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FORWARD IN CHRIST

January 2002

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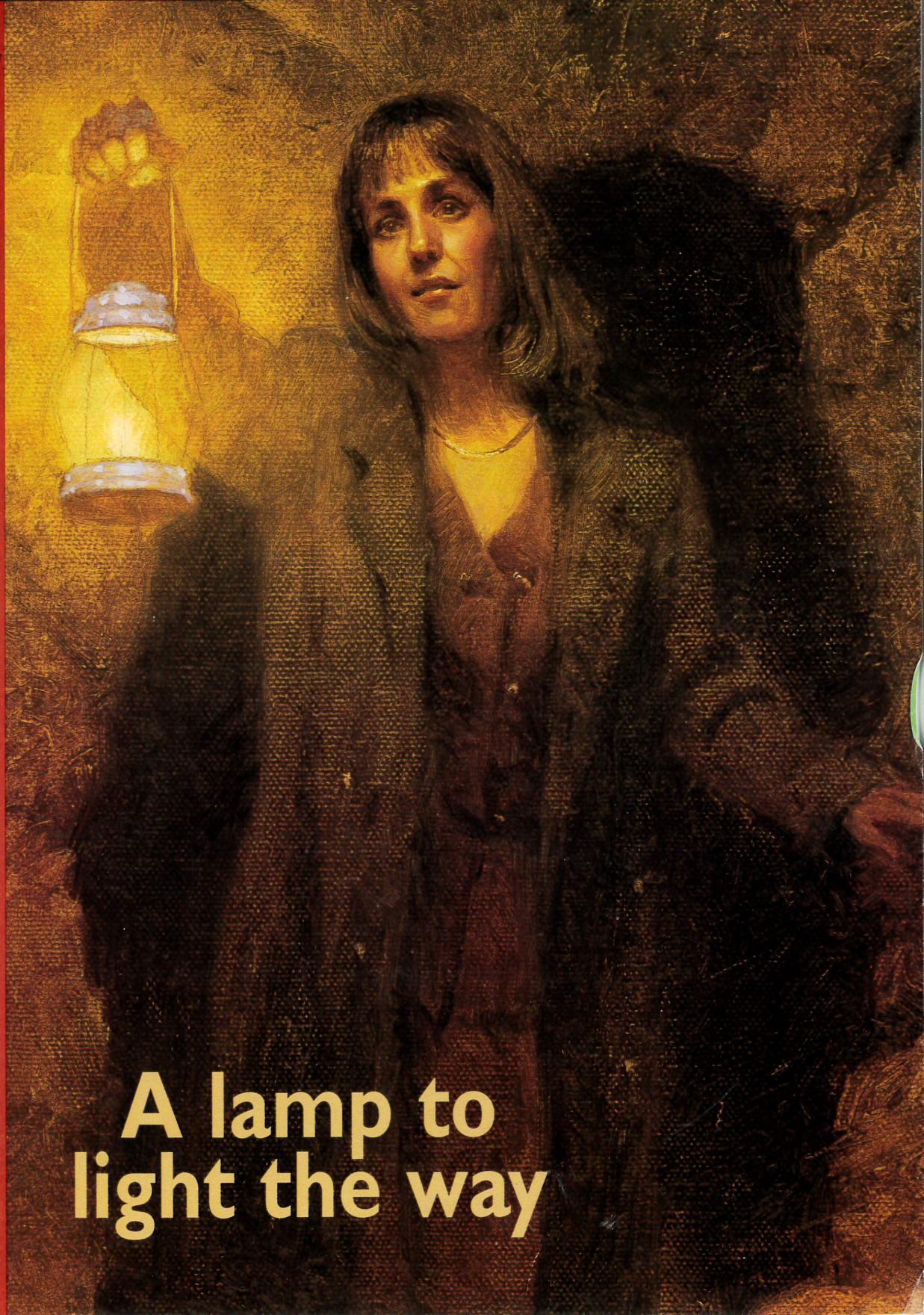
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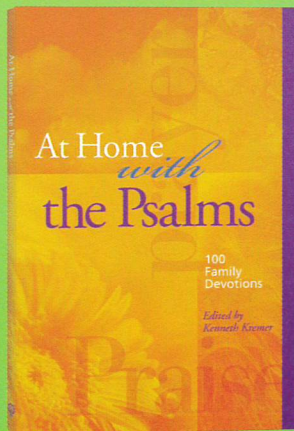


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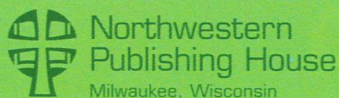
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The body doesn't know it

*The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!"
And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" . . .
Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:21,27*

Eric S. Hartzell

Alien Hand Syndrome (AHS) is as strange as strange can be. Dr. Todd E. Feinberg says: "A person with AHS has a hand that acts on its own accord, beyond the patient's conscious, voluntary command. The hand answers the phone and refuses to surrender the receiver to the other hand; it dumps a glass of water into a bowl of cereal; it tries to strangle the patient during sleep, and so on. The *sine qua non* of AHS is a hand that behaves in a fashion that the patients feel is beyond their control (*ALTERED EGOS How the Brain Creates the Self*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 94).

Alien Hand Syndrome is part of a disorder known in its broader sense as asomatognosia. Literally the word means "the body does not know it." When this mental affliction happens people disown part of their own body—usually their hand. They actually believe that their hand belongs to someone else.

Spiritual asomatognosia

Thankfully, it doesn't happen very often. That someone could hate his own hand goes against everything we know to be normal and right. Who could disown his own hand? Who could have his own hand turn on him and hurt him?

But spiritual asomatognosia happens more often than any of us would like to admit. The Lord

diagnoses its possibility with the Bible passage above. 1 Corinthians 12 goes into great detail about the body of the church being made up of many different members. When hands and feet have discussions about who belongs and who doesn't belong, something is amiss. If Alien Hand Syndrome is bizarre and strange when it happens physically, it is even worse when it happens spiritually.

Each of us has a part in this wonderful entity called the body of Christ's church here on earth. Hands go berserk when they ask, "What can I do just for me?" Hands are right and happy when they grasp or relax their hold on something for the benefit of the whole body.

Spiritual unity

Look at your hand. It's all right to love your hand. The Lord encourages us in this fact when he says through the apostle Paul, "Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:28-30).

It makes us happy to know we are living in the specially orchestrated and created community called Christ's body. Our God has arranged

us, every one of us, just as he wanted us to be. We are each other's complement, not each other's aggravation. We are each other's help, not each other's hurt.

It gives others joy too. People were amazed when they looked at the early Christians. "Behold how they love one another," they said. There was not a case of spiritual Alien Hand Syndrome to be seen!

Join with me—won't you?—in thanking God for hands that serve us all!

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



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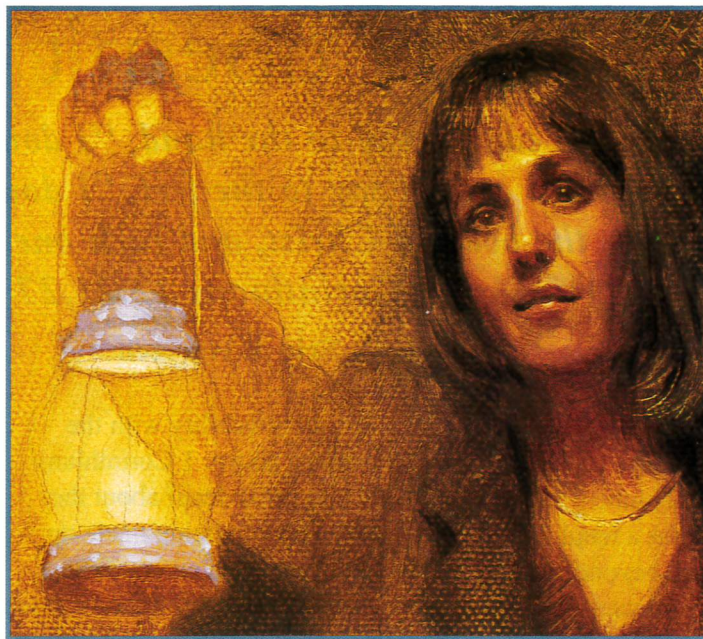
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Cover illustration by Frank Ordaz

Following the initial numbness, a widow is thrust into a tunnel of grief. As Christians, we have a hope that carries us through this tunnel to eternity.

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bits & pieces



Widowhood affects almost half of all women over age 65. What the grieving process is and how we as a church body can help widows is the focus of Sue Bondow's article, "Emerging from the tunnel" (p. 8).



With a new year often come new hopes and new plans.

- What happens when those plans don't work out? Should we blame God? David Sellnow answers that question as well as encourages us to set our sights on heavenly goals rather than earthly ones. Read "Great expectations" (back page).

- A good heavenly goal may be to beef up our personal Bible study time. *Forward in Christ* magazine has two Bible studies every month to help you with that goal. Jon Buchholz continues his series on the life of Christ (p. 30). Mark Lenz starts a new interactive Bible study series based on the theme "Jesus' miracles: Portraits of redemption" (p. 31). God's blessings on your studies!



Not many words start with the letters "expl" in the dictionary. Do you know which one fits when you see "Christ Expl. Luth. Church"? Jeff Samelson examines the different possibilities in his article on p. 18. Read it. You might be surprised by his answer.



Our "whatever" feature this month focuses on the 9/11 terrorist attack. Check it out (p. 21). And teens, keep sending those articles in!

—JKW

features

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Susan Bondow

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Just do it



In reference to the article “Lutherans carry dirty Bibles” [Sept. 2001], no mention was made of serious doctrinal differences between the different Lutheran synods. The statement, “Our mark of standing on Scripture makes it easy to spot a Lutheran,” may have been true many years ago. However, the statement makes it sound to be inclusive of all Lutherans today, which is not true.

WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have serious doctrinal differences with the liberal Lutheran synods in the United States, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. When we are asked what religion we are, we should specify that we are a “Bible-professing Lutheran.” In this day and age there is a definite need to distinguish the differences between Lutherans.

Dave Dahlke



Port Orchard, Washington

Regarding the name of this magazine . . .

Did anyone notice? Does anyone care? For over 75 years it was *The Northwestern Lutheran*. In the 90s the “The” was dropped, “Northwestern” became smaller, and the words “The Word from the WELS” were added underneath the title.

Old guys were startled (some young ones and another church body too) when the July 1999 issue screamed *Forward* and the words “Northwestern Lutheran, The Word from the WELS” became a kind of footnote. With the 150th anniversary celebration came *Forward in Christ* with the same footnote.

Since July 2001, “Northwestern Lutheran” has disappeared altogether from the cover. *Spurlosversenkt!* Just a trace inside on the masthead.

“Northwestern” was a respectable word in WELS. The sainted Prof. E. C. Fredrich, eminent historian of WELS, wrote: “These four men (John Baaing, Gottlieb Reim, Philipp Koehler, Elias Sauer) made a team in the old Northwestern Conference that embraced in

its name an honored term in the Wisconsin Synod. Today the church body has a Northwestern College in its ministerial training program, a Northwestern Preparatory School as one of that college’s feeders. It has an energetic and recently replanted Northwestern Publishing House that produces the WELS periodical, the *Northwestern Lutheran*. Until 1979 it supported a Northwestern Lutheran Academy at Mobridge, S.D. The overuse of the term tends to obscure the real significance of “Northwestern” in Wisconsin Synod history. Originally that term implied a deep commitment to a more confessional Lutheranism than was available elsewhere on the synodical scene” (*The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 31f).

No more! All that’s left is Northwestern Publishing House. I noticed. I care. I weep.

Ed Lindemann

Pardeeville, Wisconsin

“We all stem from cells” by Gary Baumler [Oct. 2001] clearly states the biblical truth related to this type of scientific experimentation.

Embryonic stem cell research is in essence manipulating human life, first by artificially creating it and then by destroying it. How much better if scientists would direct their efforts to combat disease by using stem cells from other sources such as umbilical cord blood and bone marrow.

In the 1960s I worked in the labor and delivery area of a local hospital. At that time, after a delivery the placenta with attached umbilical cord was frozen and later sent to a pharmaceutical firm. Today placentas are being disposed of unless the parents choose to save and bank the cord blood for their own possible use in the future.

Developing research to use this readily available source of stem cells and using donor bone marrow (procured in a process similar to blood donations) are other options that hold promise for treating injury and disease. As Christians we should make

our views known when there are viable alternatives to experimentation with human life.

Marge Cicchini

Kenosha, Wisconsin

In my opinion the October 2001 issue has two exceptionally good articles: “It’s not good to be alone” and “Are you using your lifelines?”. These two articles should be brought to the attention of all our backsliding and delinquent members who are in danger of losing their faith and becoming part of the crowd who are exiting the back doors of our churches as pointed out in the “Seeking and keeping” article [p. 30].

In reference to the Hebrews 10 passage mentioned in both of the articles. In the p. 3 article Paul is stated to be the writer whereas in the back page article the authorship is attributed to “the inspired writer”—the more commonly used attribution in view of the uncertainty of the Hebrews writer. Not a matter of great concern maybe as long as we’re in agreement on the source of inspiration!

