the rotation) will have 60 days to indicate interest in funding. If none is indicated, eligibility will pass to the next eligible participant(s) in the sequence.

Requests for participation will be made by the pastor/vicar to the congregational president, by the teaching staff to the principal.

Requests (including an itemized, estimated list of expenses) are to be made at least 45 days in advance.

Funded participants will provide the following accountability of their professional development activity:

1. Pastor/vicar will report to the church council, teaching staff to the faculty (report will include information on general sessions, specific sessions attended, vendors/exhibitor information, etc.).
2. Participants will prepare one activity based on their professional development to enhance the work of the church council or faculty (e.g., teacher prepares a lesson on a new math procedure, pastor shares an evangelism technique with the council).
3. Participants are encouraged to share information gained with other called workers through presentations at local, regional, and national pastors'/teachers' conferences.
4. A brief summary of the professional development activity will be included in the next issue of the *Shepherd's Staff* newsletter.

Does your congregation have a "Called Workers Professional Development Policy"? Please send a copy to K. Peterson at 2119 N Lake Shore Dr, Casa Grande AZ 85222 or <speaker@c2i2.com>.



Martin Luther College graduates

On Dec. 21, 2000, 13 students graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Those receiving Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degrees were in the teacher track. Gary Young, who received a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree, was in the pastor track.



Jeannette D. Berger
New London, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Lisa D. Gawrisch
New Berlin, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Tiffany L. Gehl
Hubertus, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Daniel J. Kasten
Marinette, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



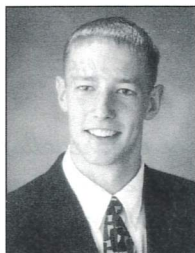
Rachel K. Olson
Royal Oak, Mich.
B.S. in elementary-early
childhood education



Katherine M. Pelischek
Fort Atkinson, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Beth A. Rahmlow
Two Rivers, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Matthew L. Schiebel
Milwaukee, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Joshua T. Schmidt
Winthrop, Minn.
B.S. in elementary
education



Rosemary A. Snyder
Sauk City, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education



Gary M. Young II
Milwaukee, Wis.
B.A.

NOT PICTURED

Joshua D. Gregovich
Wauwatosa, Wis.
B.S. in elementary
education

Beth M. Koelpin
New Ulm, Minn.
B.S. in elementary
education

Rebecca R. Schlieve
Watertown, Wis.
B.S. in elementary-
secondary education

Timothy J. Schultz
West St. Paul, Minn.
B.S. in elementary
education-staff ministry

Assignments for MLC graduates:

Berger, Jeannette D., Christ the Lord,
Clearwater, Fla.

Koelpin, Beth M., St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
Schlieve, Rebecca R., Manitowoc Lutheran
High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

Schmidt, Joshua T., St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.

Special and different

Eugene Ludwick's accent gives him away immediately. He is not from the United States, making him different from most of the other employees at the synod administration building in Milwaukee.

Yet, something about Ludwick is not particularly different from many of his co-workers, but is special, nonetheless. It is his Christian attitude, his love for his Savior that radiates from him and directs his life.

Who better to organize WELS' Forward in Christ (FIC) thank offering projects? Ludwick himself says, "The Forward in Christ celebration is a time to do things that are special and different. The thank offering projects are a collection of projects that we [WELS members] could not get around to in our ordinary days. Everyone is too busy. Yet, if we just had the time or money, we could . . . but there never seems to be enough time or money. So, FIC will find workers to do the work. It will cut through the red tape and will find bodies and spirits that can help so we can do special and different things."

Ludwick's job as FIC administrator is to oversee FIC operations on behalf of WELS President Karl Gurgel, the FIC project director. This job will take many forms. Ludwick will organize the project requests as they come in. He will also track approved projects, making sure that money is distributed properly. Once projects are begun, Ludwick will oversee their execution, although he is quick to add, "I will not be a micro-manager of individual projects. I will be a facilitator."

Ludwick left his home in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada, to begin work at the synod administration building in January. His wife, Trudy, and 18-year-old son, Evan, are staying in Canada while Evan finishes his senior year in high school.

While in Canada, Ludwick specialized in transportation management and marketing. He explains, though, that "life in the secular business world was wearing thin. From being on church committees, I noticed that when a meeting begins with prayer, things go better. I wondered why I



Gene Ludwick jumped right in and immediately began familiarizing himself with the Forward in Christ (FIC) thank offering projects he is overseeing as FIC administrator.

was doing boring secular work when I could be serving the Lord."

Ludwick concludes by saying, "Playing an important role in outreach to those who don't know the Lord is exciting. It gives me an opportunity to use my worldly skills to help called workers cut through worldly challenges so that they can do the Lord's work."

And that is special.

How can you get involved in these special and different projects? To find out, contact Gene Ludwick at 414/256-3250, <eludwick@sab.wels.net>.

From the archives

The synod archives at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, have hundreds of pictures depicting the synod and its members throughout the years. Unfortunately, many pictures are unidentified. Think of how much more valuable these photos would be if we knew when and where they were taken and who are on them.

Do you know who any of the people in these pictures are? How about where or when these pictures were taken? Let us know. Contact the synod archives at 262/242-8116; <archives@wls.wels.net>. The archives are staffed from 1 to 5 PM, Monday through Friday.

Do you have any pictures, documents, or artifacts that you would like to donate to the archives? Please label and send them to WELS Archives, 6633 Wartburg Cir, Mequon WI 53092.





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:

Serving our schools

Although he “drifted” into the ministry, Armin John Panning sure is rooted into preparing others for that same calling.

A 1957 seminary graduate, Panning, an editorialist for *Forward/NL*, may have started down the pastor track because he preferred Latin to piano.

“With some encouragement from my mother I signed up for the ministerial course (requiring Latin) and took piano lessons on the side to stay on track for the teacher’s course,” says Panning. “I minded Latin less than piano lessons, so I gravitated toward the guys in the ministerial section of my class.”

Since 1962 he has been a professor at ministerial education schools, having served 13 years at Northwestern College and 25 years at Wisconsin

Lutheran Seminary (where he teaches New Testament and church history). He served one parish—Salem, Escanaba, Mich.

“You have to adjust to the realization that at an educational institution you’re one step removed from the cutting edge of actually taking the gospel to people who don’t as yet know it,” says Panning.

