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FORWARD IN CHRIST

April 2002

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pastor a
carpenter?

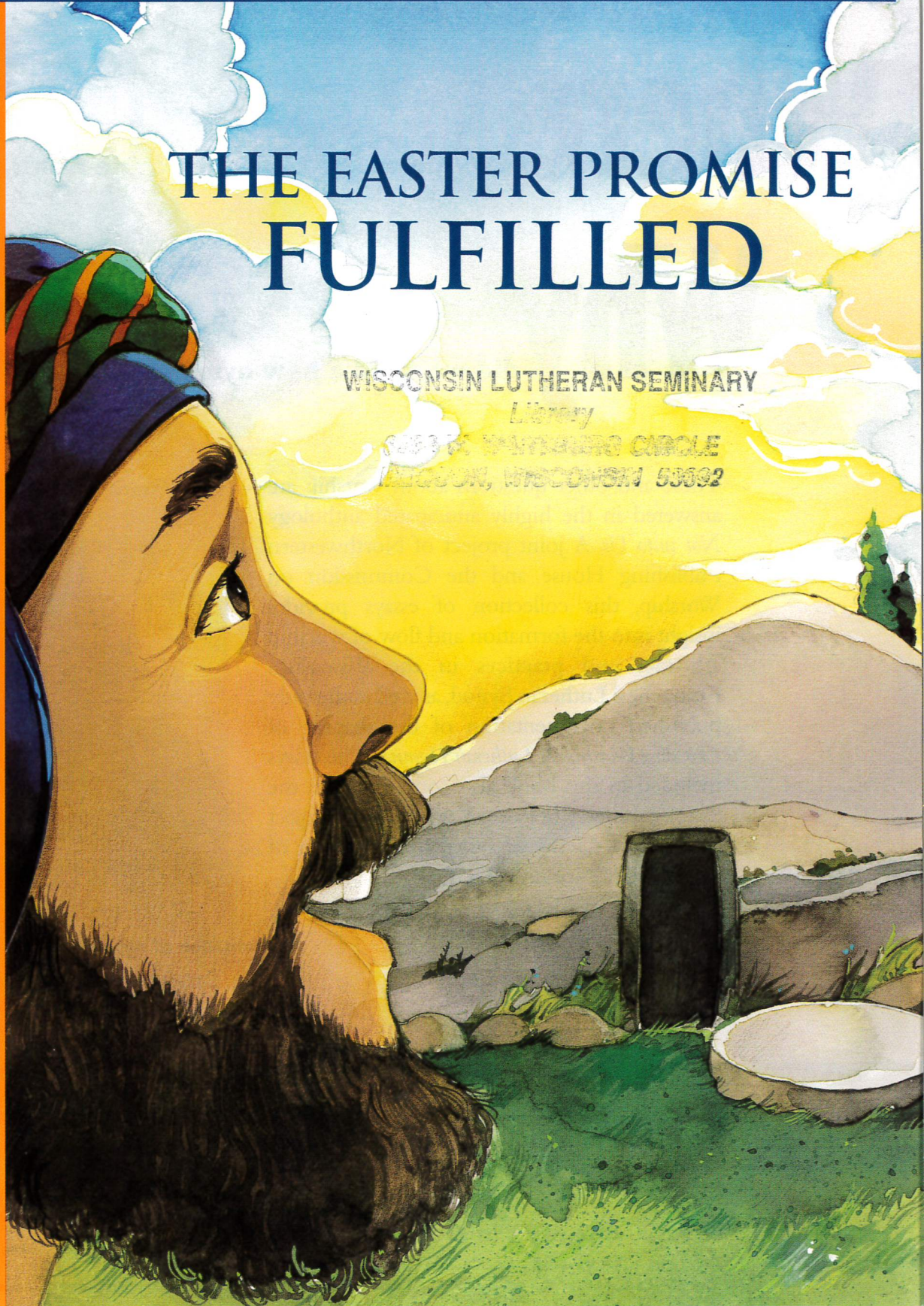
The struggle
to confront
sinners

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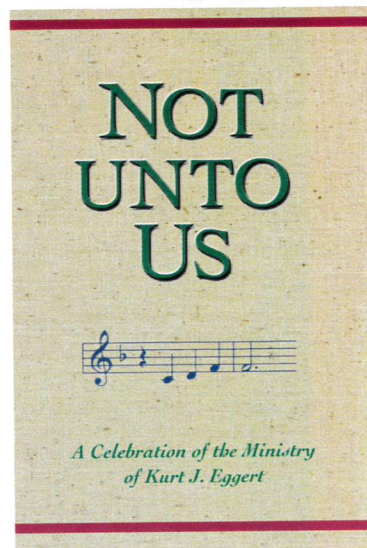


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Why did we need a new hymnal?

These and other questions about worship are answered in the highly anticipated anthology *Not unto Us*. A joint project of Northwestern Publishing House and the Commission on Worship, this collection of essays provides insight into the formation and flow of worship attitudes and practices in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, as well as the only published documentation of the shaping of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. The essays included in this book also commemorate the lifelong ministry of Pastor Kurt J. Eggert, project director for *Christian Worship* and composer of hymn 392 ("Not unto Us").



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Easter hope

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Thomas A. Westra

When his son was a little boy, he would take him to ball games. As they would leave the ballpark, navigating through the mass of people, he would hold his son's hand tightly. He did not want to lose him.