Donald M. Schmechel

Hatfield, Pennsylvania

Re: Establishing a community identity [Nov. 2001].

It would be helpful for hearing-impaired people to have [church] ads acknowledge if listening devices are available. It is quite frustrating to attend a church and not be able to understand (hear) the sermon, prayers, announcements, etc.

Also, if a signage program (for the deaf) is in place, that should be included in an ad.

Evelyn Cypert



Waukesha, Wisconsin

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



The gospel and the Bible

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) announced last August that it was undertaking a major study on the morality of homosexual relationships. A final report with the study's conclusions is due out in 2005. According to an ELCA pastor, the discussion will focus on the question: "Does the gospel override the Bible?"¹

That bit of ELCA-speak probably needs translating for most WELS members. How can the gospel "override" the Bible? Isn't the gospel the main message in the Bible? Isn't it the reason we have a Bible in the first place (see John 20:31)?

Keep in mind that terms often take on peculiar meanings in discussions like this one. When the ELCA pastor said "the Bible," he had in mind especially the passages that label homosexuality a sin (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26,27; etc). By "the gospel," he meant the message that God loves and accepts everyone, regardless of who they are or what they've done. If the gospel trumps the Bible—as, for this pastor, it clearly does—then we can take those pesky verses that call homosexuality sinful and simply sweep them away.

Now you see the problem. The ELCA pastor's remark has a ring of truth. "The written code that stood against us" (Colossians 2:14)—God's Law—has been "overridden" forever by the "not guilty" verdict God pronounced over us in Jesus Christ. Thanks to Jesus, God tore up that written code's sentence of death, and gave us eternal life instead. Jesus' work forever changed the way God feels about us.

The way God feels about sin, however, remains exactly the same. The gospel justifies sinners; in no way does it ever justify sin. Homosexuality is as offensive to God

as it always has been. So are dishonesty, pride, selfishness, and everything else that God's law condemns. Jesus saved us by taking the punishment for our sins in our place, not by somehow getting God to restudy the question of whether sin is really all that bad.

One point further. Pitting the gospel and the Bible against each other is dangerous business. The gospel is the central message in the Bible. Ultimately, we don't need a Bible to show us that there's a God. A thoughtful look at the world around us makes that obvious. We don't even need the Bible to tell us we've sinned. A moment's reflection will convince us of that.

Without a Bible, though, how are you going to learn that God became a man, suffered, died, and rose again—and that through his work you receive forgiveness for all your sins? This "gospel" that "overrides" the Bible—what exactly is it? Where do you go to find it? How do you know it's true?

When you were younger, you probably sang, "Jesus loves me this I know, *For the Bible tells me so.*" Back then, it turns out, you were a better theologian than you knew.

Better, in fact, than some pastors.

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

¹"ELCA orders study on homosexuality," *New Ulm Journal*, August 2001.

The gospel justifies sinners; in no way does it ever justify sin.

Emerging from the

“He went to lie down and take a nap. Said he wasn’t feeling quite right. When I went to check on him, he was gone—massive heart attack, they said. My life will never be the same. I lost my best friend, my spouse, my mate for life. How can I go on?”

Widowhood. It affects almost half of all women over age 65. Each year, nearly 700,000 women lose their husbands and remain widows for an average of 14 years. Because women outlive men by nearly six years and tend to marry men several years older, there are 11 million widows to 2.6 million widowers, a ratio of 4.3 to 1.

“What is my purpose?”

Widowhood isn’t easy. Following the initial numbness, a widow is thrust into a tunnel of grief hoping to emerge with a new identity as well as relationships and activities to fill the emptiness. Widows ask, “What do I call myself now? Am I still a wife, or must I now refer to myself as a widow because my husband is gone?” “What is my purpose? Where am I needed? What role do I play?”

As Christians, we have a hope that carries us through this tunnel to eternity. The Word is our lamp that lights our way, and our Savior provides the hope that keeps us going, one day at a time. “Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:22).

The first year is considered the worst as it is the “year of firsts:” the first anniversary, the first birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas . . . all spent without that spouse of so many years. It is especially during this time that close friends and family members who shared a meaningful relationship with the deceased are invaluable. Other widows who have experienced a similar loss are also a deep source of comfort. Scripture tells us: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all

After the grieving process, today’s widows—almost half of all women over age 65—carve out new lives for themselves—new lives filled with growth, discovery, and a stronger faith.

Susan Bondow

tunnel

comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

The second year does not bring immediate relief, but is a year of rebuilding and healing. By the end of the second year, statistics show that widows are no more likely to be depressed than other women their age. Also, at least a third of widows report discovering new strengths and talents.

"Life does go on."

Sometime after the second year, a corner is turned. The realization hits that "life does go on, and I need to be a part of it." The light dawns at the end of the tunnel, and those who once needed comfort and support find themselves groomed for reaching out and ministering to others. As part of a new definition of self, widows begin to seek out service opportunities, volunteer positions, and activities that nourish and foster friendships and fellowship.

Ken Dychtwald, author of *Age Power*, makes this observation: "There's been a creation of elder women tribes. Instead of the traditional husband and wife, you see three or four widows traveling together, going together to restaurants and movies, becoming caretakers of each other, sharing houses and apartments. It's a whole new social phenomenon."

This woman-to-woman ministry develops out of a shared sense of loss that often only other widows understand, as well as a shared faith that serves as a foundation upon which to build that new identity and define new activities and service opportunities. "Tribes" of women gather together for day trips, extended travel, Lutheran Women's Missionary Society rallies, Women of the WELS retreats, and service through WELS Kingdom Workers.

The Organization for WELS Lutheran Seniors has an extensive prison ministry program and a Crossing Generations program that connects volunteers with Christian day schools, Sunday schools, and vacation Bible school programs.

Individual congregations offer Christian women's organizations, music programs, Altar Guild, and Ladies Aid, all of which encourage women to grow together in faith, fellowship, and service.

One example is the Women's Caring and Sharing Ministry at St. Peter, Appleton, Wis. Bringing generations of women together to grow in faith through devotions and Bible study, the program then offers specific committees representing areas of service. A woman can choose how much or how little to be involved and pick her area(s) of interest. Committees include Willing Wheels for transportation needs, new member welcome, prayer chain, shut-in visits, Helping Hearts (which delivers meals after surgery or a new baby), sending cards, funeral serving, Gentle Souls (for those suffering from a recent loss), the Care Package Committee (which provides treats and spiritual encouragement to members in the military, away at college, or shut-in), as well as quilt-making and card-stamping.

"It's my turn."

Not all widows find it easy to turn the corner, and many remain isolated and alone. Emergence cannot be rushed or forced. As God does not give up on us, we must not give up on widows. We never know when our loved one's response to our invitation may suddenly turn to, "Yes!"

As one widow sums things up, "I cherish those memories of the wonderful times we had together; those memories help me get through the rough times. When I feel sorry for myself, I start to count all the others I know who are alone and struggling with things worse than I am. I still find myself saying, 'Oh, I wish Rob could be here to see this' or that we could have taken that trip together, and there's always that special hymn that brings tears to my eyes. But, I know it is not good to stay home alone. Walls don't talk back. Others were there for me. Now it's my turn to be there for them."

Yes, today's widows have been leaders in the reinvention of old age. They set a beautiful example of faith in action despite the crushing losses that accompany aging. It is a blessing to see these women of faith carving out new lives for themselves—new lives filled with growth, discovery, and a stronger faith. The church has been and continues to be a mainstay in generating those special Christian friendships so important during any time of loss, and, when ready, provides many opportunities for a new identity to emerge, to be nurtured in faith, and to discover ways to use time, talents, and treasures to the glory of God.



Susan Bondow, MSW, a wife and mother of three, is a member at St. Peter, Appleton, Wisconsin. She coauthored the book Through the Looking Glass and Back with Pastor Paul Kelm.

Ch-ch-ch-changes

Two WELS high schools—West and Luther—keep Christ in education while adapting to their always-changing world.

Linda R. Buxa

Heraclitus was right. You may not know his name, but you probably know his famous phrase—or at least a variation of it—“Nothing endures but change.”

This philosopher, who lived from 540 BC to 480 BC, could never have predicted all the changes to come, yet he knew the world wouldn't remain the same.

Almost 2,500 years later, he is still right. Two Lutheran high schools—West in Plymouth, Minn., and Luther in Onalaska, Wis.—know this. Take a look at the changes they face and how they adapt to them.

Changes in society

High school can be a scary place right now, in an age of school shootings and violence. That's why West promotes its safe environment to the community. “Although we know we are not immune to such incidents, it is our hope that the vast majority of our students want a wholesome educational atmosphere,” says Merlin Meitner, principal at West. Still, they are being realistic. “We are working on an action plan for violent incidents should they occur,” he continues.

Though he feels the need to be prepared, Meitner is especially grateful for the school's atmosphere. “I feel that we have a very special school where the vast majority of the

students are joyful,” he says. “There are great relationships between and among the students and faculty.”

In addition to these changes, “students have less time,” says Paul Wichmann, principal at Luther. More extracurricular activities and part-time jobs challenge students to set priorities. “This either promotes time management to remain successful with student's various commitments or exacts a price from several or all of the student's commitments,” he explains.

Changes in education

Education standards continue to change. “Colleges are raising the admissions bar,” says Wichmann, who has been principal at Luther for six years. They expect higher ACT scores and a third year of foreign language during high school. This means curriculum changes and additions. Students at Luther are offered more electives in computers, social studies, and foreign language. The faculty is also considering advanced placement courses in two departments.

In addition to these expectations, West and Luther placed higher expectations on themselves. Each school completed a self-study and became accredited. They now have specific short- and long-range plans and annually evaluate their progress.

With all the curriculum changes, however, it might be easy for students to remain focused on them-

selves. To stop this from happening, students are encouraged to be more active outside the classroom. At Luther, students volunteer with the Red Cross, hosting an annual blood drive. Two major medical centers provide plenty of opportunities to volunteer for hospital work, and the student pro-life organization visits a nursing home several times a year. In addition, all freshmen religion students do a service project.

Changes in technology

Undeniably, technology has changed—from shopping to banking to communication. To prepare students for the world, schools need to use computers and technology in education also. This means changes for both students and teachers.

At Luther, all students have e-mail and Internet access. The teachers have moved from a pencil and paper student-records system to an administrative software program, which has computerized academic, attendance, and other student data.

West, equipped with DSL (a high-speed Internet link received through your phone line) access, not only teaches students but also educates teachers how to use the computer. “For two years our teachers had a consultant helping them learn how to utilize the computers in their classroom,” says Meitner. This includes using computers for classroom presentations and assigning

**WEST LUTHERAN
HIGH SCHOOL**
Plymouth, Minn.

Year school began: 1979
2001-02 enrollment: 215
Non-WELS and/or unchurched: 68
Where graduates go: 5% to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; 85% to other colleges; 5% tech schools; 5% directly into the work force
Number of supporting congregations: 17
For more information:
 3350 Harbor Ln N, Plymouth MN 55447; 612/509-9378;
 <www.wlhs.net>.

LUTHER HIGH SCHOOL
Onalaska, Wis.

Year school began: 1957
2001-02 enrollment: 270
Non-WELS and/or unchurched: 2
Where graduates go*: 4% Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; 47% other colleges; 37% tech schools; 12% directly into the work force
Number of supporting congregations: 26
For more information:
 1501 Wilson St, Box 129, Onalaska WI 54650; 612/509-9378;
 <www.luther.k12.wi.us>.

*last year's statistics

meaningful homework so students must use the computer.

Changes in buildings

In the past two years, Luther and West saw changes in their facilities.

Meitner has been principal at West for the past five years. Since then, enrollment has grown from 103 students to 215.

With such a jump in enrollment, space is obviously an issue. So in those five years, West found its first permanent facility and completed an addition. This is their first full year using that addition.

For the second year at Onalaska, students are using the Association Center or "ACE." This addition contains a gymnasium, locker rooms, trainer's room, athletic office, a multipurpose area, and two large storage areas.

Changes in budget

No surprise here, but both schools are struggling with changes in budget issues. "Funding is a challenge," says Wichmann. "We must keep Christian secondary education affordable for all."

How to do that isn't always simple. Both schools rely on tuition for

fifth of an 11-part series



The 2000 girls' varsity soccer team at West Lutheran High School. This was West's first girls' varsity soccer team.

about 65 percent of their operating funds. They also count on congregational support. But even that isn't always enough. So, they are looking for "creativity in financing the rising cost of education" says Meitner.

West gets creative through a thrift store, which is run for the purpose of supporting the high school. And it achieves its goal. West receives a substantial five percent of its operating budget from Wise Penny thrift store.

No changes

All these changes reinforce the need for focus—a focus found only in the Savior. That's why Luther's motto is "Keeping Christ in Higher Education" and why West chose "Growing in Christ" as the theme for its capital campaign.

Both schools know that Christ has given them these challenges and blessings. And both know that God will be with them through all the changes. After all, "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, *who does not change . . .*" (James 1:17, emphasis added).

It seems Heraclitus was only partly right.



Linda Buxa is a member at Holy Trinity, Kodiak, Alaska.