He continues, “But there are also some nice trade-offs, such as being permitted to know and to work with all those gifted young people whom the Lord leads to prepare themselves for work in his kingdom. . . . There aren’t many pastors in our synod whom I haven’t gotten to know in the classroom.”

Although Panning has decided to retire from the seminary in June, he hopes to continue his ministry the way he started it—in a parish.

“It would be nice to use some of the things I’ve been trying to teach students for all these years,” he says.



Armin Panning and his wife, Virginia, at an outdoor café in Bulgaria. Armin recently had a three-month teaching sabbatical to the Bulgarian Lutheran Bible Institute and Seminary.

He also hopes to spend more time with his wife, Virginia, and on his hobbies—woodworking, garden and yard work, and photography. He will continue serving in his current position as president of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, an international body of 16 confessional Lutheran national churches with which WELS is in fellowship.

Although he calls himself “basically a dull person,” Panning’s dedication and devotion to the Lord show his true colors.

Connecting WELS schools

Connections are important in any computer system.

WELS Telecommunications/Technology (Tel/Tech) Task Force is trying to put together a different kind of technology “connection”—a connection between schools. This connection won’t necessarily link hardware to hardware, but will link schools in the common goal of improving the use of technology in the classroom.

“Using technology in the classroom enhances interest, motivation, and active learning,” says Gail Potratz, a member of a WELS technology planning team. “Kids become partners in learning and have ownership in their assignments and the path it may take to reach an answer.”

The first step in this process was to develop reasonable standards of technology for WELS schools. A 12-person planning team, consisting of

pastors, teachers, and students, met in the fall of 2000 to put together a list.

From this list, two surveys were put together to identify where WELS schools and teachers are at in the area of technology. One of the two—an on-line survey—was given to every teacher to find out technological strengths and limitations of the school, its teachers, and its curriculum. The other was sent to every school to determine what technology was available in each school. These surveys were distributed in January.

In April, the original planning team and 15 others will gather to review the survey results. This “discovery workshop” will also allow time for developing short-term goals and putting together action steps to address the future of technology in WELS schools.

To help WELS on this project, the Tel/Tech Task Force contracted with

Norstan Communications, Inc., a communications consultant and provider. Besides helping in the planning, Norstan will also develop options for WELS for extending technology into our schools.

One option, according to Dan Schmeling, administrator of the Commission on Parish Schools, may be to develop a consortium of schools. “Those who are interested in improving their use of technology would group together. . . . It will be working together as a system instead of as individuals.”

Besides “connecting” schools, Schmeling also hopes this will help schools develop their own technology infrastructure.

Monies from Tel/Tech and a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans provided funds for this project.

Pastor's angel

Sharleen Bammert plays the organ for St. John, Hatchville, Wis., every third Sunday. She also plays for many festival services and accompanies the choir. Although all organists are blessings from the Lord, there is something special about Bammert that moves her pastor, Shawn Kauffeld, to say, "Sharleen is my angel."

The factor that sets Bammert apart from her contemporaries is that she is legally blind. Yet, that has not kept her from continuing to play the organ. When she discovered that she was going blind in 1996, she says, "I made up my mind that I was not going to let this get me down. My grandma always told me that God gave me the ability to play and that I should do it. I decided that being blind shouldn't stop me."

Bammert has most hymns memorized. The new hymnal, *Christian Worship*, temporarily threw her off track, but that is when her reading machine came in handy. She projects any songs that she does not know on her reading machine, which has a tray in which to set her music. The machine projects the music onto a screen in large print. Bammert memorizes a few measures' notes. Then, she goes to her organ to play them over and over again until she has the notes memorized. At that point, she returns to the reading machine and continues this process until she has the entire piece memorized.

Because Bammert is completely blind in her left eye and has only a small amount of cloudy vision in her right eye, this process seems like it would be long and arduous. In her typical upbeat way, though, Bammert claims that "it really doesn't take that long at all."

"When the choir is practicing, she can change key with no advance preparation," Kauffeld marvels. "She is so sweet and always has a kind word for everyone she meets. I like to call her my angel, because she truly is special."

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Twelve Months Ended Dec. 31, 2000

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received			Percent of Subscrptn	Annldz Ave Per Commun
	Communicants 12/31/99	2000	Year to Date Projected	December Offerings	Twelve Months' Offerings		
Arizona-California	17,808	\$1,053,434	\$1,053,434	\$166,295	\$1,098,921	104.3%	\$61.71
Dakota-Montana	9,121	451,567	451,567	89,981	450,452	99.8	49.39
Michigan	36,334	2,191,120	2,191,120	389,396	2,169,449	99.0	59.71
Minnesota	43,184	2,479,623	2,479,623	487,719	2,363,647	95.3	54.73
Nebraska	10,414	629,355	629,355	119,132	644,003	102.3	61.84
North Atlantic	4,116	360,014	360,014	45,898	355,016	98.6	86.25
Northern Wisconsin	60,948	2,684,766	2,684,766	518,087	2,640,013	98.3	43.32
Pacific Northwest	5,133	278,700	278,700	39,839	294,318	105.6	57.34
South Atlantic	7,060	536,797	536,797	82,223	545,957	101.7	77.33
South Central	4,710	481,855	481,855	71,479	514,164	106.7	109.16
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,211	3,430,462	3,430,462	655,670	3,289,454	95.9	57.50
Western Wisconsin	59,598	3,232,908	3,232,908	498,658	3,124,359	96.6	52.42
Total - This Year	315,637	17,810,601	17,810,601	3,164,377	17,489,753	98.2	55.41
Total - Last Year	315,431	17,389,497	17,389,497	3,392,464	17,420,069	100.2	55.23

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities

Six months ended December 31

	2000 Actual	1999 Actual	2000 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$8,283,033	\$8,216,186	\$8,361,000
Gifts and memorials	2,314,019	2,479,507	3,557,000
Bequest/planned giving	347,111	626,806	744,200
Tuition and fees	6,739,239	5,830,841	5,384,400
Other	63,892	75,737	86,000
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	-	-
Transfers-endwmt earnings	169,201	201,387	114,500
Transfers-gift funds	6,123,111	5,629,648	6,064,000
Transfers-continuing programs	1,827,140	2,046,013	2,103,600
Transfers-other	3,362	-	-
Total revenues	25,870,108	25,106,125	26,414,700
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	5,206,655	4,723,698	5,155,300
World Missions	4,712,099	4,301,563	4,830,300
Ministerial Education	13,011,839	11,369,107	11,769,800
Parish Services	916,043	889,949	1,152,600
Administrative Services	2,737,512	2,657,055	3,422,100
System Wide	192,801	-	350,700
Total expenditures	26,776,949	23,941,372	26,680,800
Changes in unrestricted net assets	(906,841)	1,164,753	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	-	-
Bequest/planned giving	-	-	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	-	-
Change in temp restricted net assets	-	-	-
Net assets - beginning of year	4,350,503	4,170,081	
Net assets - end of period	3,443,662	5,334,834	