Now his son, a young man in his 20s, is lying in a hospital bed, dying. Through the night he stays at the bedside, and he remembers. He remembers the ball games, the family vacations, Little League, the birthdays and graduations. As he remembers, he holds his son's hand tightly. He does not want to lose him.

In death's dark night

Have you been there? Have you been where death was so close it seemed like a shadow hanging over you waiting to descend? Have you kept that bedside vigil as someone you loved lingered between life and death? Have you held her hand for fear that if you let go you would lose her?

Or maybe death robbed you without warning. A clear day, blue sky, and then the phone rang, and the darkness descended. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the world became an emptier place because someone who meant everything to you was gone.

If you have made that slow walk out of the cemetery, leaving behind the body that once contained the soul of someone you couldn't imagine living without, then Easter is a special time for you. I'm guessing



you are not easily distracted by jelly beans and rabbits. The words of Paul deeply stir your heart: "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

The dawn of Easter

When I was a child, we would

often play football at recess. About five minutes into recess, our teacher would come out. He would ask, "Which side is losing?" Then he would join that team. His appearance changed the whole game, for he could throw the football with pinpoint accuracy the entire length of the playground. When he joined our team, he changed us from losers into winners.

Jesus did a similar thing. Seeing that we were losing to death, he entered the game. Willingly, he died as our substitute, guilty of our sins. Then, three days later, the earth quaked, the rocks split, and Jesus showed himself alive. The world shook and hell trembled, for sin was atoned for and death was now dead.

For those who are left behind, death is only temporary. When Christ gives the loud command, our mourning will be changed into never-ending gladness as the dead are raised and we are with the Lord forever. For those who are called away, it is only a doorway that separates their smaller living from the great life Jesus has promised them. Even now they are with the Lord.

For those walking in death's dark shadow, what great comfort this sweet sentence gives: "I know that my Redeemer lives."



Thomas Westra is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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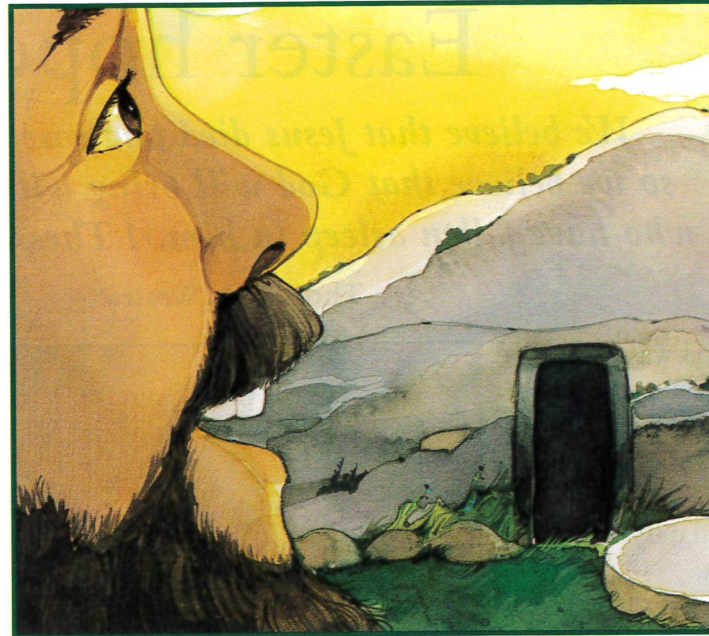
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Cover illustration by Len Ebert

"He has risen
just as he said!"
(Matthew
28:6).

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bits & pieces



Easter is a key festival of the Christian church year. That's why we dedicate the April issue every year to Easter. Check out what's in our "Easter basket" this year.

- Nathan Strobel encourages us to live life to the full with Jesus in our feature Easter article (p. 8).
- We all are losing to death. But the game isn't over yet, says Thomas Westra. Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has changed us from losers to winners. Read more on p. 3.
- What is the coolest thing to do on Easter Sunday? You might be surprised from the results of this Internet poll. Carl Henkel comments on the results and shares his thoughts (p. 20).
- What kind of treasure would an empty grave mark? John Eich knows. Read his article to find out (p. 36).



Doing things differently is not necessarily a bad thing.

- Chris Cordes is not your traditional missionary. He is a mission coordinator for our Colombia mission, yet he lives in Arizona. He doesn't have a congregation to shepherd, yet he still is a pastor. Find out more in "The best of both worlds" (p. 12).
- Second-career pastors take different paths into God's service than most men who go through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Jeff Samelson, a second-career pastor himself, gives us a closer look into the lives of second-career pastors (p. 18).



Have a slice of evangelism pie today. James Huebner concludes our series with talking about ways to involve new members (p. 14). Thanks to all of our authors for teaching us about evangelism and for inspiring us to get involved.

—JKW

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The article on widowhood ["Emerging from the tunnel," Jan.] dealt with an area infrequently discussed—death of a spouse. However, I find the context to be shortsighted and not dealing with the whole problem.

Why only widows? Why after 65?

Widowhood affects both men and women, and too many times in the early 50s, 40s, and even in the 30s. This age group usually means young children are also losing a parent, so now the parent has to deal with his or her own loss while supporting the children in their loss. How anyone could accomplish this without a sound Christian faith based on Jesus Christ as Lord and a caring, understanding pastor is beyond me.

A few days after the funeral, reality sets in. Suddenly carpooling the children, maintaining a home, preparing meals, schoolwork, and a full-time job become the daily norm. Additionally, we have obligations within our congregation.