One of the many Homecoming activities at Luther High School is a pogo stick race.

As Lutherans living in the United States we are told to ignore our religious differences or be labeled bigoted or even unpatriotic. But we can buy pizza from Islamic friends while at the same time confessing that we do not share the same God.

PIZZA, PATRIOTISM, AND LUTHER

John W. H. Berg



Do Lutherans hate Muslims . . . and Jews? Some think that Luther taught such hatred. Here Pastor John Berg stands with Habib and his wife, Afghani Muslims who make good pizza. Berg will tell you that Luther is misunderstood.

One of the two pizzerias I frequent was fire bombed.

I should mention that its sign also advertised “Afghan Cuisine” and that this incident occurred on Sept. 12.

George Bernard Shaw characterized the sick mentality behind this kind of “patriotism” as “your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it.”

My friend Habib who runs the other pizzeria is also Afghani, Muslim, and threatened. His store now sports an American flag. We are consciously supporting our Islamic friend by ordering pizza more often (what sacrifices I am

willing to make for others!).

In an effort to stem such un-American acts, politicians and preachers are once again prattling on with the heresy that we all worship the same God. To disagree is fatal. Once again this puts Lutherans on the hot seat as we are faced with the challenge of distinguishing our politics from our religion. As we abhor violence against innocent Muslims, so we abhor the religion of Islam. As we grieve and seethe with fellow United States’ citizens over the atrocities committed on Sept. 11, so we must confess that terrorists do not go to hell because they are terrorists and victims do not go to heaven because they are victims. The ques-

tion is always, “What of this Jesus?”

Faced with this challenge, we are invariably forced to face our past, specifically some of the words of our spiritual father, Martin Luther.

A message for another time

Luther wrote concerning Jews living in Saxony that their synagogues be burned, their houses razed, their prayer books and Talmud taken, their rabbis forbidden to teach on pain of loss of life and limb, their free passage through the country stopped, their usury prohibited, and their young people put to hard work. You can look it up in Luther’s works.

Indefensible? Well, listen to this. “Destroy all the places where [they]

worship their gods.” And this. “If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and worship other gods’ . . . Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death.”

Indefensible? Well, look it up—in Deuteronomy. That was God on how to treat paganism in Israel. When Israel itself fell into apostasy, the Lord demanded, “Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword” (Amos 9:1). Now, should these words of God and Luther turn us into mobs of pizzeria pillagers and synagogue sackers? No. These words are not for us—God’s or Luther’s. And we need not apologize for either.

God’s words were for the nation of Israel. God does not tolerate idolatry and at that time he ordered death for idolaters, while at the same time giving opportunity for repentance and atonement.

The religious/political situation of Luther’s day was much like that of Israel. The situation Luther was in, but did not create, was that the ruler’s religion was the religion of his land. Freedom of religion existed—you just had to go to the territory whose leader practiced yours. It was inconceivable for that generation to imagine the religious tolerance we practice, although the Lutherans for their part forced no one to believe as they.

To 21st-century ears tuned to freedom of religion and reverberating from genuine anti-Semitism, Luther’s advice seems out of order. For our day it is. However, this was for 16th-century Saxony. Remember,

God does not mandate any form of government or legislate its treatment of idolatry. Luther’s words were not for the common people but only for the leaders of Saxony whose duty it was to protect the faith and the faithful. Unlike God’s instruction to Israel, Luther’s was that no person be harmed. He prefaced his advice (which he said they could ignore) by saying, “With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few from the glowing flames. We dare not avenge ourselves. Vengeance a thousand times worse than we could wish them already has them by the throats.”

[Luther’s] writings clearly show that his quarrel was with the religion of Judaism and not with people of Jewish ancestry.


A message for all time

Luther’s advice to the princes was not the result of anti-Semitism but a response to false Jewish claims that they were being held against their will in Saxony. Luther said, fine, let the Jews go and burn their synagogues behind them. (Unlike Luther, others were advocating “burning synagogues with the Jews still in them” and did.) Luther was happy to grant their “wish,” because they were gaining converts to Judaism. Jews could remain and be safe, but their proselytizing had to stop. That there was no organized persecution of Jews at that time in Saxony is evidence that Luther was not naive in believing that no Jew would be harmed. Rights of rulers were sharply distinguished from those of individuals.

In addition, Luther was responding to some unprintable and unimaginably gross blasphemy against Jesus and Mary, as well as to the illegal practice of usury, to reports of the murder of Christian children, and to other criminal acts. Finally for Luther, since these Jews were resisting Christianity, the time had come to no longer “throw your pearls to pigs” (Matthew 7:6).

Luther was not anti-Semitic. His writings clearly show that his quarrel was with the religion of Judaism and not with people of Jewish ancestry—an important distinction that even some Lutherans refuse to grant Luther. Luther called many a Jewish convert “brother.” In fact Luther closed his writing with this prayer, “May Christ, our dear Lord, convert them mercifully and preserve us steadfastly and immovably in the knowledge of him, which is eternal life. Amen.” It can safely be said that Luther would not write in 21st-century America as he did in 16th-century Saxony, although his condemnations of idolatry would be just as harsh as God’s, and so, just as out of tune with 21st-century America.

As Lutherans living in a country where we are told to ignore our religious differences or be labeled bigoted or even unpatriotic, we need resolve. We can wave our flag with Jewish friends or buy pizza from Islamic ones while at the same time confessing that we do not share the same God with these idolaters. Like Luther we must confess to foe and friend alike that they need to turn in repentance and faith to the only true God and Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose holy, precious blood was shed for all races.

That is hardly anti-Semitic or unpatriotic. That is loving. 

John Berg is pastor at Hope, Fremont, California.

The 12 attributes presented in this series reflect what makes Lutherans unique. Although each attribute on its own may be shared by other religious groups, when all the attributes are studied together, a uniquely Lutheran image emerges.

Lutherans come to Supper

What makes the Lord's Supper special for Lutherans is not what we bring, but what God serves.

Wayne D. Mueller

There are way too many old jokes about Lutherans and eating. Some say Lutherans cannot understand the Bible without a coffee in one hand and a donut in the other. Others intone that where two or three Lutherans are gathered together, there is a potluck supper.

Mixing food and meetings is standard fare across all denominational lines. Still, when Lutherans come to supper, something special takes place. What makes the eating and drinking of Lutherans unique is a certain meal we receive together. The meal that sets us apart from other Christian groups is not food we prepare for ourselves, but nourishment God prepares and serves to us. That meal is the Lord's Supper.

Same, but different

Of course, most Christian denominations celebrate Communion in some form. But the things that make Lutherans unique in other ways also contribute to the singular way we participate at the Lord's Table. The simple truths of the inspired Scripture make us confident of what we are receiving from the Savior's hand. And the Bible's two main teachings of law and gospel help us to prepare for this special meal in a special way.

The menu

I have friends who will not eat out unless they can have the restaurant's menu e-mailed to them in advance. Even more will those who attend the Lord's Supper want to know in advance what they are receiving.

God faxes his menu for the Lord's Supper through his Word. Paul wrote, "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:29). Jesus gave bread to his disciples to eat when he instituted the Supper and said, "This is my body [which is] given for you" (Luke 22:19). Jesus gave his disciples wine in the cup, and after "they all drank from it," he said, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:23,24).

Lutherans are unique because they don't try to alter the Savior's simple menu for the Supper. They know they are receiving both bread and wine, and—along with the bread and wine—the body and blood of Jesus. Other Christian churches do not have the same menu. Protestants, including the Reformed and Evangelicals, deny that Jesus' real body and blood are present. Roman Catholics teach that the bread and wine are not

received by the communicant. They say that their ritual physically transforms the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

The blessing

Does what's on the menu really make a difference? It does if we want to be sure we receive the blessing Jesus promises to those who come to his Supper. Paul says that to deny the presence of Jesus' body and blood, as the Reformed do, is a sin that incurs God's judgment rather than his intended blessing. On the other hand, Roman churches, by trying to bless themselves when they elevate and praise the transformed elements, do not receive what Jesus promised.

To accept the menu Jesus puts before us in the Holy Supper is to trust that we receive the benefit he promises from his divine food. Paul explains: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Jesus serves his heavenly menu to his disciples with the words, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:27,28).

Lutherans above all treasure the Holy Supper because there Jesus fulfills his promise to forgive us, fully and freely. What makes this meal special for Lutherans is not what we bring, but what God serves.

The forgiveness our Lord distributes at the Table leads us to prepare more carefully than we do for any other meal. Proper dress, the anticipation of seeing friends, and prayer may be a part of our preparation. But every Lutheran confirmand has memorized Luther's words: "He is properly prepared who believes in these words, 'Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins'" (Small Catechism). There are many external considerations, but our trust that God will serve what's on the menu is proper preparation.

God delivers

The way we look at the Lord's Supper through Jesus' eyes characterizes our Lutheran view of both sacraments. We consider Holy Baptism the same way we view Holy Communion. Baptism is a sacrament in the true sense of the word, a holy act of God to dispense his highest blessings to us.

In this washing instituted by Christ, we receive forgiveness, spiritual life, and the assurance of eternal life. "This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also" (1 Peter 3:21). "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

At his invitation we come to his Communion table often, but our Lord instituted Baptism to be received only once. The power of Baptism, however, is an ongoing influence in our

lives. Paul wrote, "We 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" (Romans 6:4).

Communion and Baptism are not potlucks where everybody contributes. In the sacraments God does everything for us.

We also distribute the Savior's blessings according to his directive. He charged us to baptize all nations and said that, as a rule, instruction will follow baptism (Matthew 28:19, 20), so we bring our babies to be baptized into God's family. Jesus instituted Holy Communion, however, only among those he first instructed (Mark 14:22). And his apostle wrote that those who participate at the Lord's Table must have the ability to examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). That's why we offer the Lord's Supper only to those who have the maturity of Christian faith and knowledge.

A table waiter's heart

God feeds our faith with a table waiter's heart. Communion and Baptism are not potlucks where everybody contributes. In the sacraments God does everything for us. He prepared the blessings through the humble service of his Son. He prepares the table before me (Psalm 23:5). He distributes his blessings freely.

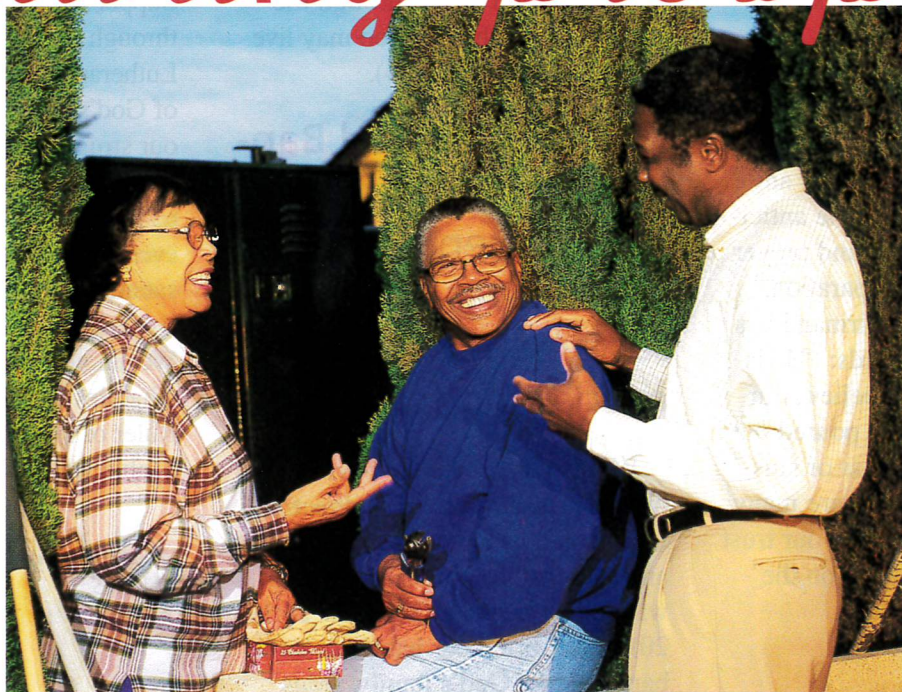
Many despise God's gift of the sacraments, arguing that we receive no blessing in Baptism and the Lord's Supper that we do not already possess through the spoken gospel. But Lutherans treasure every dispensation of God's grace. Our feelings of guilt, our struggle with persistent sins and weaknesses, our recurring doubts lead us to crave God's nourishing gospel in every form. In the sacraments God satiates all our senses—taste, touch, sight, and smell, as well as hearing. We are nourished and reinforced for what lies ahead. We sit in awe as the Ruler of all serves us graciously with a table waiter's heart.



Wayne Mueller is first vice president of WELS.



Nurturing prospects



The best advice one can give for nurturing the people on a church's prospect list is see the people, share the Word, and multiply the effort.

James J. Radloff

Several years ago a young man graduated with a business degree but was not able to land the job of his choice. Finally he accepted a position selling life insurance and in short order became his company's top salesman. At an annual awards banquet he was expected to give a brief motivational speech to his colleagues. This struck fear in his heart. He wrote out word for word his two-minute speech on cards, one taped to his bathroom mirror, the other tucked in his suit coat pocket for ready reference and memorization. He could in time recite it without flaw.