Statement of Financial Position

	Dec. 31, 2000	Dec. 31, 1999
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	25,671	1,146,119
Due from other funds	37,051	45,385
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	124,250	125,250
Cash advances-schools	501,325	250,654
Other accounts receivable	266,306	346,936
Contributions receivable	3,648,200	3,454,400
Mortgage note receivable	9,499	11,764
Allowance for doubtful accts	(45,100)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	42,883	69,493
Total assets	4,610,085	5,358,003
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to other funds	961,000	-
Accounts payable	205,423	23,169
Total liabilities	1,166,423	23,169
Unrestricted	(204,538)	1,880,434
Temp restricted	3,648,200	3,454,400
Total net assets	3,443,662	5,334,834
Total liab. and net assets	4,610,085	5,358,003

Mark Meissner, director of finance



District news

North Atlantic



Thomas Haar; his son, Daniel; and his wife, Deborah, were granted Canadian citizenship in October 2000 (also pictured: a Canadian judge). Haar is pastor at Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Haars now have dual citizenship in the United States and Canada.

Minnesota

In October 2000, 21 individuals with developmental disabilities and 21 counselors attended **Joy in Jesus—Retreat 2000**, the first-ever Jesus Cares Ministries special needs retreat, at Camp Omega, Waterville, Minn.

Western Wisconsin



Marie Ashley began playing the organ for WELS churches when she was 16 years old. Seventy-two years later she is still a full-time organist for St. John, Doylestown, Wis., and St. Stephen, Fall River, Wis.

North Atlantic

For the second year in a row, **Messiah, South Windsor, Conn.**, had a booth at its local community fair. Members distributed over 400 bags with church information. Of the 325 people who entered Messiah's raffle, 10 percent checked the box to be added to the church mailing list.

Living Hope, Midlothian, Va., received a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans to coordinate an outreach program that encourages church attendance and congregational involvement among those who currently do not belong to a congregation. The outreach effort will include friendship evangelism, new-neighbor visits, and outreach Sundays.

Dakota-Montana



On Oct. 15, 2000, St. John, Dempster, S.D., and Mount Calvary, Estelline, S.D., honored (from left) organists Velma Kreul and Mae Begalka.

South Central

Thirty-five Vietnamese children participated in the children's Christmas service at **Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.** Staff and members reach out to new Vietnamese immigrants in their area.

Trinity, Temple, Tex., started a ministry to those with alcohol and drug addiction problems using Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services' 12-step program.

Over 90 people from places like China, Japan, Thailand, India, and Iran attended the Christmas Eve worship service and dinner at **Beautiful Savior, College Station, Tex.** Many are Texas A&M students and family members who heard the gospel for the first time that day.

Western Wisconsin

Lord of Love, DeForest, Wis., dedicated its new church on Dec. 3, 2000. The congregation began as an exploratory in 1991 and now has 230 members.

After 28 years of God's grace, **Mount Zion, Jacksonville, Ill.**, held its final worship service on Nov. 17, 2000. Members of Mount Zion transferred to the nearest WELS church, St. Mark, Normal, Ill.

Happy Anniversary!

CA—On Jan. 21, members of St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif., thanked **Rich Kogler** for his 25 years in the pastoral ministry.

SA—**Abiding Love, Cape Coral, Fla.**, celebrated its 15th anniversary on Jan. 21.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: **CA**—Hermann John; **DM**—David Wendt; **MN**—Jeffrey Bovee; **NA**—Kevin Schultz; **SA**—Mark Haefner; **SC**—Peter Snyder; **WW**—Elton Stroh.

FROM BEGINNING TO END
Through the Bible in one year

March 2001

1. Leviticus 9:23-12	18. Num. 4:21-49
2. Lev. 13-14:32	• Prov. 16:20-18:15
3. Lev. 14:33-16	19. Num. 5 • Prov.
4. Lev. 17-19	18:16-20:19
5. Lev. 20-22	20. Num. 6 • Prov.
6. Lev. 23-25:22	20:20-22:16
7. Lev. 25:23-26	21. Num. 7:1-23
• Psalm 38	• Prov. 22:17-
8. Lev. 27 • Ps.	24:22
66 & 143	22. Num. 7:24-53
9. Galatians 1-3	• Prov. 24:23-26:20
10. Gal. 4-6	23. Num. 7:54-77
11. Numbers 1:1-27	• Prov. 26:21-28
• Proverbs 1 & 2	24. Num. 7:78-8
12. Num. 1:28-54	• Prov. 29 & 30
• Prov. 3 & 4	25. Num. 9 & 10
13. Num. 2 • Prov.	• Prov. 31
5 & 6	26. Num. 11-13
14. Num. 3:1-13	27. Num. 14 & 15
• Prov. 7-9	28. Num. 16 • Ps.
15. Num. 3:14-39	58 & 75
• Prov. 10 & 11	29. Num. 17 & 18
16. Num. 3:40-51	• Ps. 106
• Prov. 12-14:20	30. Num. 19-21
17. Num. 4:1-20	31. Num. 22-24
• Prov. 14:21-16:19	

WELS news briefs

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

Vice-President for Mission and Ministry

414/256-3204

A brochure detailing the WELS Mission Objectives Vision Statement is now available. Contact your district's Synodical Council lay representative for copies. A list of the representatives is on the Web site <www.wels.net>. Press the Ministry button and click on Synodical Council.

Communication Services Commission

414/256-3210

In January you may have noticed a new look on the WELS Web site homepage <www.wels.net>, making it easier to navigate. This redesign was a long-time project for Steve Nolte, a student at Milwaukee School of Engineering who works part-time in Web technologies, a division of Communication Services.

In January, two representatives from each district came to Milwaukee to learn about WELS' "private web" (intranet) and to offer suggestions that will help shape this project.

Board for Ministerial Education

414/256-3237

Martin Luther College is finishing curriculum changes that resulted from the college's 1999 self-study. The result is a curriculum that retains the best from the past and incorporates methodology and efficiencies of the present to better prepare gospel proclaimers for the future.