In some areas of our country, widowed people have joined together in groups to support and assist each other. These groups have no denominational lines but limit their membership to widowers who live by Christian principles. To have people network together at solving these problems is wonderful. [Support groups] can provide avenues for those who need further assistance with their grieving process.

There are many ways for Christians to witness in their widowhood outside of the local congregation. It also provides an opportunity for your own Christian faith to grow. God has a purpose in everything, including the death of a spouse. Just give him a chance. I've been there, and I've done it.

Gordon Rabe



Laurel, Maryland

"Emerging from the tunnel" was such a wonderful and touching article. I am not a widow, but my

husband does not share my Christian faith, so in many ways I could relate to this article. I remember a time when a WELS pastor mentioned to me that the Lord had placed me in a Christian congregation for a reason. He spoke of the friendships you develop, and I have seen this come true in my life. I found the article really faith building. I thank Susan Bondow for this heartwarming article.

Name withheld

Re: "Christ Expl. Lutheran Church" [Jan.] That was an awful lot of bones for the little meat that was on them!

M. Ohnstad

North Branch, Minnesota

Thank you for your article, "Religion as usual" [Feb.] It was something that needed to be said.

I cringe when I see a service such as the one held at the National Cathedral for the victims of Sept. 11. What must the good Lord think? We are so afraid of offending people of different faiths but think nothing of the offense this gives our heavenly Father. He is indeed patient and long-suffering. May God have mercy on our nation.

Lois Kirkpatrick

Watertown, Wisconsin

I thought "Religion as usual" [Feb.] presented in a very clear manner what is really going on, how the devil is using "religionness" to attack true religion. The beast's PR agent (Revelation 13:11ff) is really busy.



Paul Eckert

After reading Prof. Gurgel's "Cross hairs" article on Harry Potter books [Feb.], one footnote seems appropriate. As a Christian parent myself, I would do everything in my power to keep the developing mind entrusted to my care free from corrupting influences until I was sure

that spiritual maturity was reached. The age group for which these books are intended is still immature in the spiritual discernment department, and our duty is to preserve them in their fledgling faith (see Mark 9:42).

For those times when Mom or Dad are not close-by, perhaps Philippians 4:8 would be a clear, proper, loving guideline for our WELS elementary and high schools to use in choosing which books to discourage our children from reading.

James W. Hohenstein

Yampa, Colorado

All the fuss about witchcraft and enchantment with Harry Potter [is one thing]. What bothered me about Harry Potter is his undisciplined behavior while attending school.

That would make a greater impression on children than the wizardry. Parents should be alarmed about that. Wizardry is not running wild in this country, but respect for authority is.

Fred Knupeppel

Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

I read Pastor Doug Engelbrecht's article on "Crossing Over" [Feb.], and I agree that we will not know in this lifetime if the star of the show is for real or not.

But, please at least get the guy's name right. It's John Edward, not Edwards. I get the feeling that if [Engelbrecht] watched the show for a considerable time to get a real feeling of what the man is all about, he wouldn't have gotten his name wrong and he wouldn't have quoted him equivocating on his reading, which is something I never heard him do.

Ardith Morris



Cottonwood, Arizona

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Is religious faith relevant?

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

In the world of the 21st century, is religious faith relevant? In a famous essay, Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb gave a two-part answer to that question. Part one: the question is an absurdity that doesn't deserve an answer. Part two: I'll answer it anyway. Yes, religious faith is relevant.

Let's take part two first. "Religious faith is relevant," Gottlieb said, "because religion has a very good track record at helping people live better lives." For instance, most people would agree that vice and crime are bad things. It's easy to show that, in general, people who practice some form of religion have fewer vices and commit fewer crimes than people who don't. Most people find that life is lived better when we find some kind of meaning in it. Religion helps millions of people do just that. Religion, therefore, is relevant.

Now back to part one: "Is religious faith relevant?" is an unanswerable absurdity. We need, first, an answer to the question: "Relevant to what?"

Gottlieb's illustration: When a candidate applies for a job, normally his height has no relevance whatsoever—unless he wants to play center in the NBA. Then it makes all the difference. "Is religion relevant?" is a meaningless question because things can't be simply "relevant." They can only be relevant—or irrelevant—in terms of something else.

In the case of religion, what is the "something else"? As Gottlieb put it, "For me to ask whether religion is relevant is to measure religion against my goals and values. But, this presupposes that I already have goals and values." And that is simply not how God's Word works. Quite frankly, God's Word doesn't give a hoot about my preexisting goals and values. Instead, it confronts me with the truth.

In his Word, God says, "I will tell you how things really are. You will then learn what is and is not relevant, what goals and values are actually worth having. My Word is the standard by which you will judge your life. It doesn't work the other way around."

It's vital to understand this. God's Word says that regardless of what I think my problems are—my boss, my checkbook balance, my health—my real problem is my sin. My problem is that, by nature, I'm headed straight into the black hole of an eternity without God, and there's no way I can stop myself. God's Word also says that regardless of what I think the solution is, the real solution is my Savior, Jesus. Through his law and his gospel, God lovingly and persistently turns my focus away from what I think I need, toward what I really need—away from my "goals and values," and toward Jesus.

That means that anytime I perceive God's Word as "irrelevant," the trouble isn't with God's Word—it's with me. The problem isn't a message that's out of touch with life. The problem is a life that's out of touch with reality.

That's why the great Bible commentator Johann Bengel said, "Apply yourself totally to the text; apply the text totally to yourself." And do it in just that order.