Then came the night of the banquet. Introduced by the company CEO, he looked out at a sea of eyes all fixed on him, and he lost it. He stood in silence, trying to retrieve his

opening words. He couldn't. The best he could do was recall a line that began the second paragraph. Clearing his throat, he started, "See the people," . . . then silence. That was all he could remember. The silence was deafening. He started a second time with greater urgency, "See the people," and again he drew only blanks. One last time he tried, "See the people . . ." It was useless, and so with a nervous smile he sat down. After a short pause his fellow employees began to applaud wildly, giving him a standing ovation. They thought it was the greatest motivational speech they had ever heard for selling insurance. "See the people . . . see the people . . . see the people."

Seeing people sells life insurance. Seeing the people and sharing the

Word—that offers the assurance of eternal life in heaven.

The best advice one can give for nurturing the people on a church's prospect list is see the people and share the Word, see the people and share the Word, see the people and share the Word!

I begin this article with two basic assumptions:

1. Your church has a sizable prospect list to nurture, and
2. You have a friendly and caring church community ready and willing to welcome new babes in the faith.

If not, that is where you need to begin. If so, then see the people and share the Word.

See the people

A pastor friend blessed in outreach work put it this way: "The key to



follow-up is follow through.” We often give up on people too soon. We should keep in mind the three p’s—persistence, patience, and prayer. Don’t give up; wait on God’s timing and pray, pray, pray.

In reaching souls for Christ, remember that we can determine activity but not results. Set goals for activity. Trust God for results! God has called us to do the fishing, but he does the catching.

I have a favorite saying that goes this way: “Presence is more important than paper, but paper is an excuse for presence.” That you would care enough to stop by and see a prospect personally is more valuable than any sheet of paper that you might leave with him. However, a printed invitation to some special service, event, or activity at your church will make it easier to stop by, to talk with him about the great issues of life, and to invite him to “come and see” Jesus.

No six- or eight- or 10-step plan will guarantee that people will come and join your church as true believers in Jesus. The best things we can do are plan our visits sequentially (plan each visit with your next visit in mind), keep good records of contacts made, share the gospel verbally and

in written form, and pray that the Holy Spirit will touch and move hearts through his Word.

In our churches, outreach is a team effort. While some people are out making calls, have other people at home and at church praying. We have in our churches, especially among the aged and handicapped, some people who are prayer warriors. A blind lady in our church in Austin, Tex., could pray for hours. She would pray daily through our prospect list, which we printed in Braille for her. She was a valuable part of our outreach team.

Ask your prayer warriors to pray while the evangelism committee is out making calls, and publicly recognize them as a part of your outreach team.

Share the Word

Our goal in prospect nurture is, of course, to share law and gospel as often and in as many different ways as we can: verbally, in printed form, with videos, by the pastor, through a friend, with an invitation to a class. Be creative! The great assurance that we have from our Lord is that his Word works every time we share it! “[My word] will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). Paul says in Romans 1:16: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power [Greek: *dynamis*, from which we get our English word dynamite] of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” The gospel has the power to blast a soul all the way from hell to heaven! That’s powerful.

Realize also that when we share the Word it works in different ways

with different people. To some it may become “the smell of death,” that is, a word of judgment when rejected, but to others it will be “the fragrance of life,” the sweetest saving message they have ever heard (see 2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

In nurturing prospects, simply share what Jesus has done for you and for the world. Remember the ABC’s of the Christian faith:

A. Jesus lived a perfect life for me and for the world under the law (Galatians 4:4),

B. Jesus died for my sins and the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:5,6), and

C. Jesus rose again for me and for the world, proving that his work in our behalf is perfectly and forever completed (Romans 4:25).

Multiply the effort

When prospect nurture is carried out in a church setting, a third element is needed: multiply the effort. In other words, involve a growing number of people in reaching out with the gospel to friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. More “fishing lines” in the water give the Lord more opportunities to bless!

When recruiting outreach workers, do it one on one and heart to heart. Tell them what is expected, how long it will take, and provide training for the task. Training will involve both classroom work (Bible study and practice) and on-the-job modeling.

There you have it. Prospect nurture is the work of the church through God’s people, and it is as easy as one, two, three—see the people, share the Word, and multiply the effort.



Pastor Jim Radloff, former mission counselor for the South Atlantic and Southeastern Wisconsin Districts, is an outreach explorer to Grenada, West Indies.

Christ Expl. Lutheran Church

Just what does the abbreviation “Expl.” mean?

Jeffrey L. Samelson

I found one in the mailbox again today. Another advertising appeal (yes, churches get junk mail, too) addressed to “Christ Expl. Luth. Church.” Sometimes the labels spell out “Lutheran;” sometimes they drop “Church,” but they don’t leave out the “Expl.”

Having done data entry for mailings once upon a time, I understand the need to shorten words—you can only fit so many characters into a computer data field or onto a label. But what does “Expl.” abbreviate?

Well, I know what “Expl.” is supposed to stand for. But in the year or so that I’ve been sorting mail for the congregation, I’ve wondered about the people who print up the labels or place them on the envelopes—even the workers in mail rooms and post offices. What do these people—who have no contact with us other than our name—think it means when they see “Christ Expl. Lutheran”?

Well, what could it mean? I checked the dictionary and discovered that not too many words begin with “expl,” and most of them are related. Which words might people associate with our church?

• I guess the meaning we would least want attached to the abbreviation would be a form of the verb exploit, such as **exploitive** or **exploiting**. Although it possibly could be understood positively—“we as a Lutheran church are using our relationship with Christ to the greatest possible advantage”—I think the idea of exploitation has negative connotations for most people. Actually, that would fit in well with certain modern philosophies that view Christianity as nothing but a cancer on society and its churches as self-seeking, unethical parasites. So we don’t want that word.

• **Expletive** would be another meaning for “Expl.” that we would want to avoid. I hope that no one would associate that word, in its common first sense, “an exclamation or oath, especially one that is profane, vulgar, or obscene,” with us—especially since “Christ” is already used in that improper way so often.

The basic meaning of expletive refers to something that is added or inserted in order to fill a vacancy—a basically meaningless space filler. If that’s the role we’re filling as a

church here in Maryland, then something's most definitely wrong. We have purpose as a church—we are Christ's body, and we are his witnesses to our world. We aren't here just because we were here before and expect to be here again. We're here because we have a mission to fulfill and ministry to do. So let's keep expletive deleted.

- A much better long form for "Expl.," although rather awkward, could be "**Christ Explaining Lutheran Church.**" That would certainly be something wonderful to be known as: the church that explains all about Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World. But since technically we can't really explain Christ, i.e., we can't actually make Jesus the God-man plain or understandable to human minds, this might not work so well after all.

- Then how about "**Christ Explicit Lutheran Church**"? That name would certainly get people's attention, since explicit is used so often with things describing the racier side of society. But look at these meanings for explicit: "Fully and clearly expressed without vagueness, implication, or ambiguity." "Fully and clearly defined or formulated." "Forthright, unambiguous, and unre-served in expression." Isn't that exactly how we want to share, declare, and live out our faith in Christ? But somehow I don't think that's what comes to mind when anyone sees "Christ Expl. Lutheran Church."

- Of course, the original word had to be **exploratory**. The church's name ended up on someone's mailing list before it was officially a

congregation, and the synod was still just "exploring" the possibility of a permanent mission here. But I doubt that any label-sticker, envelope-stuffer, or mail-sorter thinks of exploratory when they see the abbreviation "Expl.," no matter how sensible or authentic that may be.

- And besides, exploratory is nowhere near as much fun as our last option: some form of the verb "**explode.**" "Christ Exploding Lutheran Church" inspires some interesting mental images, doesn't it?

But seriously, maybe it would be good to be known as the explosive Lutheran church: The Lutheran church whose members are so excited and thankful about what God has done for and in them that they practically burst with joy and enthusiasm. The Lutheran church that grows by leaps and bounds because that joy and enthusiasm shows itself in works of service and words of witness. Yes, even the Lutheran church that understands that the gospel is dynamite itself—the power of God for salvation—and that the Word of God that we rely on gives us "divine power to demolish strongholds . . . [to] demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and . . . take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4,5).

Hmm . . . I like that. "Christ Exploding Lutheran Church." What do you think? Is it too late to change our name?



Jeffrey Samelson is pastor at Christ, Columbia, Maryland.

Simple joy marks upcoming milestone

What is it like to be confirmed as an adult? Here's one woman's story.

Jane Peterson

This Sunday I'm going to reach an important milestone in my life. After 20 weeks of adult Bible classes, I'm going to be confirmed in my church Sunday and take my first communion.

I was married in a Lutheran church and baptized by a Lutheran minister. Becoming a member of the church was something I always wanted to do, but it was one of those things "that I would do someday."

"Someday" caught up with me last fall when the pastor of the church my husband belongs to and I attended occasionally with him, called to invite me to attend the adult Bible information class.

He asked what day of the week would be convenient for me, and I thought about it before committing to Tuesday. To be perfectly honest, my first thought was how I was going to commit to an hour and a half each week. I have a husband, toddler, four cats, a house, and a full-time job—and on Tuesday evenings I frequently brought home work with me. Twenty weeks seemed like forever.

But soon that didn't even become a question for me. I put my priorities in order and developed ways to get my work done before class. I looked forward to the inner peace and joy that studying the Bible brought. I began attending worship services more frequently and started

getting to know some of the people in the church.

And although I had attended services before, the words had more meaning to them, and the prayers had more depth. The more I learned, the more I wanted to know.

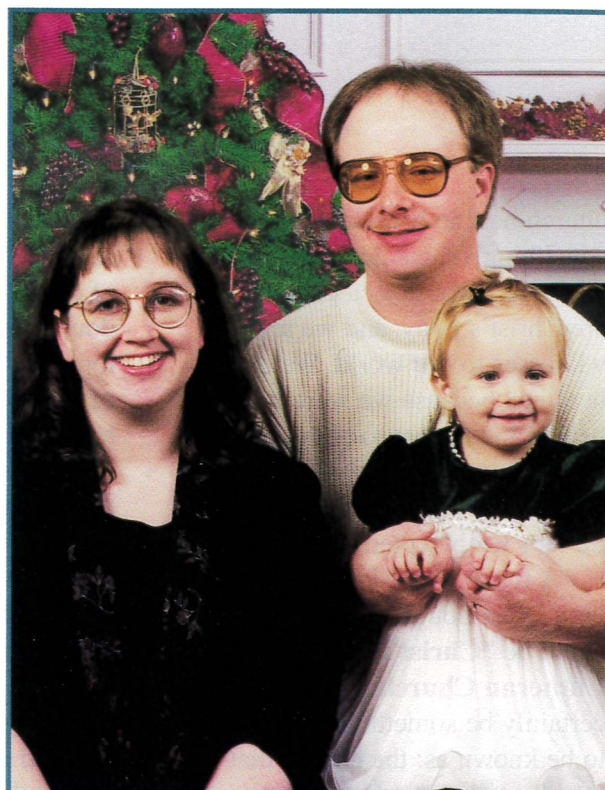
I began changing the way I look at things and the way my actions affect others. But don't get me wrong. I don't pretend to be perfect. I'll still catch myself gesturing at the driver who cut me off, losing patience when my daughter dumps her tea set into the toilet, and lifting money from my husband's wallet when his back is turned.

I'm more cognizant of my actions now, and I feel like I have the knowledge to instruct my daughter about faith in Christ.

At first I struggled to put aside a few hours each week for religious education. Now I wonder what I'm going to do with my free time on Tuesday nights.

So, as I reach this milestone in my life, I don't feel like something has come to an end. I feel like it is only beginning.

Jane Peterson is a member at Gloria Dei, Grand Blanc, Michigan. This article was originally printed in the Holly Herald, a community newspaper.



Jane, Ben, and Elizabeth Peterson in November 2000.

Following up . . .

We contacted Jane Peterson after her confirmation and asked her to reminisce about her confirmation day and to explain what blessings she's received as a member of Gloria Dei.

Peterson says that although her confirmation day was special, it was not like a traditional confirmation done as a teenager. There weren't gifts and fanfare, just a simple ceremony during the church service with her husband and daughter in attendance. She notes, though, "I did it because I wanted to, not because it was expected of me."

As a member of Gloria Dei, Peterson is "able to look at everyday blessings more." She explains, "I have an awareness I didn't have before. And, I feel connected as part of the church."

WHATEVER

The 9-11 call

Christopher Becker

It was the day all people will forever remember
Of all that took place on the eleventh of September,
The scenes of planes crashing through the Trade Center
Of all enemies we faced, this our biggest tormentor.
Terrorists, you might have thought that you have won
By all that you did on 9-11.

It was a peaceful morning on that September day,
But that all changed when I heard the President say
Terrorists attacked the most powerful on earth.
But you sir, Bin Laden, for what it is worth,
Helped unite our nation together as one
When you attacked us on 9-11.