In the fall of 2000, over 60 people took part in the second of two planning retreats that will provide a strategic blueprint for ministerial education for the next decade. Participants represented all ministerial

education schools, the synod's areas of ministries, and the area Lutheran high schools.

Commission on Adult Discipleship

414/256-3277



The 2001 stewardship emphasis, *Profit My Spirit Lord*, is now available for purchase. The focus of the program is on the Word and Sacraments rather than the traditional emphasis on giving. The program kicks off on Reformation Sunday 2001 and concludes on Easter 2002.

Commission on Youth Discipleship

414/256-3224



Star Tracks, a *Christ-Light*® vacation Bible school curriculum and a joint project of the WELS Board for Parish Services and Northwestern Publishing House, is now available for purchase. Each lesson uses a "constellation" to help students remember the truth of that day's lesson, which always points to the greatest light of all—Jesus. To order, call NPH at 1-800-662-6022.

Board for World Missions

414/256-3239

The Synodical Council has endorsed the joint plan of the Board for World Missions and the Board for Ministerial Education to have **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) build housing on the seminary grounds**. The homes can accommodate both furlough missionaries and married WLS students who would rent the homes during the school year. If all goes according to plan, the first home will be constructed in 2001 and a second home in the following year.

The **Multi-Language Publications Program and Publications for Latin America have amalgamated**. Called the Multi-Language Publications Program, this group, located in El Paso, Tex., is now being coordinated by Pastor Paul Hartman. This program will continue to work hard to provide materials in different languages for world missions and cross-cultural ministries in the United States.

Commission on Evangelism

414/256-3287

The Commission on Evangelism is planning a new Web site, <www.whataboutjesus.com>. This site will share biblical truths about Jesus with non-religious people. A \$25,000 grant from Aid Association for Lutherans will help make this site possible. The COE hopes to have it running by the end of 2001.

Board for Home Missions

414/256-3286

Videos are available of some of the presentations at the WELS Home Missions Conference (3M3) held July 27-29, 2000. Each video costs \$8. Contact the number above or e-mail <JeanMP@sab.wels.net>.

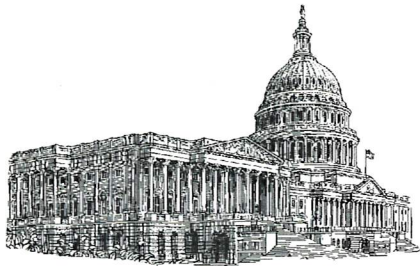
At the Board for Home Missions meeting in September:

Mission status was granted to Good Shepherd, Livermore, Calif.; Risen Savior, Savannah, Ga.; Amazing Grace, Boise, Idaho; Prince of Peace, Yankton/Vermillion, S.D.; Living Water, Richmond, Va.; and Risen Savior, McFarland, Wis.

Exploratory efforts were discontinued in Louisville, Colo., and Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

New manpower and exploratory status was granted for East Sarasota, Fla.

Land search authority was granted to Living Hope, Peoria, Ill., and Amazing Grace, Boise, Idaho.



Religious make-up of the Congress—Americans for Religious Liberty reported the religious make-up of the 107th U.S. Congress in its quarterly newsletter in January. Of the 535 members, numbers included

- 150 Roman Catholics (91 Democrats and 59 Republicans),
- 72 Baptists (37 Republicans, 34 Democrats, and one Independent),
- 65 Methodists (39 Republicans and 26 Democrats),
- 49 Presbyterians (32 Republicans and 17 Democrats),
- 41 Episcopalians (30 Republicans and 11 Democrats),
- 37 Jews (33 Democrats, three Republicans, and one Independent),
- 29 nondenominational Protestants (19 Republicans and 10 Democrats),
- 20 Lutherans (11 Democrats and nine Republicans),
- 15 Mormons (12 Republicans and three Democrats),
- Eight members of the United Church of Christ (five Republicans and three Democrats).

Seven members claimed no religious affiliation. There are no Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu members.

World life news—

- A survey of teenagers in Taiwan has indicated that 87 percent believe abortion is equivalent to murder, although at the same time 54 percent said that they would consider having an abortion. The survey, conducted by the Eastern Multimedia Marketing Survey Center, also showed that 27 percent knew of friends who had had an abortion.

- It has been estimated that 70 percent of all pregnancies in Russia since 1994 have ended in abortion. Abortion is provided free on demand during the

first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The Soviet Union was the first country in the world to legalize abortion in 1920, and now only Romania has a greater number of abortions per live births. The Russian population is said to be shrinking by 2,500 every day.

- For the first time, a greater proportion of teenage pregnancies in Canada are ending in abortion than in a live birth. A report on teenage pregnancy released by Statistics Canada stated that in 1997, 50.3 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 who became pregnant had abortions, compared to 46.8 percent who carried their babies to term. 2.9 percent of teenage pregnancies ended in miscarriage or stillbirth. [*LifeWire*, Jan. 4, 2001]

Who's reading the Bible—About six in 10 Americans say they read the Bible at least on occasion, according to a Gallup poll conducted in October. This number has declined since the 1980s (from 73 percent to 59 percent).



Those who read the Bible at least once a week has decreased slightly over the last decade, from 40 percent in 1990 to 37 percent today. Sixteen percent of Americans say they read the Bible monthly, 10 percent say less than monthly, and 41 percent say that they rarely or never read the Bible.

Many report that they would like to learn more about the Bible (35 percent are very interested, 40 percent are somewhat interested). Twenty-four percent report no interest in learning more about the Bible.

The percentages are based on telephone interviews of 1,024 adults, 18 or older. It has a plus or minus three percent margin of error.

[*Emerging Trends*, Nov. 2000]

Pope says all who live a just life will be saved—In December, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that all who live a just life will be saved even if

they do not believe in Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church.

“The gospel teaches us that those who live in accordance with the Beatitudes—the poor in spirit, the pure of heart, those who bear lovingly the sufferings of life—will enter God’s kingdom,” John Paul said.

This statement tones down the recent declaration “Dominus Iesus” issued in September by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which serves as the Vatican’s guardian of doctrinal orthodoxy. This document said that while “it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking, they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.”

ELCA Lutherans, Episcopalians celebrate “full communion” agreement—In January, thousands of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) members and Episcopalians gathered at the National Cathedral to celebrate the adoption of a “full communion” agreement between the two churches.