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

Anytime I
perceive
God's Word
as irrelevant,
the trouble
isn't with
God's Word—
it's with me.

Easter

LIFE TO THE FULL!

The promise of Easter is fulfilled: “He has risen just as he said!” (Matthew 28:6). So, why do our lives sometimes seem so empty?

Nathan J. Strobel

*John,
Andy and I went
up to the lake until
Sunday noon.*

Joe

“Perfect!” John thought after reading his roommate’s note. “After the full day I’ve had, this is great timing! An empty apartment, no intrusion on my space—just me! Yes!” he said, as he pumped his fist in the air.

A full life vs. an empty life

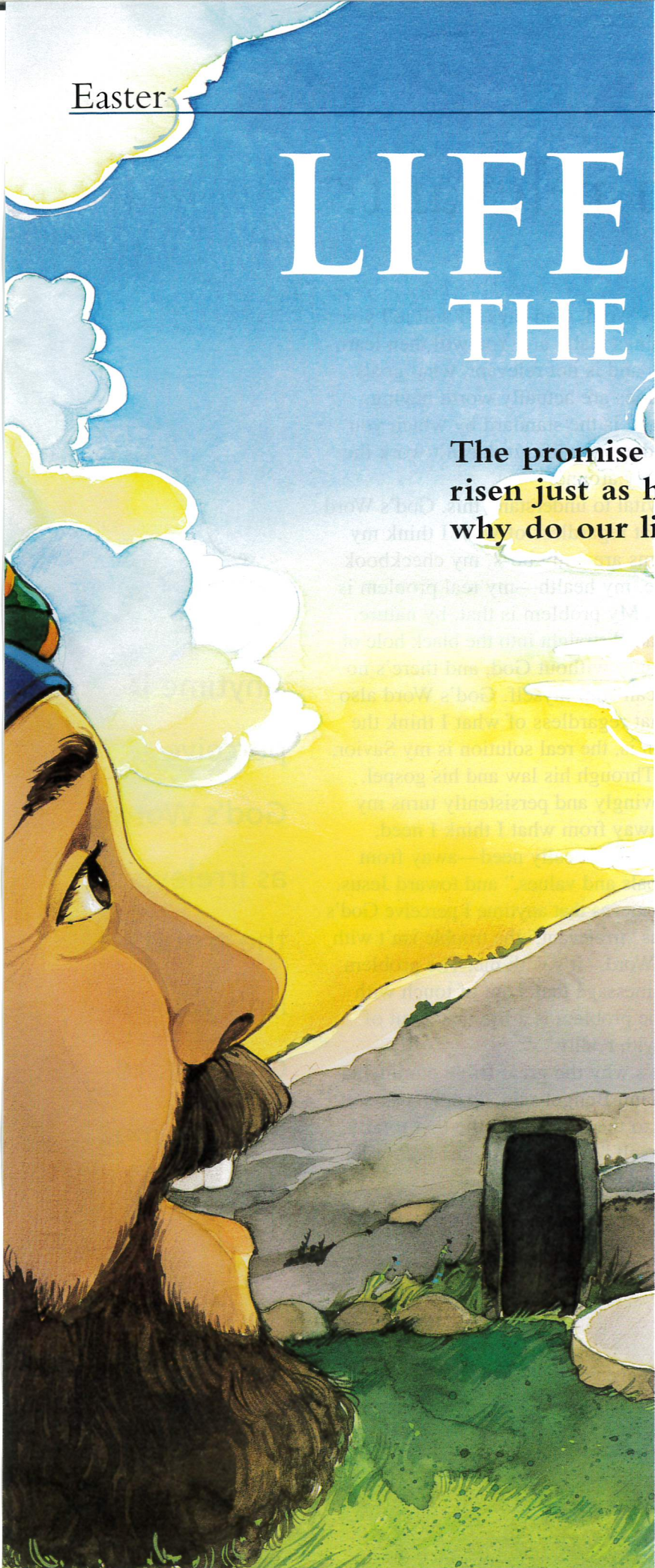
Do we ever experience a life so full that the only solution seems to be a major dose of emptiness?

Then again, maybe fullness of life isn’t our issue. Maybe it’s the emptiness. Possibly we have vowed to fill our lives with people, with places, with activities—so that we never feel empty again.

But either way, are we winning the battle? Does satisfying fullness persist in our lives? Or does it fade away as easily as the morning mist?

“Life ought to be full, rich, and satisfying,” we say to ourselves. “But people let us down. The places are only as fun as the people with us, and the activities get to be too much and sap our energy. Life ought to be full and rich—but so often it is not.”

The disciples’ lives had been so wonderfully full! They had spent three years with Jesus of



Nazareth—the apparent Messiah, the miracle worker, the most charismatic figure of their day. They had been in the “in” crowd, sharing the pomp, the glory, and even the power. And they had anticipated increasing rewards of the same stripe and flavor. Jesus said they would rule with him on 12 thrones.

But, as the world measures things, the bottom fell out of their lives in that olive grove when Judas showed up with the jealous opposition. The wind shifted, the tide turned, and, just like that, Jesus and the Galileans seemed on the outside looking in. They weren’t calling the shots anymore. Their religious and spiritual choices had made them apparent losers—Jesus was going to die.

What a heavy realization for the disciples! The satisfying fullness of their lives gone with that pitiful cry to God: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Wasn’t this the one who had said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it *to the full*” (John 10:10)?