The images of planes lining up and smashing
And then pictures of the twin towers crashing
Made me think why someone would do such a thing.
Is it because our theme is "Let Freedom Ring"?
You did not use tanks, bombs, or a gun
But our own planes on 9-11.

Heroes are the crews that helped no matter the cost,
Tending the injured or looking for the lost.
They all kept working no matter the strife;
They gave of their talents, for some their life.
Your courage should now be measured by the ton
For all that you did on 9-11.

The scenes on T.V. were a sword through my heart
When the thousands of people from earth did depart.
Children without parents and husbands without wives
From the Pacific to the Atlantic, it changed all our lives.
My heart and prayers go out to everyone
Who lost a loved one on 9-11.

In view of thousands killed that day,
Let us bow down with a sad heart and pray
To the all-powerful God who is in control of all:
May this cowardly attack not let our faith fall,
But instead let it be strengthened in your Son
With all that happened on 9-11.

Christopher Becker, a member at St. John, Lannon, Wisconsin, is a junior at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wisconsin.





Sharing Christ

Kathleen K. Luehring, a sophomore at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., and a team of four other MLC students participated in a Forward in Christ canvassing and vacation Bible school project in the summer of 2001, traveling to different churches in the United States and Canada. Here Luehring relates one of her stories:

I saw a lady walking down the street in Beatrice, Neb., carrying two bags of groceries. She was out of breath and seemed tired. I asked her if she needed help carrying her groceries home. She was happy to accept my offer, and together we continued toward her house.

I learned on the way that she had some health problems. She also told me that she had just gotten a divorce. She broke down and told me that her husband had abused her both physically and mentally. He had also cheated on her with her best friend.

I learned that day what it's like to have no hope in Jesus. When she cried, it wasn't just tears of sorrow but also tears of despair. Her apartment was empty, no car, no telephone, little food, no friends, and no hope. I asked her if she had a church, and she said no. She then told me it would be okay to come back and visit with Phil Spaude, pastor at Christ in Beatrice.

A few days later, Pastor Spaude and I went back to visit. We went through the Great Exchange, first the law and then the gospel. Because she didn't have a car, Pastor Spaude said he'd arrange for someone to pick her up for church on Sunday.

Our team left on Saturday, so I never got a chance to see her in church. Pastor Spaude later e-mailed and said that she had bailed out at the last second. I wished I could have been there to encourage her in her faith, but at least I can still pray for her. I pray the Lord will continue to work in her life so that she can and will come to know him and the comfort he brings.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. If you have an example to share, send it to Forward in Christ magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>.

"My name is Leslie Schmidt. By the grace of God, and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I am a breast cancer survivor of eight months."

These are the words I spoke at the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life held in May in Savannah, Ga. Approximately 400 survivors of cancer gathered together there to celebrate another year of life.

After the introductions, the survivors walked the first lap of the track event. We invited our caregivers to walk the second lap with us.

The next day a friend inquired what there was to do at the relay event. His question seemed strange to me and prompted some further thought.

The relay wasn't about what there was to do as much as what cancer does to each person it touches and the people who help you through it.

For me it has been about losses. I not only lost my hair during chemotherapy treatment, but I lost the vanity that we all have about how we look. I lost my hard-line attitude to have everything just right. I don't think perfection is so important anymore. I no longer live and view life with the arrogance of thinking I will somehow escape death. I honestly see each day as precious. I observe so many things differently and receive such enjoyment in the sights and sounds of creation.



Leslie Schmidt walks the survivor lap at the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, remembering the days that are past and rejoicing in the present day that the Lord has made.

Paul spoke my thoughts better than I ever could: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ . . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:7).

Some would think I was "off balance," because I thank God for my cancer—but I do. I have grown in my relationship with him and know resurrection power in the assurance of God's presence, love, and forgiveness. This newness of life has blessed and affected my relationships with others, my worship mindset, and my prayer life.

I don't know what the future holds for me. Cancer survivors live with the reality of a recurrence of this dreaded disease. But I do know that the Lord who walked this "relay" with me these past months is the same Lord who will greet me in eternity. Praise his holy name!

Synodical Council sets direction

The WELS Mission Objectives Vision (MOV) statement outlines our purpose and what we hope to accomplish as a synod. In applying that MOV, the Synodical Council highlighted our most critical challenging opportunities at its fall meeting.

The key thrusts the council wants WELS to focus on are

• **Grow spiritually—hear the Word and live it publicly in the world.**

Says WELS President Karl Gurgel, “If we are not deeply rooted in the Word, there’s no incentive to move out and share it with others.”

• **Equip the saints—by mobilizing believers in Word ministry.**

“We need to use all of God’s people in every way possible to spread the Word of God everywhere,” says Gurgel.

• **Reach out—relationally with the gospel.**

“In our daily contacts, look for opportunities to share the gospel with all those around us. It needs to be part of the fabric of our daily life,” says Gurgel.

Areas of ministry will relate each budget item to one of these key thrusts. That will help the Synodical Council make wise decisions in the next two years when WELS will need an additional \$8 to \$10 million annually to solidify recent ministry and mission gains. Meanwhile, in response to a synod convention resolution, the Conference of Presidents and the Commission for Communication on Financial Support are developing a stewardship emphasis for the benefit of both congregations and the synod.

Other important events at this meeting included:

• The approval of a revised revenue forecast for the 2001-02 and the 2002-03 budgets. Less revenue in both budgets is expected—\$1,053,195 less in 2001-02 and \$909,121 less in the 2002-03. WELS ministries are preparing to cut budgets as necessary.

• The approval of the 2002 benefits rates. The rates will rise an average of 12 percent beginning in January 2002. The exact rate will vary widely by region.

• A recommendation that all the areas of ministry participate in a budgeting exercise that will allow each area to fully examine each item in its budget and look at alternative ways to accomplish its goals.

• A report that over \$2 million was requested in a total of 60 Seek and Keep grant requests. The Seek and Keep program gives grants to congregations, individuals, and organizations to promote outreach and assimilation/retention.

• A proposal for a 9% tuition and room rate increase at our synodical schools. The council endorsed this increase pending results of a study of the current rates and tuition and fee structures.

According to Pastor Peter Kruschel, administrator for the Board for Ministerial Education, in the past decade tuition and fee rates at the four synodical schools (Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw; Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon) have only increased at the rate of inflation (about 3 to 3.5 percent a year). Nationwide, tuition rates at public colleges and universities have risen an average of 7.7 percent this year alone. But add in new programs, maintenance costs, and synodical budget constraints, and the need for a sharper increase becomes apparent.

“It appears that the opportunities for finding areas for substantial savings are running out,” says Kruschel. “Short of cutting back or cutting out key educational programs, we have little choice but to raise tuition to a rate that will still be comparable to public universities in the upper Midwest.”

The Synodical Council’s next meeting is in March.



**So, God,
what about ...?**

Want God’s advice, but you’re not sure where to look? We’ll get you started with the basics. Remember these verses—and share them!

In the wake of terrorist attacks and war with Afghanistan, you may feel afraid and insecure. The following deal with those emotions.

- Psalm 27:1: “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
- Isaiah 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
- Matthew 10:28: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- Hebrews 13:5,6: “Keep your lives from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’ ”

On your own

When the world seems bigger than God, read Psalm 90.

When you want rest and peace, read Matthew 11:25-30.

When you are in danger, read Psalm 91.

This year instead of daily Bible readings, we are providing topical Bible readings. If you want a list of daily Bible readings, check out the WELS Web site, www.wels.net/sab/frm3yr.html, or order a copy at www.shopWELS.net; 1-800-662-6022.



Meet the editorial staff—uncut

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

Global, not confused

When asked to describe himself in one word, Kenneth Cherney Jr. replies, “Global.” He continues: “I’m told that’s how you describe the thinking pattern of someone who can’t concentrate on one thing at a time, but likes to juggle several things at once and see what develops. It sounds much nicer than ‘confused.’”

Global is a good word to describe Cherney, but not because he’s confused. Cherney juggles a busy lifestyle, including family, graduate school, and teaching Hebrew and Greek at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. Still, Cherney managed to reply to my e-mail questions for this article less than two hours after I e-mailed him—a record indeed.

We at *Forward in Christ* magazine first became acquainted with Cherney through his newsletters when he served an exploratory

church in Mandeville, La. His style and unique way of looking at things caused us to ask him to join the editorial staff.

“Most of my editorials begin as my own attempts to think something through, on paper, for myself,” says Cherney.

“E. B. White said a good writer always writes for an audience of one, and I think I understand what he meant by that.”

After serving in Louisiana, Cherney began teaching at MLC. His favorite part about teaching? His students. “By and large they’re friendly, cooperative, funny, and fun to be around.”

But he does miss working with people of different ages. “I don’t baptize babies anymore, nor do I get to pray with Grandma in the hospital the way I used to. That’s hard sometimes.”

Family is also important to Cherney. His favorite vacation was a canoe trip to the Boundary Waters that he and his family took while on furlough when he was serving



Prof. Ken Cherney Jr. and family with Mount St. Helens, Washington, in the background. From left: Isaac, Michael, Kenneth III, Ethan, Kris, and Ken.

our mission in Brazil. “Furlough means that your time in the United States and with family is limited,” says Cherney. “It makes a vacation like that one even sweeter.”

Since Cherney just completed his master’s degree in Hebrew at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he has a little more free time. And he’s spending that time with his family. “I used to have a wider variety of hobbies—hunting, fishing, etc.—than I do now. Now, as Bill Cosby said, I mostly sit around and stare at my wife and kids.”

That doesn’t sound confusing at all.

Symbols for your life

Symbol: Cup & Wafer

Background and meaning: This symbol signifies the Lord’s Supper. We receive Christ’s body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine—“given and shed for you.” Wheat and grapes are often found in stained glass windows or woven into altar cloths to signify Holy Communion.

Bible gems:

“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took



the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

A symbol for your life:

Why did our Savior give us this supper? How do you prepare for taking communion? How often do you partake of Holy Communion? Why?

DEFINING RELIGION

Stewardship: the managing of what belongs to someone else. Christian stewardship involves recognizing that everything we have belongs to God. We will, therefore, want to manage and use everything we have according to his will. We will use our time, talents, and treasures in church, family, and state to God’s glory and the benefit of our fellow human beings.

Reaching out in St. Lucia

Delegates who live outside the United States gave the devotions at the synod convention last July. Joel Jaeger, a missionary in St. Lucia for nine years, was one of these presenters. Here he shares with us more about his mission work.

By the numbers: Jaeger started at St. Lucia in 1993 as the first resident missionary. He had a nucleus of 25 people, mostly expatriates that came from Antigua.

Now Trinity, St. Lucia, has about 70 communicants, over 50 percent of whom are native St. Lucians. Children make up over 50 percent of their total membership of about 125.

His ministry: Much of Trinity's outreach is working with the youth. Through Project Timothy, Luther Preparatory School students help each year with vacation Bible school (180 kids attended in 2001). Jaeger holds a Wednesday afternoon children's Bible hour to keep contact with these children. Trinity also has a minister of Christian education, Erik Landwehr, who runs an after-school study hour.

"We concentrate on children. With our activities, we're doing some parenting, we're doing some teaching, and, most important, we're telling them about Jesus. . . . That's borne us good fruit because through the children, we have opportunities to minister to the adults."

Differences with working in the Caribbean vs. the States: Although St. Lucia is a home mission, it possesses some world mission attributes:

- A third-world country economy.
- Government restrictions to become a resident missionary and to set up a church. It took Jaeger seven years to get permission to be a marriage, burial, and baptism officer.

- Language barriers. The native St.



Missionary Joel Jaeger by the St. Lucian flag. Although much of Jaeger's work is done in English, Jaeger is taking courses in St. Lucian Creole with the goal of having services in that language.

Lucian language, St. Lucian Creole, wasn't even a written language until 10 years ago.

And the Caribbean English is another story:

"You can hear all the English words and not understand what they mean because the words get used a little bit differently. My teens laugh at me and correct my English. I say things that to us mean one thing but to them mean something totally different."

Joys: *"This year two of the young adults that I instructed and confirmed were elected to the church council. Up until now our church council has been made up of 'foreigners' because we don't have many adult St. Lucian men."*

"Children who went to vacation Bible school seven or eight years ago now are some of our best Sunday teachers and VBS teachers. It's a joy to see them take hold of the Bible lesson with minimal guidance and teach the lesson well. They're eager to share the gospel, and you can see their concern for the children in their class."

REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

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

From John Janosek, a WELS missionary in Malawi, Africa, after returning from his furlough:

Yesterday (Oct. 7) I went to two of my large congregations (Khanyepa and Balala). I baptized 15 children and three adults and confirmed eight people. I communed 280 people.

As I was approaching Balala, I noticed that the whole congregation came outside to greet me—about 300 people. They were singing and dancing and clapping and playing their drums and other instruments.

The church leader, Mr. Raphael Mendulo, and the evangelist, Edwin Chikwewe, told me to sit down because the congregation had a message for me that had to be delivered before the service began. When things like that happen, I usually cringe. However, they spoke in such a gentle and friendly way that I was at peace in my heart and readily sat down.