The nearly three-hour-long service blended elements of Lutheran and Episcopal liturgy as members from both churches renewed their baptismal vows and communed together.

The “Called to Common Mission” accord allows the two churches, with a combined membership of 7.8 million, to swap clergy and sacraments and collaborate on joint mission projects. While short of a merger, the agreement allows most clergy to move between the two churches. The accord has taken 40 years of dialogue to resolve.

WELS is not a part of this agreement.

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**

- Baerbock, Ronald E.**, to Multi-Language Publications Program, El Paso, Tex.
Bilitz, Keith J., to St. John and Trinity, Janesville, Minn.
Gaertner, Joel P., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Getka, James J., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Harders, Delmer J., to retirement
Hartman, Paul J., to Multi-Language Publications Program, El Paso, Tex.
Staab, William E., to retirement

Teachers

- Adrian, Michelle A.**, to St. John, Sturgis, Mich.
Eggers, Kris A., to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
Grunke, Sarah J., to St. Luke, Saginaw, Mich.
Guenterberg, Thomas M., to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Klindworth, Robert F., to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Knippel, Mary B., to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.
Lecker, David P., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Manke, Gwen M., to Christ-St. John, West Salem, Wis.
Meitner, Matthew S., to Salem, Loretto, Minn.
Melso, John M., to Memorial, Williamston, Mich.
Monday, Lori A., to Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.
Neuman, Jane M., to Little Lambs of Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Noack, David W., to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Schmidt, Amy, to Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.
Schmidt, Shannon L., to St. John, Milwaukee
Scrifer, Neil H., to Southern Lutheran Academy, Lakeland, Fla.
Spittel, Debra, to Precious Little Lambs, Jacksonville, Fla.
Unke, Lori L., to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.
Weber, Bridget K., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Weihrauch, Carl J., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Zanto, Mary E., to Grace, Eau Claire, Mich.
Zeitler, Susan L., to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.

Staff minister

- Pfeifer, Michael J.**, to Commission on Youth Discipleship, Milwaukee

SYNOD CONVENTION

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

ANNIVERSARIES

- Fort Atkinson, Wis.**—St. Paul (140). Special services, 8 & 10:30 AM. 920/563-2263.
 May 6—Lifting High the Cross in our elementary school
 June 10—Lifting High the Cross in music, Charles Bono organ concert
 July 8—Lifting High the Cross in families
 July 29—Lifting High the Cross in Scripture, opening of cornerstone
 Aug. 5—Lifting High the Cross in outreach
 Sept. 9—Lifting High the Cross in our confirmands
 Oct. 7—Lifting High the Cross in missions

- Nov. 4—Lifting High the Cross in German (German-English services)
 Dec. 9—Lifting High the Cross in the next century
West Bend, Wis.—Good Shepherd (50). Apr. 29. Service, 3:30 PM. Meal, 5 PM. 262/334-7881.
Sleepy Eye, Minn.—St. John (125). June 16. Service, 7:30 PM; ice cream social to follow. June 17. Service, 10 AM; catered dinner to follow. RSVP, 507/794-7476.

COMING EVENTS

- Hymn festival**—Apr. 1, 2:30 PM. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Forward in Christ celebration featuring songs sung throughout the ages.
Concert—Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale Choral Festival, "Thy Strong Word." Apr. 1, 7:30 PM. Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis. Alan Ross, 920/684-5833.
Women's retreat—Apr. 6-7. Park Inn, Wausau, Wis. Donna, 715/842-5802.
Concerts—Lutheran Festival Chorus, "Celebrating 25 years of spreading God's Word through song." Apr. 8. 3 PM, Resurrection, Aurora, Ill. 7:30 PM, Christ the King, Palatine, Ill. Marvin Koch, 847/437-8187.
Martin Luther College choir tour—
 Apr. 6—St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., 6:30 PM
 Apr. 7—Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 6:30 PM
 Apr. 8—Our Savior, Burlington, Iowa, 10 AM; St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis., 7:30 PM
 Apr. 9—Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., 9 AM; Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., 2 PM; Grace, Oshkosh, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 10—Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., 9:30 AM; Trinity, Osceola, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 11—Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis., 1 PM; St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 12—Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somer, Wis., 2 PM; St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 13—Trinity, Crete, Ill., 2 PM; St. John, Libertyville, Ill., 7 PM
 Apr. 15—Peace, Wilmet, Wis., 6:30 AM; St. John, Burlington, Wis., 10:30 AM; St. John, Jefferson, Wis., 7 PM
 Apr. 22—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 7:30 PM
LWMS Women of WELS (WOW) retreats—
 Apr. 20-22, Williamsburg, Va. Lynnette Hupman, 703/361-1419.
 May 4-6, Otter Crest, Ore. Char LaForest, 541/388-2405.
WELS Church Librarians' Organization meeting—Apr. 21. St. Paul, Woneewoc, Wis. Advance registration, 414/256-3222. \$7 fee includes lunch. Speakers from Jesus Cares Ministries and Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services.
National Lutheran Pioneer convention—Apr. 28. Emanuel First, Lansing, Mich. Lutheran Pioneers, 888/214-8225.
SHARE's spring seminar and social—Singles Helping one Another on the Road to Eternity. Apr. 28. Milwaukee, Wis. 262/534-7582.
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.
WELS Kingdom Workers convention—July 19-22. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. 800/466-9357.
Christian Life Resources national convention—Oct. 12-14. Mayo Civic Center, Rochester, Minn. 414/774-1331.

AVAILABLE

- Electric candelabras**—from the 1920s. Need rewiring and replating. Free for the cost of shipping. St. John, Renville, Minn., 320/329-3826.
Scholarships—from WELS Lutherans for Life, a division of Christian Life Resources. Offered to qualified high school seniors committed to pursuing a career in which prolife values will be demonstrated. Applications, including recommendations, must be received by March 15. For an application, call 1-800-729-9535 or download from <www.ChristianLifeResources.com>.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

- Camp Phillip**—Wautoma, Wis. May 29-Aug. 15. Counselors, Bible study leader, waterfront director, lifeguards, adventure coordinator, and junior staff director. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.
Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi—Christian couple to serve at the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi. Three-year commitment. Wife should be a registered nurse, and husband would serve as administrative coordinator. Irene Brug, 262/242-8139.

NEEDED

- Volunteer RNs/EMTs**—as health care directors for one week or half-week youth camp sessions at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.
Musicians—especially a drummer and keyboardist to help gospel choir. John Paul Simons, St. Philip, Milwaukee; <johnpaul@excepc.com>.