And then there was the empty tomb. That really sent them for a loop. Even in giving their Lord a proper burial, they were left feeling empty. They had no closure. They had no point from which to move forward—if that were even possible. All they had was this tomb—and it was empty—along with the report of an angel claiming, “He has risen just as he said!” How could they believe the report? Gone seemed their dream of a full life riding on the coattails of Christ.

Focus on Jesus vs. focus on self

Little did they know, but Satan had them exactly where he wants us all. He had them so focused on themselves, with their eyes *off* Jesus, that they felt cornered by life.

They seemed all alone in the world, with their crying need for fullness no longer satisfied in Jesus of Nazareth. His promises seemed as empty as his tomb.

Focus on “self” and “what I want” is the plague of the world and people apart from God.

The disciples’ problem really stemmed from their focus on what they wanted from life—the right people, the right places, the right things—rather than on what they needed, which was a right relationship with God. They needed a relationship focused on him, rather than one focused on themselves. They needed a relationship that would enrich their lives with his forgiveness, his hope of heaven, and his sure promise that he was working through all the events of life to bless them.

Focus on “self” and “what I want” is the plague of the world and people apart from God. It is also a plague that still infects our sinful natures and that wars against the fullness of life we have through faith in Christ.

The world’s focus on “self” is also a focus on the here and now. But that focus is misguided, and it is also too narrow to provide the fullness we need and desire. For in the back of everyone’s being is a sense of dread and emptiness when we admit that there is more to life than what we see. That “more-to-life” idea scares us with visions of seeing God in all his glory while we are robed in all our sin. Oh, the emptiness!

At times, we might be tempted to join the world in its denial of what is coming. We might try the distractions

of this world—people, places, and things. That approach may seem to help for a time. But then, one by one, the people, the places, the things go away, and the emptiness returns.

The final answer

So what is the answer to the emptiness? Jesus of Nazareth, the one who rose from the dead “just as he said.” Jesus of Nazareth, who bridged the gap from this life to the next. Jesus of Nazareth, who stands before the Father, holy and true, and says, “Father, I have come to you that they may have life, and have it to the full. When I was forsaken by you on the cross—oh, the emptiness that was mine!—I did it for them. I want them to know the fullness that is life when their sin is forgiven in me, when their guilt is lifted by you, when their confidence is found in you, and when their hope in your promises is so big that it transcends the boundaries and heartaches of time. I want their hope to overflow into the vastness of eternity with us. Father, forgive them because of the emptiness I endured for them, and fill their lives with your love, your promises, and your faithfulness.”

Are we experiencing a life so full of the things of this world that the only solution would seem to be a major dose of emptiness? Are we living a life so full of me and my choices that we feel rather empty at the thought of seeing our God?

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” is the emptiness of Christ that fills our need. “He has risen just as he said!” is the fullness of life that fills our days—and our forever. Happy Easter!

Nathan Strobel is campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

All in the family

With support, individual attention, and love, Lakeside Lutheran High School and Winnebago Lutheran Academy gird their students with God's Word and all the skills they need to survive.

Julie K. Wietzke

It's like a family—without having to wait in line for the bathroom. It's like a family—without having to share a room with your little sister.

It's like a family—and all your best friends are part of it.

Lakeside Lutheran High School and Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA) are like families. With support, individual attention, and love, these schools gird their students with God's Word and all the skills they need to survive in a world that isn't always so family-like.

Family support

When a difficult decision needs to be made, when you're struggling with a problem or situation, when life just seems too hard, family support can help you succeed and get through the tough times.

Because being a teenager is tough, the support—both emotional and physical—given by Lakeside and Winnebago is important.

Lakeside offers student support in academics through its Extended Learning Center. This center offers programs for students with learning differences, supports teachers as they work with these students, and provides tutoring help.

"No one comes to high school to fail," says Emily Armstrong, coordinator for the Extended Learning Center. "Where there are difficulties,

there has to be a reason. Working to find the problem and resolve the issues is fascinating and teaches me to rely on the God of all wisdom."

This support is apparent to Lakeside students.

"I know that if I have problems or questions I can talk to any student or teacher," says senior Nick Raith. "Without the Christian support, Lakeside would be missing something."

Sophomore Ben Rosenblatt will attest to that same Christian support at WLA. When Rosenblatt was recently baptized, many students and teachers attended the service.

"I went to a public school my whole life," says Rosenblatt. "Now being at WLA, I know what I missed. Being around friends who believe the same thing I do is really comforting and enjoyable to know. Most important, they showed me how important it is to be baptized. Being baptized brought me into God's family, and I feel like my faith is getting stronger every day."

And that support is not restricted to the students.

"The faculty, students, and families interact very well and support each other in the training and instruction of these wonderful lambs of Jesus," says Randall Westphal, WLA principal.

Individual attention

Part of being supportive is giving attention to people when they need

it. This individual attention helps people thrive and succeed.

Being a large high school, however, makes giving individual attention difficult. That's why both Lakeside and Winnebago are working hard at keeping a small-school atmosphere.

"With a small school, each individual has a unique and significant role to play in the school," says Westphal. "If a school becomes larger, the individual student can lose his identity and become just another face in the crowd. Jesus saw each person as a special individual. We need to have that same focus."

By treating each student as a special individual, students gain more confidence and self-esteem.

"My Lutheran education lets me know that I am special and that whatever people think of me doesn't matter," says WLA freshman Jenni Bradford.

Lakeside helps students gain confidence by making allowances for different needs. One way this is done is through a full-time Tech Ed department with courses such as computer-aided design, welding, woods, and construction.