The chairman of the congregation, backed up by all of the elders, came forward. "We were very worried about you because of all the trouble back in America where you were. We are so happy that you have arrived safely back here in Malawi. We are especially happy that you are here to serve us again. God continue to bless you!"

Then, all the ladies began to ululate, the people cheered and danced—and I had a hard time getting my glasses off so that I could clean the journey's dust from my eyes.

Yes, I am happy to be "home" again. Though we have a warm feeling of love in our hearts for Africa, we do love our native land of America. Our prayer is that God would bless America with the continued preaching of his holy Word.

District news

Southeastern Wisconsin

Christian Life Resources, Milwaukee, Wis., held its annual National Convention on Oct. 12-13, 2001, in Rochester, Minn. Under the theme "Lights on a Hill," the convention was attended by 456 people, 143 of whom were teens who attended sessions on peer pressure, chastity, and sharing one's faith. If interested in audiotapes of the workshops, contact Tim Skurdahl at 720/344-0183.

Western Wisconsin

Peace, Cataract, Wis., dedicated its moved and refurbished church building and new parish hall on Nov. 4, 2001.

Happy Anniversary!

NW—On Nov. 11, 2001, members of **Immanuel, De Pere, Wis.**, praised God for the 100 years he has granted their congregation.

SEW—Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis., celebrated the 25th anniversary of service of Staff Minister **Hans Metzger** on Oct. 21, 2001.

On Oct. 12, the Board for Ministerial Education held a service of thanksgiving for Administrator **Peter Kruschel's** 25th anniversary in the pastoral ministry.

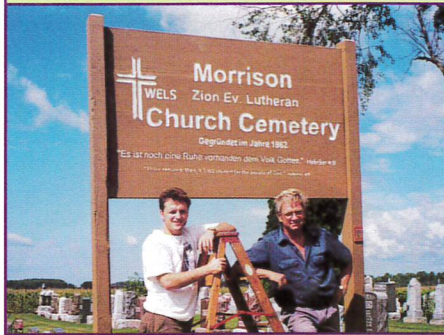
These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: **NW**—Joel Lillo; **SEW**—Scott Oelhafen; **WW**—Elton Stroh.

Northern Wisconsin



On July 15, 2001, members of St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis., sponsored the celebration of Henry Juroff's (center) 50th year in the pastoral ministry. Also present were James Rath (left), who was ordained by Juroff, and Henry G. Meyer (right), who ordained Juroff 50 years ago at St. Paul, Mound City, S.D.

Northern Wisconsin



Herold Treichel and his grandson, Todd, noticed that the original cemetery of Zion, Morrison, Wis., was not clearly identified with a sign. The pair sketched a design of what the sign should look like, received unanimous approval from the church council to go ahead with the project, and built the sign (shown above with Todd and Herold) in August 2001.

Southeastern Wisconsin



Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., began an Emergency Teacher's Training Course 45 years ago to alleviate the shortage of Christian day school teachers. Sixteen women completed this first class and were assigned in the fall of 1956. This class held its 45th reunion on July 28, 2001, in Port Washington, Wis. Pictured are the classmates who attended. From left, back row: Lois Becher, Mary Cuff, Gladys Brueske, Lois Krause, Louise Porth, and Julaine Boehm. From left, front row: Lynn Heup, Jean Ziegler, Jean Morrow, and Marie Leinberger.

Obituaries

Paul Erdman Pankow 1932-2001

Paul E. Pankow was born Apr. 3, 1932, in Green Lake, Wis. He died Sept. 3, 2001, in Cape Coral, Fla.

A 1958 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Pankow served three Arizona congregations: St. Peter, Globe; Trinity, Morenci; and Grace, Safford. In Washington he served Calvary, Bellevue and Snoqualmie Valley, Snoqualmie. In Wisconsin he served Crown of Life, Hubertus and Cross of Christ, Portage.

Pankow is survived by his wife, Karen; one sister; one brother; five children; and 10 grandchildren.

Samuel G. Kugler 1913-2001

Samuel Kugler was born May 22, 1913, in Kenosha, Wis. He died Oct. 11, 2001, in Vista, Calif.

A 1939 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Kugler served as teacher at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis. He served as pastor at Grace, Burke and Peace, Carlock, S.D.; Zion, Clatonia, Neb.; Trinity, Manitowoc, Wis.; King of Kings, Little Rock, Ark.; Cross, Charles City, Iowa; St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.; and Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.

Kugler is survived by his wife, Alice; one son; one daughter; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Ada Hagedorn 1907-2001

Ada Hagedorn (nee Werner) was born Sept. 26, 1907, in Milwaukee, Wis. She died Sept. 13, 2001, in Madison, Wis.

A 1929 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., Hagedorn served Zion, South Milwaukee; St. Peter, Fond du Lac; Grace, Milwaukee; St. Paul, Town Forest; Mt. Calvary, La Crosse; and St. Marcus, Milwaukee, all in Wisconsin.

Hagedorn was preceded in death by her husband, Fred, and one grandchild. She is survived by seven daughters, 22 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

WELS news briefs

These updates are from the offices of 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 Mission Opportunity Task Force has been appointed to consider second-level restructuring of the synod. **They will discuss the need to consolidate communication efforts and look at restructuring mission efforts. This task force met for the first time in October 2001.**

Board for Ministerial Education

414/256-3236

Enrollment figures are in for our ministerial education schools. Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, (355) and Lutheran Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., (561) are both near capacity. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., (1,058) has a record number of students. Enrollment at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, (165) is up 11 percent from last year.

Board for Home Missions

414/256-3285

At the Board for Home Missions meeting in September 2001:

Mission status was granted to Santo Tomas, Phoenix, Ariz.; Crown of Life, Pueblo West, Colo.; Mighty Fortress, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada; Hope, Manhattan, Kan.; Our Savior, Roanoke, Va.; Beautiful Savior, Summerville, S.C.; Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga.; and Living Word, Mobile, Ala.

Exploratory status was continued for another 22 outreach efforts.

Land search authority was granted to Crown of Life, Pueblo West, Colo.; Our Savior, Roanoke, Va.; Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga.; and Living Word, Mobile, Ala.

Facility planning authority was

granted to Summerville, S.C.; and Wind Lake, Wis.

Land purchase was granted to Lexington, Ken.

The Campus Ministry Committee (CMC) produced a manual called "Person to Person: A Training Manual for Students Serving Students in Christ." This manual equips students to support one another and reach out to the lost they come into contact with on their campuses and in their lives. The CMC used the manual at a staff conference centered on peer-ministry training in September 2001. Both of these projects were made possible through a gift from WELS Kingdom Workers.

Commission on Worship

414/256-3265

"Worship Music: A Resource for Lutheran Keyboard Musicians," a biannual publication from the Commission on Worship and Northwestern Publishing House, will provide easy new and existing compositions, flexible for piano or electronic keyboard, along with hints for organists with less technical training and lists of publishers and other resources. The first four issues will be sent to WELS organists and keyboard players for free. The first one was sent out in November 2001. Interested in a copy? Call Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022 (Milwaukee area, 414/475-6600).

Commission on Parish Schools

414/256-3220

The third School Leadership Conference, under the theme "The Heart of Leadership," will be held June 25-27, at the Country Inn, Waukesha, Wis.

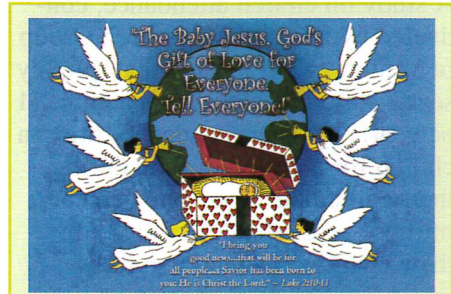
Commission on Youth Discipleship

414/256-3274

The first level of the new *Christ-Light*® materials for high school

Bible study is now available. To order materials, call Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022.

Over 2,200 people attended the 2001 International Youth Rally at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Plans are underway for the 2003 rally, July 9-12, in Estes Park, Colo.



Lilia Peng, who attends confirmation classes at Grace, Seattle, Wash., won the 2001 Christmas card contest sponsored by the Commission on Youth Discipleship. Participants were to create a design with the theme: "The Baby Jesus, God's gift of love for everyone. Tell everyone!"

Communication Services Commission

414/256-3230

Two new services are available through our Web department:

- @WELS.net is a free e-mail service available through WELS. Because @WELS.net uses a Web browser as an e-mail program, you can access your e-mail from any computer—all you need is an Internet connection. Sign up now at <www.wels.net/webmail>.

- Need WELS products? It's all just a click away. Check out <www.shopWELS.net>, and order what you need today.

Financial

Norris Henry Koopmann, who served as treasurer and controller at the synod administration building from 1961-1982, died Sept. 26, 2001. Koopmann was a member at Beautiful Savior, Bella Vista, Ark.



Survey: Church attendance as a youth and its effects in later life—

A study on church attendance, conducted by the Barna Research Group of Ventura, Calif., found that roughly seven out of 10 Americans adults (71 percent) regularly attended a Christian church for a period of time during their childhood. Sixty-one percent of those who attended church in their youth still attend regularly, while 78 percent of those who were not churchgoers as children are still absent from churches.

More than one-third of the 35-and-over generation of the unchurched-as-children group presently attend a Christian church, compared to only 16 percent of those under age 35.

Attending church as a child also affected other religious practices. According to the survey, during a typical week those who attended church as a child are

- twice as likely to read the Bible,
- twice as likely to attend worship, and
- 50 percent more likely to pray.

Unfortunately both those who were churched as children and unchurched as children hold views that disagree with biblical teaching. A minority of both groups believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit and of Satan, and a majority believe that eternal salvation can be achieved by doing good deeds.

The survey was a nationwide random sample of 1,003 adults conducted in May 2001. Sampling error is ±3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

From "Adults who attended church as children show lifelong effects," <www.barna.org>; Nov. 5, 2001.

Missouri Synod president faces charges—

Two Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) pastors have brought two separate charges against LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick involving fellowship issues.

One charge involves Kieschnick's support for the decision of Atlantic District President David Benke to participate in "A Prayer for America" at New York's Yankee Stadium on Sept. 23. This service included prayers by Jews, Muslims, and other denominations.

The other charge involves Kieschnick's participation in a prayer service with Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officials following a tour of Ground Zero in September.

Missouri District President James Kalthoff, who is Kieschnick's district president, has been asked to terminate Kieschnick's membership in the synod, and therefore his presidency as well.

David Strand, the LCMS public relations director, says, "The reaction from the church in general is solidly supportive of Benke and Kieschnick."



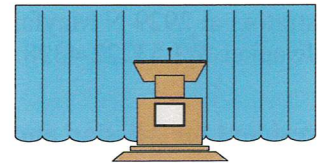
German law recognizes same-sex couples—

A new law in Germany allows same-sex couples to exchange vows at local government offices and also extends to them the same inheritance and health insurance rights given to married couples.

This law doesn't recognize "marriages" for same-sex couples, but "registered life partnerships." It does not allow same-sex couples to adopt.

Several other countries in Europe—including Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and France—

already legally recognize same-sex couples. Only the Netherlands allows same-sex couples to legally marry.



Faith and order conference set for 2004—

A "faith and order" conference to discuss the walls that divide the Christian church has been set for 2004.

The new Foundation for a Conference on Faith and Order has sent out letters seeking support to 328 U.S. and Canadian church bodies. Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox leaders have already said they will support the initiative. WELS is not involved with this conference.

The first faith and order meeting was held in Oberlin, Ohio, in 1957.

Leading charities named—The Salvation Army was named as the nation's leading charity, according to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

This is the ninth year in a row that the Salvation Army has topped the charts. It raised \$1.44 billion in 2000.

Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund was ranked second, and the YMCA was ranked third.

Other religiously oriented charities in the top 25 include Lutheran Services in America (5), Catholic Charities USA (13), Feed the Children (16), Habitat for Humanity (18), and Campus Crusade for Christ International (21).

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



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Becker, Bruce H.**, to Board for Parish Services administrator, Milwaukee
- Frey, Marc P.**, to Peace of Our Savior, New Carlisle, Ohio
- Gawrisch, Daniel M.**, to St. John, Stanton, Neb.
- Gehl, Michael L.**, to Our Savior, Arlington, Tex.
- Hartman, Robert C.**, to interim civilian chaplain in Europe
- Hartmann, Jon P.**, to Atonement, Milwaukee
- Johnson, Timothy W.**, to Rockwood, Manitowoc, Wis.
- Klein, Carl M.**, to Calvary, Glenwood, Minn. (retirement)
- Kogler, Frederick A.**, to retirement
- Meyer, Ib V.**, to Lilongwe, Malawi
- Otterstatter, Michael**, to Abiding Word, Maineville, Ohio
- Sawall, Robert**, to University Lutheran Chapel, Oshkosh, Wis.
- Schultz, Michael D.**, to Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.

Teachers

- Miller, Patrick L.**, to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
- Vanderhoof, Tiffany L.**, to St. John, Newburg, Wis.