NAMES WANTED

- Lexington, Ky.**—Victory Lutheran, Jonathan Zietlow, 859/258-9030.
WELS musicians—with professional training, current college or graduate study, or performance degrees in vocal, instrumental, or conducting. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.
Myrtle Beach, S.C.—Amazing Grace. James Schumann, 843/236-9134.
LaPorte/Michigan City/Chesterton/Porter, Ind.—Don Schultz, 219/874-2465.
Sheridan, Wyo.—Pete Zietlow, 307/672-7599.
Southwest Ocala, Fla.—Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.
Laredo, Tex.—D. Scott Bertram, 956/727-3050.

SERVICE TIMES

- Renville, Minn.**—St. John. Sunday service, September-May, 10 AM; June-August, 9 AM. 320/329-3826.
Mobile, Ala.—Saving Grace. John Boggs, 334/342-4048. Call for time and location.
Southwest Ocala, Fla.—Abiding Word. Saturday worship service, 7 PM. Friday Bible study, 6 PM. Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.

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

The LORD, our comfort

**Our faith in the LORD may waver as Elijah's did.
God reminds us, though, that he will never leave us.**

James A. Aderman

Elijah had experienced miracles, but not like on Mount Carmel. There the LORD consumed his own sacrifice with a fireball. The people of Israel acknowledged the LORD as their God. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal lay dead near Brook Kishon. Prayed-for rain watered dusty fields.

Elijah's emotions rocketed into the stratosphere. But what goes up must come down. When a seething Queen Jezebel promised to see Elijah dead within 24 hours, he spiraled and crashed. The prophet who stood Gibraltar-firm against an amoral king and overwhelming odds disappeared. He was replaced by a coward who ran for his life (1 Kings 19:1-21).

Elijah forgets God's promises

He jogged through Judah, heading for the Negev—inhabitable mountains, searing daytime heat, and nighttime cold. He headed for Sinai, the LORD's mountain, more than 300 miles from where he started. Elijah had decided to resign from being God's spokesman. In fact, he had no desire to live. Where better to terminate his employment than at the place the LORD gave his laws to Moses?

"I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty," Elijah complained. "The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."



OUR COMFORT

Elijah had had enough—because he had lost sight of who God is. He felt mistreated by his heavenly master, alone and frightened, frustrated at a lack of results despite putting his life on the line. Mostly he felt sorry for himself.

Elijah's depression stopped him from seeing that nothing had changed in his life. His God was still "the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. . . ." No matter what his emotions screamed, the truth was that his God "does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Exodus 34:6,7). Justice would prevail.

God renews his promises

The LORD demonstrated his abundant grace and faithfulness by empowering his prophet to journey to Sinai. He sent an angel with a meal that enabled Elijah to walk for 40 days through the desert. Once there, the God who is slow to anger drank in his prophet's whine, then served up for him a table full of his grace.

Like a mother shushing her squalling child, the LORD spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper. His

message: "I love you and remain committed to you. You are not alone. Seven thousand live in Israel who have not bowed to Baal. And I've chosen Elisha as the next generation's prophet. You will mentor him."

His message: "I am in control. Ahab will be replaced, as will Hazael, Israel's nemesis to the north. My wounded prophet, I have a role for you in all this. Your crash experience will keep you dependent on me and my grace. Go, my son."

A renewed Elijah left Sinai.

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For further study

1. In Psalm 43 the psalmist describes a time when he, like Elijah, felt abandoned and frustrated. How was this believer's situation similar to Elijah's? How was the lesson learned the same?
2. In what area of your life are you feeling like Elijah at Sinai? How is God's message to you the same as to Elijah?



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

When a physician conducts a routine physical exam, she checks off a "review of systems." The result is an overall picture of your physical health. What systems or "health factors" would provide a snapshot of your spiritual health? Factors like attention to the Word and receiving the Lord's Supper are ongoing, like breathing. Baptism, a third factor, occurs once, but its blessings continue.

Health factor—Recalling my baptism

God's Word

• The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free (1 Corinthians 12:12,13).

• Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. . . . ¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:3,4,11-13).

1. What do you know about your baptism? (Who baptized you? When? Where? Who else was there?)
2. According to 1 Corinthians 12, though, who really baptized you?
3. According to 1 Corinthians, what has the Lord done for you in baptism?
4. When have you especially appreciated being a part of "one body"?
5. What additional blessings of baptism do you find in Romans 6:3,4,11-13?
6. Why is the word "therefore" at the beginning of Romans 6:12?
7. In Romans 6:13, Paul draws a contrast between two lifestyles: offering your body to sin and offering your body to God. If you were talking to an unbeliever, how would you explain the difference?
8. Who comes to your mind when you think of someone offering his body as an "instrument of righteousness"? Why?

My soul for personal check-up

1. What reminders do I have of my baptism?
2. What could help me remember my baptism more often?
3. How might the reminder of my baptism help me with a personal struggle I am engaged in right now?
4. "Blessed to be a blessing" is the refrain of an old song. How have the blessings I've received in baptism been a blessing to others?

My church for group check-up

1. What traditions in our church help make baptism memorable?
2. What does the location of the baptismal font in our church say about baptism?
3. How might our church teach the power of baptism as strength to resist evil?
4. What are some ways we demonstrate that we are "one body"?

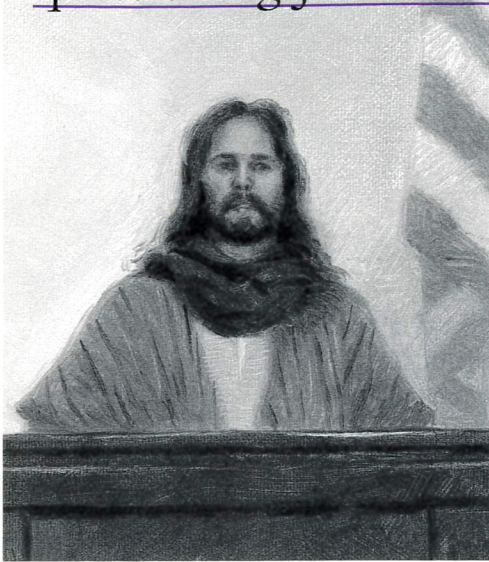
Web-med

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

Subscribe to a daily devotion to help you remember the blessings of your baptism at <http://www.wels.net/sab/listserver/lb-devoted.html>.