"This department has met the needs of learners who have different interests and gifts outside of the traditional academic courses," says Jeffrey Davis, principal.

Because Lakeside has 29 congregations over a 35-mile radius in its feder-

ation, it is understandably difficult to maintain individual attention to its students in outlying regions. Yet to serve these families, Lakeside supports seven daily bus lines that begin an average 25 miles from school (one way).

"We have had to make adjustments to our class/athletic schedules and activities in order to serve the families in the outer reaches of our federation," says Davis. "However, these families have brought something to our school because they come from a wide range of communities, both urban and rural."

Christian love

All this support and individual attention demonstrate the best quality of these schools—Christian love and caring.

"My favorite part about attending Lakeside is the close Christian friendships that I have formed with my fellow students and my teachers," says junior Caroline Corlett. "I can always find someone to talk to if I have a problem because the teachers really do care about the students."

And this caring isn't only seen in the teachers.

"Outwardly, our students often

act as any other teenagers," says Lakeside teacher Gerry Walta, "yet in their hearts is the love of Jesus that is reflected in their interactions with each other and with teachers and staff members here at school."

Their Christian love also extends outside of the school walls. Both Lakeside and Winnebago have active student service groups that show their love for Jesus by serving the community.

Girding with God's Word

Perhaps the greatest way that the teachers of these schools show Christian love is by girding their students with God's Word.

"Lakeside has been blessed with the ability of always placing Jesus very prominently in its curriculum," says Davis. "When visitors walk into our school they know very quickly it is Christian. Jesus is evident in our building: a picture of him is prominent in our school; his name is used by our instructors; he is the focus of our school and all that goes into it."

That focus is also seen in the students' lives.

"The faith of our students and their parents is the greatest blessing," says

Winnebago Lutheran Academy Fond du Lac, Wis.

Year established: 1925

2001-02 enrollment: 440

Number of teachers: 30 full-time, four part-time

For more information: 475 E Merrill Ave, Fond du Lac, WI 54935; 920/921-4930; <www.wlavikings.org>

Lakeside Lutheran High School Lake Mills, Wis.

Year established: 1958

2001-02 enrollment: 405

Number of teachers: 29

For more information: 231 Woodland Beach Rd, Lake Mills, WI 53551; 920/648-2321; <www.llhs.org>

Winnebago teacher Ann Steffen. "Last winter one of our students was killed in a car accident. Our students and the young lady's parents witnessed to their faith in the most difficult time. As a teacher of teens you sometimes wonder if 'they get it.' What a comfort it is to know that 'they do.'"

And because they do get it, students at these schools belong to one more family—God's.



Julie Wietzke is senior communications assistant for Forward in Christ magazine and WELS Communication Services.



Forty WLA seniors helped move a house that was on the property that WLA has purchased. Winnebago has come a long way since its beginnings in 1925, when St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis., started WLA so its eighth-grade class could have another year of Christian education. "Now we are teaching grandchildren of former students!" says Teacher Larry Klukas.

The theme of Lakeside's 2001-02 school year, "Seeing Jesus," is prominently displayed at the school's front entrance. In September, Lakeside will start a major construction project, including remodeling the current building and constructing a new gymnasium, separate vocal and band rooms, four new science rooms, a media center, and an art room.



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

A pastor learns what it is like to be a layman.

Chris A. Cordes

I'm not a pastor anymore—at least not in the traditional sense. I don't have a congregation to shepherd. I don't prepare catechism classes. I don't give devotions at meetings each week. I don't sweat to give birth to sermons every week.

But I'm still in the ministry.

A couple years ago my family and I were living in Colombia, but the violence of the guerrilla conflict against the government of that land finally put our missionary families at risk. We were taken out of Colombia and now live in the United States.

I have not stopped serving Colombia. To most people, though, I don't look like I'm in the ministry anymore. Someone once asked me if I was on extended furlough or if I was retired.

It has to be the strangest ministry I never imagined.

Learning to be a layman

Actually I'm both layman and minister. In my local congregation I don't do pastoral work. Instead we are simply members there. So now I get to practice what I used to preach. I teach myself to ask, "What tasks or jobs does my church family need? Where can I use my talents to serve with my fellow laypeople?" And I share the layperson's challenge of challenging myself to find personal time to help out.

I used to wonder how it sounded to prospects when I would tell them I liked going to church every Sunday. "Yeah, but you're the pastor," they would say. "You have to be there." Now I challenge myself to want to go because we need to be encouraged by each other's voluntary presence. I also know I need to hear God's precious truths applied to my life. I don't let it be an option to attend. Thanks to God, it's a standard focus of each week.

Now instead of working hard to keep people's attention, I get to struggle at paying attention. My pastors aren't boring speakers, but if I don't prepare for church by getting a good night's sleep, I find I'm nodding for more than one reason. Lately, asking my children after church what the sermon was about is a new game entirely.

To me, the best part of lay life is doing what I tried to teach my former parishioners—listen to God in the service. I like to think of my pastors as the visible reminder of our invisible God. When they speak, I like to imagine Jesus himself in the pulpit or in front of the altar. Because they represent our God to us, it is the Savior who I see handing out the bread and extending the cup for us to drink. When dessert comes at the end of the service, when the blessing is spoken, in reality it is Jesus' voice placing his saving, powerful name on us. I know from a lay perspective now the mean-

ing of the hymn words "too soon we rise, the vessels disappear" (*Christian Worship* 315). Often I find myself saying, "It's over already?" wishing for more.