Staff ministers

- Blauert, Mark H.**, to Trinity, Crete, Ill.
- Malnes, David H.**, to Peace in Jesus, Boise, Idaho

COLLOQUY NOTICE

John Weaver-Hudson, who came from an LCMS colloquy program, after having successfully completed the steps of our colloquy, including a year of studies at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, was declared eligible for a call into the ministerium of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Wayne D. Mueller, First Vice President
Prof. David Valleskey, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
John Seifert, Michigan District President

ANNIVERSARIES

- East Troy, Wis.**—St. Paul's school (25). Jan. 20. Service, 9:30 AM. Dinner to follow.
- Green Lake, Wis.**—Peace (100). Feb. 10. Service, 9 AM.
- Milwaukee, Wis.**—Mt. Lebanon (75). Feb. 17. Service, 9:30 AM. Dinner to follow.

COMING EVENTS

- WELS/ELS Ladies Retreat**—Woodlands Lutheran Camp, Montverde, Fla. Jan. 11-13. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.
- Southwest OWLS Pow Wow**—St. Thomas, Phoenix, Ariz. Feb. 7-9. W. Bein, 623/977-4654.
- Martin Luther College choir tour**
- Feb. 23, 7 PM, Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
 - Feb. 24, 9 AM, St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.; 7 PM, Grace, Indianapolis, Ind.
 - Feb. 25, 7 PM, Living Word, Johnson City, Tenn.
 - Feb. 26, 7 PM, Grace, Charlotte, N.C.
 - Feb. 27, 7 PM, Abiding Peace, Simpsonville, S.C.
 - Feb. 28, 7 PM, Abiding Hope, Ocala, Fla.

- Mar. 1, 8 PM, Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla.
- Mar. 2, 7 PM, Orlando Lutheran Academy, Orlando, Fla.
- Mar. 3, 7 PM, Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Fla.
- Mar. 4, 8 PM, Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla.
- Mar. 5, 7:30 PM, Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga.
- Mar. 6, 7 PM, Star of Bethlehem, Winston Salem, N.C.
- Mar. 7, 7 PM, Our Savior, Asheville, N.C.
- Mar. 8, 7:30 PM, Hope, Louisville, Ky.
- Mar. 9, 7 PM, St. John, Lannon, Wis.
- Mar. 17, 7:30 PM, St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

Pathways to Christ Women's Retreat—Hawthorne Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. Mar. 15-17. Brochures available. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.

International Girl Pioneers Convention—Apr. 5 & 6. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Diane Jabs, 952/492-2540.

WELS-CLO meeting—for the church librarian's organization. Apr. 13. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Two representatives from Demco Library Supply will demonstrate computer software for small libraries. Joanne Weber, 414/256-3222.

Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women—Apr. 12-14. Radisson, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-3945.

WELS Handbell Festival—Apr. 20 & 21. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference meeting—Gothenburg, Sweden. Apr. 23-25. Information and registration materials available from Armin Panning, 1833 Woodview Cir, Port Washington WI 53074; <panninga@wls.wels.net>.

Special Ministries In Lutheran Education (SMILE) conference—June 28-30. Ramada Inn-Airport, Bloomington, Minn. Goal is to promote and strengthen the partnership of those involved in the spiritual training of people with developmental disabilities. Includes parents, caregivers, teachers, pastors, and volunteers. Bruce Cuppan, 920/922-8672.

Northern Wisconsin District Regional Youth Rally—June 30-July 3. Chilton, Wis. \$150/person. <Survivor2002@nwdcyd.org>.

"Tap the WELS" Music/Outreach/Spiritual Growth Family & Community Event—July 18-20. Red Wing, Minn. 414/256-3274.

National Conference for Worship, Music, & the Arts—July 21-24. Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis. 414/256-3226; <worship@sab.wels.net>.

Regional youth rally—Western Wisconsin District, July 25-27. Wisconsin Dells, Wis. 414/256-3274.

Sunday school workshops—Wisconsin area. Sept. 14, 8:30-11:45 AM. A nominal fee will be charged. Workshop will be held at four locations:

- Wausau, Wis.—Preparing & teaching a Sunday school lesson
- La Crosse, Wis.—Classroom management
- Watertown, Wis.—Memory work, mission, and music
- Eau Claire, Wis.—Reaching families through the Sunday school

Plan ahead—workshops will rotate every year and will be held the second Sat. after Labor Day in 2003, 2004, 2005. Debbie Rothe, 262/567-6375.

2003 WELS International Youth Rally—July 9-12, 2003. Estes Park, Colo. 414/256-3274.

AVAILABLE

Altar cloths—free for the cost of shipping. Dennis Reichow, 320/864-3093.

Wood school desks—with chair attached. In good shape. Free for the cost of shipping. Pastor Tom Mielke, 920/863-2850.

NEEDED

Handbells—two- or three-octave set. Candi Brueggemann, 262/246-4181.

Names of Japanese returning to Japan—WELS' Japan mission field is searching for people who have been studying or staying abroad with whom you have been in contact and who are now returning to Japan. Contact Glen Hieb, <hieb@jcom.home.ne.jp>. Resources to witness to Japanese people are available at <www.net-ibaraki.ne.jp/leccjws>.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Bethany Lutheran College—Mankato, Minn. The following faculty positions are open for the 2002-03 academic year: education, history (emphasis on American history), social science/anthropology. Must have Ph.D. or minimum of master's degree with willingness to pursue terminal degree. Application deadline: Feb. 1. Contact Ronald Younge, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001; 507/344-7000.

Teach English in a foreign country—Has the Lord ever laid on your heart a desire to share Jesus with people of a foreign country? If so, this may be the opportunity you are looking for. We have English language teaching positions open. Airfare, housing, health insurance, and an in-country livable wage will be paid. Main qualification is a desire to serve Jesus and share your faith. WELS people with teaching degrees and teaching experience preferred but not required. Husband/wife teams okay. One-year commitment minimum. <asia-usa@juno.com>.

SERVICE TIMES

Safford, Ariz.—Grace, 225 E Main St. Worship, 10:30 AM. Bible class, 9:45 AM. Paul Schulz, 928/428-7620.

NAMES WANTED

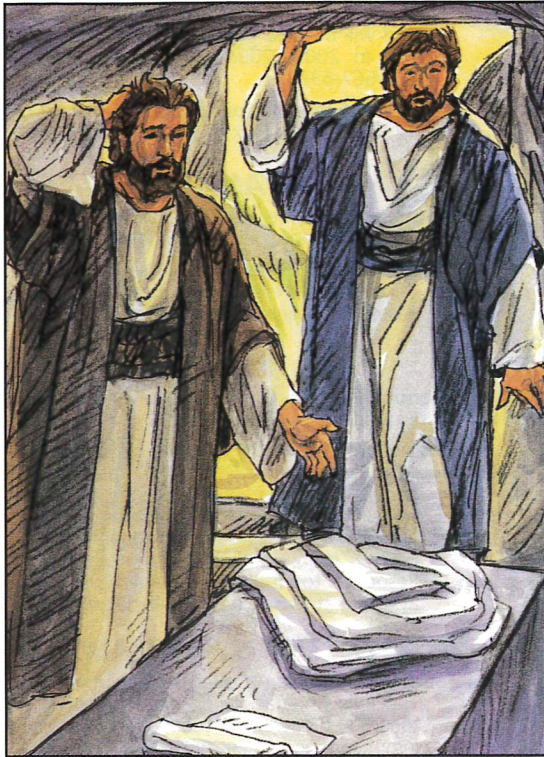
McAllen/Harlingen/Brownsville/South Padre Island, Tex.—Joel Sauer, 956/968-5228.

Greater Dallas, Tex., area—including Allen, McKinney, Frisco, Celina, Denton, Flower Mound, North Richland Hills, Fort Worth, Arlington, Carrollton, Lewisville, Los Colinas, Sherman, Van Alstyne, Little Elm, Plano, Dallas, Duncanville, Richardson, Garland, Rowlett, Rockwall, and Mesquite. Send names and addresses to William Gabb, <pastor@atonement.org>.

To place an announcement, call

414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3899;

<BulletinBoard@sab.wels.net>. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.



He is risen!

Death couldn't hold the Lord of life.

Jon D. Buchholz

Come and see! They inspected the tomb carefully. The governor's seal was broken, and the stone was rolled away. The guards were nowhere to be found. Instead there were angels. They were not guarding a closed casket. They were giving tours to an open tomb. The angels were sent from heaven to tell the world that Jesus has conquered death forever.

Peter and John had to see. When they heard that the grave was open, they ran to look. They found the strips of linen. They found the shroud that had wrapped Jesus' head—carefully folded and laid aside. They didn't see a dead man (John 20:3-9).

For the woman from Magdala it took only one word to make everything clear. "Mary!" Jesus said to her as he stood outside the tomb. And suddenly, face to face with her risen Savior, Mary realized that she was an eyewitness to the greatest miracle ever (John 20:10-18).

Go and tell

The angels told those first women, "Go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.'"

Go and tell! Did they really need prompting? The women were exploding with excitement when they told the Eleven. They couldn't help but tell what they had seen. Soon the entire city of Jerusalem was buzzing with the news.

The soldiers—once they had recovered from a traumatic morning—were paid good money to circulate the story that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body (Matthew 28:11-15). Others wondered if the reports of the women could be true. What could it mean?

We know what it means. Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection. Paul said, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14). If Jesus is still dead, we have nothing to tell.

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20). "He has risen, just as he said" (Matthew 28:6). Jesus is everything he claimed to be. He is the Son of God. He is the payment for our sins. He is the destroyer of death. He is the Savior of the world. Jesus promised, and Jesus delivered.

Come and see! Outside ancient Jerusalem, you'll find an empty grave, quite likely the exact place where Jesus once lay. But you won't find his corpse. Come and see that death couldn't hold the Lord of life.

And go and tell. With unrestrained excitement, with overflowing joy, share the good news with everyone you can. He has risen! Jesus lives!

Jon Buchholz is pastor at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington.

Their dreams were shattered. Their hopes were dashed. Their grief was beyond description.

Jesus was dead.

With tear-filled eyes and heavy hearts, the women made their way through the pre-dawn darkness to the tomb. They wanted to finish giving Jesus' body a proper burial. They needed to pay their last respects to a departed friend.

Come and see

Blinding light pierced the darkness. But it wasn't from the sun just breaking the horizon on this first day of the week. It was a celestial light, brighter than lightning. Amazement gripped the women as they found themselves face to face with a messenger from God. The angel spoke to them, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay" (Matthew 28:5,6).



Jesus' miracles: PORTRAITS OF REDEMPTION

Mark J. Lenz

INTRODUCTION

Which would you label a miracle?

- Voyager II beams pictures of the planet Neptune from 2.7 billion miles away.
- God answers our prayers.
- The Holy Spirit converts a sinner.
- Refractive surgery does away with the need for eyeglasses.
- God assures us that he controls everything for our good.
- A woman gives birth to a healthy child.

In a sense everything on the list is miraculous. But it depends on what you mean by miracle. Some of the things are wonderful and amazing, while others only God can do. What about the miracles performed by Jesus during his earthly ministry? In what ways would they be different from the list above?

The New Testament records 35 miracles of Jesus. Each miracle was an act of kindness, performed through divine power, creating wonder in those who saw it, and signifying Jesus' authenticity as the Son of God and the Savior from sin.

Jesus' miracles have been called "portraits of redemption." Just as he opened the eyes of the blind man so he cures our spiritual blindness. As he fed the multitudes so he is the Bread of Life who nourishes us spiritually. In upcoming months we will learn how Jesus' miracles dramatically demonstrate important truths about his nature and mission.

TEXT—ACTS 2:22-24

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

QUESTIONS

1. Who spoke these words (Acts 2:14)? To whom were they spoken (v. 14)? What was the occasion (v. 1)? Why were they spoken (vs. 12-16)?
2. Name three ways God accredited Jesus to the people.
3. The word translated as "miracles" is "miraculous powers" in Matthew 13:54 and 14:2. What does this suggest about Jesus' miracles?

QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

4. The word translated as "wonders" means the people who saw what Jesus did were awestruck. What was the disciples' reaction after Jesus walked on the water (Mark 6:51)? After the catch of fish (Luke 5:9)?
5. The word translated as "signs" is also found in John 2:11 and 3:2. What insight do these verses give you into the meaning of this word?
6. Why could Peter's hearers not dispute that Jesus had performed miracles?
7. Was Jesus' death on the cross the work of men or God?
8. Why was it impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus?

APPLICATIONS

1. Jesus' miracles have been called "acted sermons." Why might dramatizing Jesus' miracles be an effective way to teach them to children? Think of an example.
2. Jesus' miracles have also been called "parables in concrete." Why is this an appropriate way to refer to them?
3. St. Augustine once said that Jesus' miracles are "not just pictures to admire but letters we must read and understand." What do you think he meant? Prove your answer with an example.
4. How did Jesus' miracles of healing differ from the healing modern doctors can do?
5. How did Jesus' miracles differ from those claimed by modern faith healers?
6. What evidence can you find in John 11 that the raising of Lazarus was a factual event?
7. In the New Testament, the word "sign" is used to refer to Jesus' miracles more than twice as many times as "miraculous powers," "wonders," and "works" combined. Why do you think this is so?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, your amazing miracles reveal that you are the Son of God and the Savior from sin. Forgive me for the times I have doubted your power and ability to help and failed to give you the honor and praise that are yours. Assure me that my sins were nailed to the cross with you and that because death was not able to hold you, so it will not be able to hold me. Hear me for your mercy's sake. Amen.