Search for the word "baptism" on the Q&A feature of the WELS Web site at <http://www.wels.net>. Look for Q&A under "Extras."

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



Mark, a non-Lutheran Christian pastor, asked me, “When did you become a Christian?”

Referring to my infant baptism I answered, “Nov. 6, 1949.”

Deciding for Christ?

He assessed my age, and said, “Oh, you must be a Lutheran.”

I acknowledged that his guess was correct. He asked if I ever “made my decision for Christ.”

“No, I do not believe in self-conversion,” I responded. “Out of pure mercy, God turned my heart to Jesus when I was baptized as an infant.”

Not agreeing with the saving power of infant baptism, Mark stunned me with his conclusion: “Then you are not saved.” He went on to say my parents did a “good work” by bringing me as an infant to the baptismal font and quoted Ephesians 2 to underscore the truth that one is not saved by good works.

I agreed that we are not saved by good works and my parents indeed performed a “good work” by bringing me to the font. “However,” I insisted, “my parents did not convert me. The natural water placed on me with the supernatural Spirit working through God’s word of promise miraculously brought me

Born a second time?

Conversion is God’s merciful decision to choose us, not our decision to choose him.

Thomas H. Trapp

from spiritual death to life with God. At that moment I was born a second time.”

I pointed out that baptism “saves . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). It does not matter if we are infants or adults, conversion is fully needed by us and fully God’s act on us. We are not involved. Just as we did not make our decision to be born physically, neither do we make our decision to be born spiritually.

Our spiritual second birth is alone God’s saving act.

True, once we are converted we cooperate with the Spirit to “live a new [godly] life,” (Romans 6), but conversion is God’s merciful decision to choose us (Ephesians 1:4), not our decision to choose him.

Mark still disagreed.

Although he agreed that Jesus did everything to save us, he reasserted that “we have to make our decision to turn to him.”

I explained that as converted Christians, with the Spirit in us, we daily “decide” to follow the devil, world, flesh, or Jesus. Jesus daily stands at the door of our heart, knocks, and calls us to “repent” (Revelation 3:19,20). But our spiritual second birth is alone God’s saving act. I quoted John 1:12,13, “To all who received [Jesus], to those

who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Mark was not convinced. It did not make sense.

Christ’s decision for us

Like Nicodemus, we scratch our heads and ask the same question he asked Jesus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” (John 3:4).

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5,6). Jesus was saying that all humans are born separated from God and his holiness because everyone is born from sinful parents (Psalm 51:5). Everyone needs “the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Everyone needs to be born a second time by God.

The beautiful truth is this: at baptism we receive that second birth and become Christians. It’s not a question. It’s a fact.

Treasure it. Rejoice in it. Share it.



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

God's wisdom for today

Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. Proverbs 30:7-9.

A stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him. Proverbs 28:22.

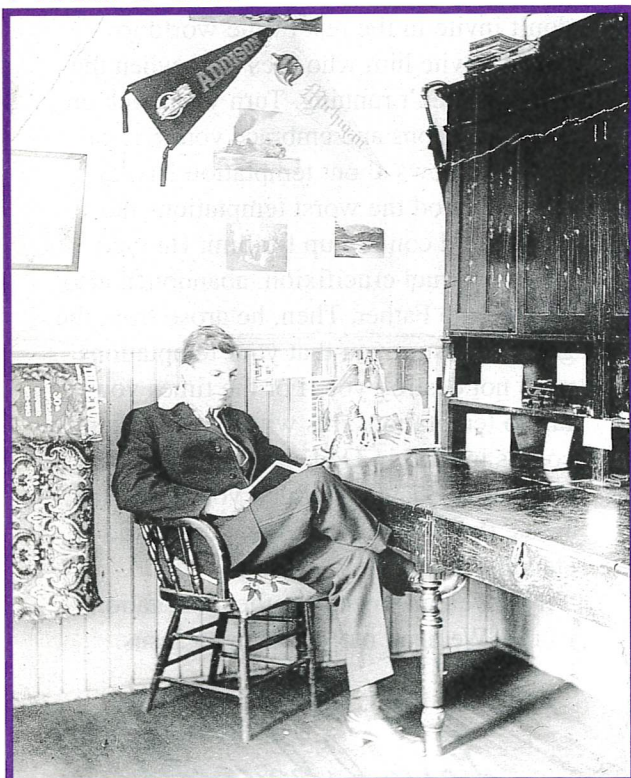
Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Proverbs 16:24.

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out. Proverbs 17:14.

THINK OF IT

- The man who is fighting sin is too busy to carry a chip on his shoulder.
- Education can polish people, but only the blood of Christ can cleanse them.
- The Christian is not ruined by living in the world—but by the world living in him.
- Bad habits are like a comfortable bed: easy to get into, but hard to get out of.
- If a care is too small to be turned into a prayer, it is too small to be made into a burden.
- I guess more of us are willing to forgive others than are willing to admit we need the forgiveness of others.
- Many people spend six days sowing wild oats, then go to church on Sunday and pray for a crop failure.

Picture this



Martin L. Weiss, studying to be a Lutheran teacher in 1914. Weiss taught in Lutheran schools in Michigan for over 30 years, where he earned a reputation as one of the finest teachers in the state until his death in 1950.

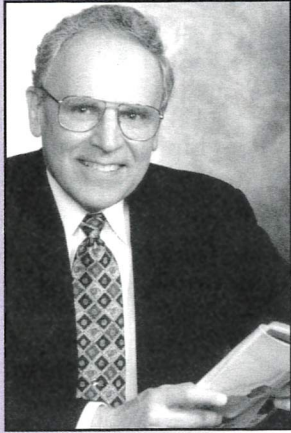
Submitted by Weiss's daughter, Ruth M. Wagner

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.

Which disturbs you most?

- A soul lost in hell . . .
or a scratch on your car?
- A sermon 10 minutes too long . . .
or lunch a half-hour late?
- Missing worship service . . .
or missing a day's work?
- Your children late to Sunday school . . .
or late to public school?
- Missing your Sunday Bible class . . .
or missing your favorite TV program?
- Church work neglected . . .
or housework neglected?

Which disturbs you most?



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

When temptation beckons, you, and you alone, are responsible for how you respond to her allure.

Temptation islands

Do we really need another temptation island? Yes, I know that only one television show bears that name, and it is, it seems, the first. But it is not the first temptation island.

Countless temptation islands threaten the stability of the lives of people everywhere. You have at least one temptation island in your life, probably several. So do I.