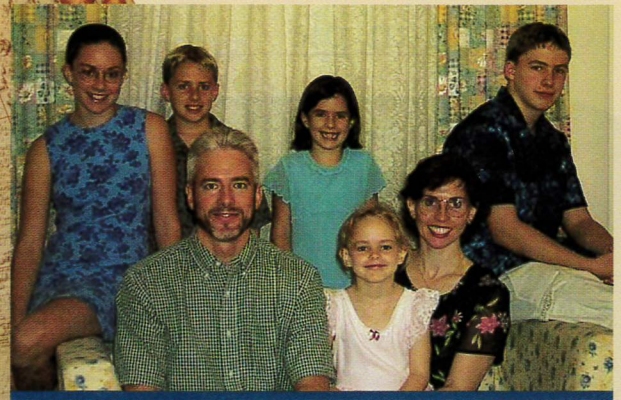
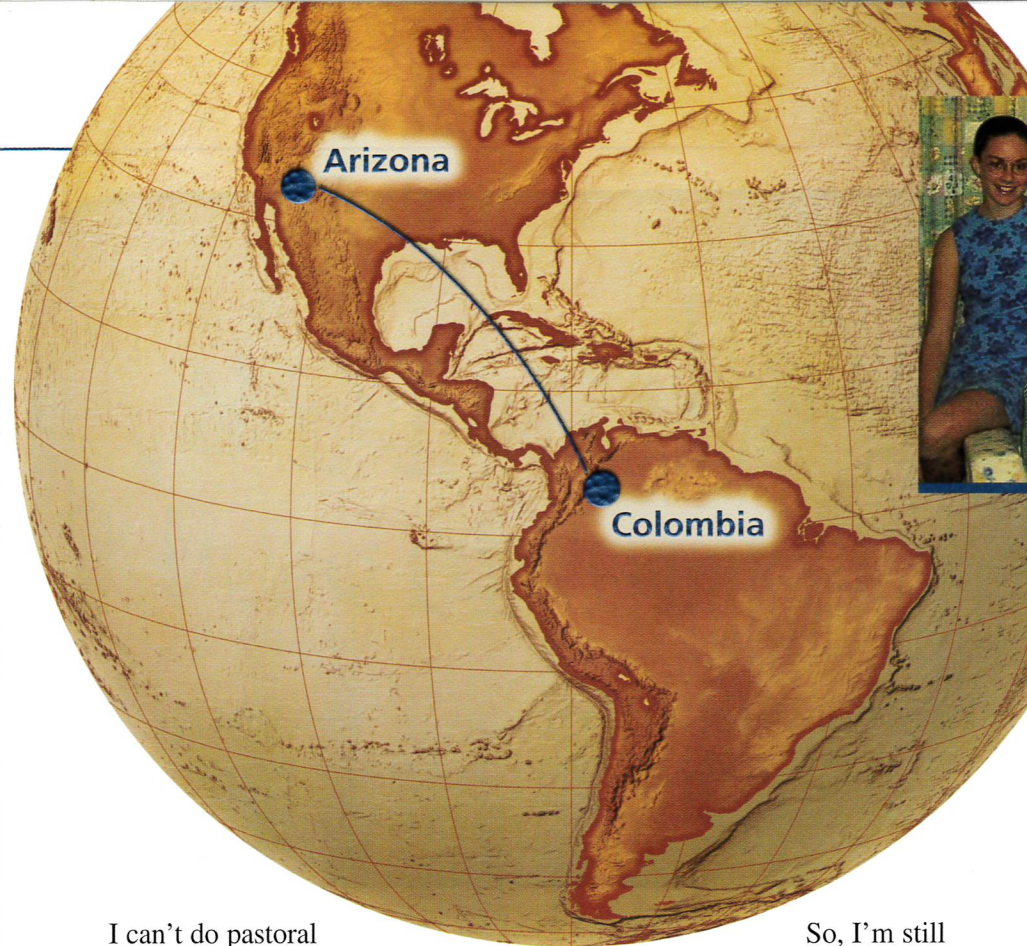
As a pastor I used to appreciate beyond words the members who gave support and encouragement, who treated my family and me with kindness and respect, despite my weaknesses and failings. For my pastors now, I ask God's help to do the same. This includes praying for them. God knows pastors and teachers need our prayers. Their responsibilities in the ministry of the Word exceed all others. Sometimes the burden crushes them and drains their strength. So I pray for them and look for ways to encourage them. I try not to call them on their days off. I try to keep them informed of important family matters, so they're among the first to know. I hope they sense that I back them 100 percent in their godly ministries, even should our opinions in debatable matters differ. I hope they know that I treasure their work deeply and them personally.

It's good to be a layman.

Continuing to be a pastor

But I'm still in the public ministry. I'm not on extended furlough. And at 42, I'm not retired.

So what do I do with all my time, now that I don't live in Colombia?



The Cordes family

I can't do pastoral work in a Colombian church anymore. That ministry was handed over to men called by their churches to take over for us. But everyone in ministry there is still in training. They have learned enough to do the tasks of their callings, but each needs more ministerial education, and they need encouragement. That's my ministry.

As the mission coordinator, my call is to get them through all 70 courses needed for ministerial training and to serve them as friendly counselor. They aren't always sure what to do, and they need advice and encouragement. Often I'm on the phone or writing letters and correcting tests and papers. My time is also filled with the administrative duties of coordinating the mission with our boards and committees here. In particular, weeks and months are taken up reviewing, editing, revising, and preparing courses in Spanish. With 70 courses to prepare and teach, most of them long distance, I may not finish before retirement.