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: SECRETS OF THE VINE

Question: What are your thoughts on the sequel to *The Prayer of Jabez*, the book *Secrets of the Vine*, also written by Bruce Wilkinson?

Answer: *Secrets of the Vine* teaches that Jesus' words in John 15:1-8 conceal truths that have rarely been understood. The author claims that Jesus reveals four successive stages in the believer's sanctified life. By studying Jesus' words, we learn "secrets" of how to move from bearing no fruit, to bearing some fruit, to bearing more fruit, to bearing much fruit. Only by making proper choices based on these secrets can we progress on the path to the abundant fruit-bearing God desires.

Wilkinson's three secrets are:

- If your life consistently bears no fruit, God will intervene to discipline you.
- If your life bears some fruit, God will intervene to prune you.
- If your life bears a lot of fruit, God will invite you to abide more deeply with him.

There's some biblical truth in Wilkinson's secrets. However, as he explains these secrets, his book weaves a confusing mix of truth and error.

Perhaps the most dangerous confusion comes when his self-imposed order of secrets leads him to place immersing ourselves in the Word of

Jesus as something that comes late in this process. Only when we have begun to bear more fruit, he claims, does Jesus invite us to abide more deeply in him.

Abiding in Jesus' Word is the power without which we could bear no fruit at all!

While much of what the author says about the blessings of a regular devotional life is accurate, how sad that he didn't begin with this secret! This is not the "secret" to move from modest fruit bearing to abundant fruit bearing. Abiding in Jesus' Word is the power without which we could bear no fruit at all! The Word (together with the sacraments, whose rich blessings Wilkinson completely ignores) is the living power of God by which he leads us to daily repentance and forgiveness. Only there do we find the power of the gospel, which alone empowers true fruit bearing.

This delay in leading us to the real power supply for sanctified living has a disastrous ripple effect. Because he withholds until the end any detailed discussion about the real power supply for bearing fruit, much of his book is filled with instructions that give the impression that we are more important than the Holy Spirit when

it comes to producing fruit in our lives. Sanctified living becomes a tribute to correct human decisions instead of a reveling in the empowering grace of the Spirit in the gospel.

Subtitles such as "It's All Up to You" (p. 39) and "Your Response Is Everything" (p. 86) dominate the book. How sad that he directs us to the paltry resources of our own resolve instead of directing us to the limitless resources of the empowering gospel. Just as in his previous book, any otherwise worthwhile portions of *Secrets of the Vine* are severely handicapped by a deplorable lack of real gospel comfort and power. Jesus is reduced to a supporting role in our life of sanctification instead of playing the lead.

How much better to say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The limitless love of Jesus Christ for each of us is the real power of sanctified living. And that's no secret!



Richard Gurgel is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Have a question you want answered? Send it to 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>.



Over 2,000 WELS youth and youth leaders gathered at the 2001 WELS International Youth Rally held July 11-14 at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. "The theme for the rally was 'Get Real!' To me that means that I have to be real about my faith," says Luke Hendricks of McDonogh, Ga. "Don't hide it under a bushel, but let it shine for all the world to see. I've been so encouraged to know I'm not alone. And the workshops have gotten me psyched up to go out and spread the gospel. I want to go home and start a Bible study group with a bunch of Mormons, and I want to start a pro-life club in my high school."



Pastor Paul Tullberg and his group from Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

*Submitted by Kris Snyder,
2001 International Youth Rally coordinator*

Send pictures to *Picture this*, Forward in Christ magazine, 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.

Don't stay away from church because it is not perfect. How lonely you would feel in a perfect church.

Just for this day . . .



Just for this morning I will let you wake up softly, all rumped in your sheets, and I will hold you until you are ready for the day.

Just for this morning, I am going to smile when I see your face and laugh when I feel like crying.

Just for this afternoon, I will unplug the telephone and keep the computer off and sit with you in the backyard and blow bubbles.

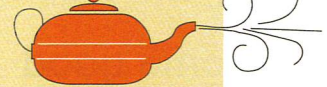
Just for this afternoon, I will let you help me bake cookies, and I won't stand over you trying to fix them.

Just for this evening, I will let you stay up late while we sit on the porch and count all the stars.

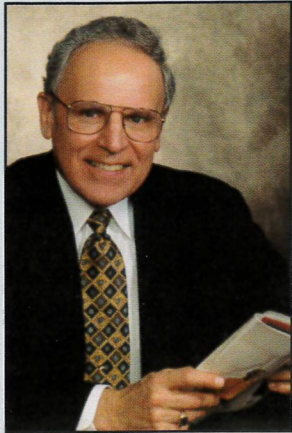
Just for this evening, when I run my fingers through your hair as you pray, I will simply be grateful that God has given me this great gift.

It is then that I will thank God for you and ask him for nothing, except one more day.

LADIES TEA



Need a new idea for outreach? How about having a ladies tea. In one WELS congregation, each table is "sponsored" by a woman who is responsible for supplying the card table and table settings, decorating the table, and inviting three other ladies to her table, at least one of which, hopefully, is unchurched. Teens sponsor their own tables. The pastor conducts a brief devotion, and the men in the congregation, who leave immediately after their duties are fulfilled, serve dinner. The ladies conduct a program of skits, readings, and fashion shows tied to a central witnessing theme. A number of women have been introduced to the congregation by this means and later went through Bible information class.



Gary P. Baumler is editor of *Forward in Christ* magazine and WELS Director of Communications.

Draw on your
faith in Jesus,
and make
some good
use of "Just
do it."

Just do it

Just do it." You've heard the expression, haven't you? It's a rallying cry for action. Be involved. Fulfill your dreams. Capture the moment.

If you're like me, you probably remember some times when you wish you'd followed that advice. I wish I had taken that trip, bought that house, invested in that stock. I wish I had taken that job, gone on that date, climbed that mountain.

"Just do it" is enabling. It adds zest and excitement to life. It seizes opportunities that otherwise pass by and are lost. It generates a "can do," "will do," "why not do?" spirit.

Good advice, isn't it?

Time to pause and think.

Just do it. Do what? The advice is only as good as the meaning of that big little word "it." If it is dangerous, illegal, immoral, or just plain foolhardy, then the better advice is "Just don't do it."

How many people get started on drugs, for example, spurred on by "Just do it"? How many people suffer serious accidents in the name of "Just do it"? How many family problems has "Just do it" caused? Can "Just do it" keep you out of jail, restore lost health, satisfy insatiable longings? All the woes of this world began with a wink and a "Just do it."

Only a fool will just do it without first considering all the consequences that doing it might bring.

But, because we are all, too often, foolish, God sent his own Son into the world to save us from our foolishness. Jesus came, and he just did it the way God planned. In Jesus, we find the fullness of life. With Jesus, we reach the top of the mountain. Through Jesus, we are truly rich.

How well have we learned that truth? How fully have we lived it? Can we even begin to comprehend that Jesus just did it all for us? He acted in love, and he called for us to show that love in our lives. He has given us a blueprint for holy living and the power of his Spirit to show us the way. When we falter, he is there just for us to help us on the way again. The heavenly Father looks at us, and he sees all of what Jesus did in our place. Jesus' life counts for us. His death assures us of forgiveness and eternal life. His truth sustains us.

That's why I can say to you now, "Draw on your faith in Jesus, and make some good use of 'Just do it.'"

- * Will it help you read your Bible each day? Just do it.
- * Does your elderly neighbor need help with some chores? Just do it.
- * Can you influence government decisions on moral issues by voting? Just do it.
- * Do you know someone who is hospitalized and could use some cheer? Just do it.
- * Do you have a friend who needs to learn about Jesus? Just do it.
- * Can fervent prayer evoke vital answers? Just do it.
- * Will going to church regularly bring you blessings? Just do it.
- * Has God opened doors for you to do good? Just do it.

In God's service, "Just do it" makes good sense and expresses faithful living. Remember what Jesus did for you, and just do the things he allows you to do for him.

Gary P. Baumler



HOME MISSIONS

TURNING HIS MISSION
INTO MISSIONS

WE CAN HELP

- District Mission Boards
- Multi-cultural Ministry Committee
- Campus Ministry Committee
- Mission counselors
- Cross-cultural outreach consultants
- English as a Second Language workshops
- Outreach strategies

WELS Home Missions seeks to serve our Lord and you by helping to turn his Mission into Missions in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean.

It's the **neighborly** thing to do.

Loving our **neighbors** includes seeking our neighbors in Christ Jesus.

We Need Your Help

Prayers for the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ and for his witnesses that we may proclaim the gospel clearly to our **neighbors**.

Colossians 4:2-6

Encouragement for the mission stations and missionaries. Love your **neighboring** home missions.

John 15:1-17

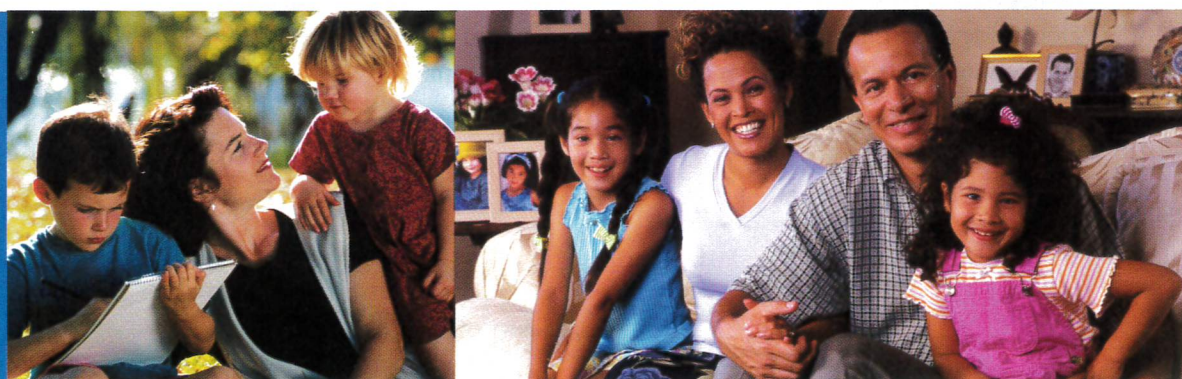
Money through your congregational mission offerings, your gifts to home missions, or to a **neighboring** outreach effort.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15



Thanks, Neighbor!

WELS Board for Home Missions
2929 N Mayfair Road
Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398
Phone: (414) 256-3286
E-mail: bhm@sab.wels.net



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

While our expectations frequently center around earthly ambitions, the Lord is looking at the eternal big picture.

David D. Sellnow

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

This will be a good year. We hope.

Our hopes and dreams

A farmer hopes the hail that hurt the last harvest won't happen this go-round. An entrepreneurial woman with her own small business is optimistic that it will really take off this year. A couple struggling with infertility prays that their frustration will end happily—that this will be the time. A pastor plans aggressive outreach programs and anticipates strong results.

For some, it may be as they envision; for others not. Any number of factors may hurt agriculture and business. Fertility may remain elusive. Congregations may see more membership losses than gains. A host of hopes may go unanswered.

We come at the new year with great expectations. Before the calendar turns to February, a different reality often takes shape.

But Lord, I prayed!

Does this pattern indicate that God doesn't answer our prayers? Is he uncaring about our aspirations? Not at all! He loves each of us deeply, a Father loving his children. He simply has a different agenda for us than we sometimes do. While our expectations frequently center around earthly ambitions, the Lord is looking at the eternal big picture. The way he meets our needs and answers our wants will always serve the interests of our spiritual well-being. For instance, we might want prosperity and growing investments . . . God may know we need financial insecurity to foster stronger dependence on him.

So should we stop hoping and planning and think like a stoic: "I'll get whatever I get, and there's nothing I can do about it"? No, God doesn't want his children to be gloomy or pessimistic. He encourages us to be bold and courageous, to seek to move mountains . . . in his name.

What can we expect?

More than anything, God would have us set spiritual goals. When we shift our focus from current concerns to eternal priorities, we see with eyes of faith. We can expect infinitely great things with certainty:

Membership in God's family is ours, assured by baptism (Galatians 3:26,27).

God will be with us every day, every step of the way (Joshua 1:9).

No sin we commit will be powerful enough to change what Jesus has done for us (Romans 7:19,24,25).

Peace and forgiveness will be given to us in Christ's supper (Matthew 26:27,28).

God's Word will enlighten us and will never be wrong (2 Samuel 22:31, Psalm 119:130).

Eternal life will remain our possession always in Christ (John 10:27,28).

This will be a good year!

Here-and-now blessings of wellness or wealth are possible. God may lavish us with abundant possessions. If he does, we will respond with abundant thanksgiving. But we do not base our faith on the amount of earthly stability or progress we enjoy. Our confidence in the Lord is based in his words of gospel certainty. His spiritual guarantees will sustain us even if this year is worse than last year, even if it proves to be the most difficult year of our lives.

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength . . . he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

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

January 2002

February 2002