What is yours? Is it similar to the one that the money gods of TV are passing off as can't-miss prime-time viewing? Are you tempted to cheat on your spouse, to look for something more exciting than you find in your marriage? That kind of temptation plays itself out every day somewhere. Usually it is a kind of an island: done in private, away from the crowds, borne in isolation. Certainly not recorded by TV cameras for the world to see.

Maybe your temptation island is the lure of games of chance, the thrill of risking much for more, the rush in anticipation of winning big. Again, you're on an island. Few, if any, know how gambling has invaded your life and threatens your livelihood.

Maybe you see your island in the shape of a table, full of rich pastries, chocolate delights, deep-fried everything, juicy (greasy) meats that you cannot resist. You know it hurts your health, but no one seems to understand what a struggle you go through trying to refrain.

Is it drink or drugs? Is it pornography? Computer games? Gossip? Misplaced anger? Bigotry? Speed? Violence? Greed?

When temptation beckons, you, and you alone, are responsible for how you respond to her allure. You may be in a crowd (over-indulging at a bar), or you may be alone

(accessing unmentionable Internet sites on your computer). In either case you may as well be on an island. The people around you rarely know or care.

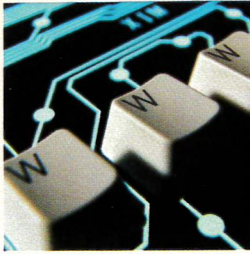
So, the temptations are really going on all the time—a virtual string of temptation islands. It's the real world. And what do we do with the real world these days? We televise it for all to see. In doing so, we also legitimize it in its worst forms. We begin to revel in it, feeling secret delight in seeing some fall to the temptations. Nonetheless (who can understand it?), we applaud those who overcome.

There's a better way. The worst part of being on the island is the sense that you are all alone—a sure recipe for failure. Instead, you need to see that you are not alone. No, don't invite in the rest of the world to watch. Invite him who sees even when the cameras aren't running. Turn your back on the temptations and embrace your Savior.

Jesus knows about temptation islands. He withstood the worst temptations the devil could conjure up for him. He died alone by cruel crucifixion, abandoned also by God the Father. Then, he arose from the grave to assure you that your temptations need not destroy you. For the times you fall to temptations, his withstanding them counts instead in God's eyes. For the way temptations have separated you from God, Jesus' death has restored you into good standing as his child.

No, we don't need another temptation island. We need more time with Jesus.

Gary P. Baumler



INTERNET



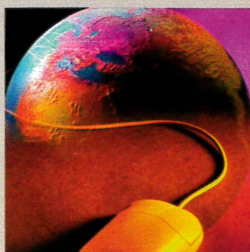
SOFTWARE



RECORD KEEPING



VIDEO



E-MAIL

By all possible means— expanding ministries through technology



July 15-18, 2001

Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wisconsin

WELS Tech 2001 is a comprehensive conference that will help pastors, teachers, and laypeople use the latest technology to enhance their ministries. Sessions for beginning, intermediate, and advanced users will cover topics in the categories of hardware, software, teaching, preaching and Bible study, music, video/photography, and on-line.

WELS Tech 2001 Web site

A comprehensive list of sessions and information on keynote speakers and logistics are available at www.wels.net/welstech2001.

To receive a registration brochure, contact:

WELS Communication Services • 2929 N Mayfair Rd • Milwaukee WI 53222
414/256-3210 • welstech2001@sab.wels.net

www.wels.net/welstech2001

THE STORM

before the calm

The Lenten storm of our sinfulness and God's unrelenting law must come before the Easter calm of knowing that Jesus conquered sin for us.

Stephen H. Geiger

I had 10 minutes to walk almost completely across the golf course.

My group was waiting on hole number five. In the distance, clear sky beckoned. Not far above, clouds hung low. I was racing, dragging a pull cart behind me.

Out of nowhere, wind whipped. Buckets dumped rainwater in sheets. Wind-driven pebbles peppered arms and chin. Caught in the open, I stopped, huddled, and covered my face.

Just as suddenly, it was gone.

Only to reveal that most rare but breathtaking sight—double rainbows. Four pots of gold, I suppose. And the Lord's promise never again to destroy this planet with a flood.

The storm, and then the calm.

Holy Scripture is filled with that pattern. A plunging dagger about to kill a son, stopped by an angel, and the calm. Egyptian soldiers ready to extinguish God's people, only to be swallowed by the sea, and the calm. Our Savior, mobbed by violent men and led to death, emerging from a tomb victorious, and the exultant, eternal calm.

It is God's way, the storm before the calm.

This is Lent—the storm, when we see our spiritual sickness.

The storm, when our souls face the onslaught of God's unattainable expectations.

It is serious. It is painful. It is God's will that we "humble [ourselves],

therefore, under God's mighty hand" (1 Peter 5:6). Humbled not by self-imposed hardship, but by the truth. The truth not of who we might be if we really were bad people. The truth of who we are—really bad people.

When we know the good we ought to do but don't do it, do we find comfort in the fact that at least we knew what we should have done? Let us not find comfort but greater guilt. When we know the evil we should not do but do it, do we find comfort in the fact that at least we knew it was wrong? Let us not find comfort, but greater fright.

What should God do with us, we who have tasted how good the Lord is, yet continue to misplace priorities, lose hope, grow impatient in struggle, act ashamed of the truth, prove silent in witness, and attach our happiness to the ups and downs of this life?

Shouldn't we be deserving of the severest of blows? What wretched men and women we are. Who will rescue us from these bodies of death?

Here is the season of Lent. God's unrelenting law. God silencing every mouth, holding you and me accountable to the one we will

see at our last hour.

Here is the storm.

The storm before the calm.

"Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord." While we have become certain of our destruction, the loving Lord lifts us from the whippings of our guilt and from the tumult of a thundering conscience and says, "Look! Do you see the cross? Do you see that storm? Do you see the sky going dark and the earth quaking beneath your feet? Do you see the Son of God suffering tortures unspeakable?"

What a storm! "But look! Do you see the tomb empty?"

Do you see these hands and feet? Touch me. It is I. I was put to death because you have sinned. I was raised to life because you have been declared innocent. Go in peace."

The calm!

The storm that preceded is now just a memory, but Lent must come before Easter. The storm must strike before the double rainbows shine.



Steve Geiger is pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton/Christ Our Savior exploratory, Vermillion, South Dakota.