So, I'm still a pastor. I shepherd pastors and teachers in ministry. I don't get to preach much, except for mission festivals here in the States. And I don't make hospital calls or visit shut-ins or teach Bible classes here. But I still feel the weight of responsibility for the kingdom.

I struggle not to worry about losing momentum or servants or souls to man's schemes or the devil's deceptions. And I still rejoice at spiritual victories—when the Lord gives our Colombian ministers a good response in a tough situation, when his Spirit leads them to suggest and implement ways to improve church life, or when they get innovative in helping families and individuals mature in their walk with God. It's good to be a minister, too.

I'm living the best of both worlds. ✨

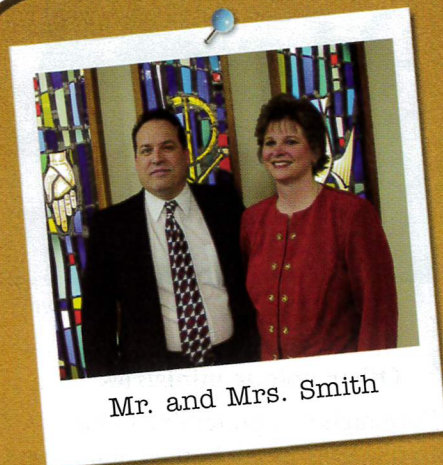
Chris Cordes, a member at Grace, Glendale, Ariz., is WELS' mission coordinator to Colombia.

Other unique ministries

Although it is preferable to have missionaries living in the country that they are serving, sometimes circumstances call for unique methods. Mission Coordinator Chris Cordes is just one example. Here are two more:

- Missionary Pieter Reid and his family were evacuated from Indonesia in September 2001 because of the growing anti-American sentiment held by radicals in this primarily Islamic country. Yet Reid will continue to serve *Geraja Lutheran Indonesia* (the Indonesian Lutheran Church) for another two years from his home in Sun Prairie, Wis. Some of his responsibilities include maintaining personal relationships with the national workers through letters, e-mails, and phone calls and traveling to Indonesia every three to four months to encourage the national workers, teach them, and help with their planning.

- Missionaries to the Caribbean Larry Retberg and Nathan Wagenknecht work with the Lutheran Church of Cuba from their homes in Saginaw, Mich., and The Woodlands, Tex. Maintaining contact with members and leaders of the Lutheran Church of Cuba is difficult because e-mail is not available to many people in Cuba. Therefore Retberg and Wagenknecht make six trips a year, for 30 days each, to Cuba. While in Cuba, they instruct church leaders in five different locations and help gather congregations in areas where the Lutheran Church of Cuba has no leaders. While in the States, they study and prepare materials and classes for future trips.



Mr. and Mrs. Smith

Welcome, new member!

It is easy for a new member to remain anonymous, to get lost in the crowd, or to “slip through the cracks.” Here are ways we can help keep new members active and involved.

James R. Huebner

Bill and Sue finished the Bible information class and were excited about joining the church. They publicly acknowledged their unity with their fellow believers during worship about two weeks before their wedding. After their honeymoon, they showed up for worship three Sundays in a row. Then their attendance slipped to twice a month, once a month, once every two months, and eventually they dropped out of sight.

What happened? I suppose we could chalk it up to their sinful nature demonstrating itself in spiritual apathy. But there may be more to the story. Although Bill and Sue bear responsibility for becoming active members of the church, perhaps the congregation could have done something to help assimilate them into congregational life and active membership.

What is “assimilation”? Assimilation is folding new sheep into the flock without spindling or stapling

them. The larger the congregation, the harder that is to do. For example, if the average attendance of your congregation is below 90 on any given weekend, it is likely that a new member will not only be received with open arms, but missed if absent from worship and Bible study. However, in a larger congregation, just because of the sheer number of people, it is easy for a new member to remain anonymous, to get lost in the crowd, and, when showing early signs of inactivity, to slip through the cracks.

So, what can we do to help new members become better assimilated?

Communicate the Lord's expectations

It is essential to communicate to all new members the Lord's expectations of those who unite with a Christian congregation. That's not being legalistic. That simply means sharing in an honest and loving way what God says in his holy Word about

- the importance and benefits

of corporate worship (Hebrews 10:25),

- spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18),
- witnessing for Christ with life and lip (Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 28:19,20),
- managing finances for the work of the Lord and his church (Proverbs 3:9), and
- managing time and spiritual gifts in service to God and others (1 Corinthians 12:7-27).

Provide a meaningful entrance into the congregation

Some congregations have included new-member transfers in a public rite similar to that of adult confirmation or at least have found a way to introduce new members at the close of a worship service so that current members can greet and welcome them. A new-member dinner or brunch, in-home visitations by congregational leaders, a “getting to know you” newsletter article, new-member sponsors, and a new-member information packet are also excellent ideas.

Make available sufficient opportunities for spiritual growth

The primary goal of corporate worship is not entertaining the crowd but elevating Jesus. Wouldn't it be great if the dominant thought on the hearts and minds of worshipers on their way home would not be "That made me feel good," but "Isn't our Savior wonderful"? In addition, offer to all members, new and veteran, training for personal Bible reading and study as well as varied and ongoing opportunities for study of the Scriptures.

No matter what the size of your congregation, consistent two-way communication will aid in assimilation of new members.

Provide opportunities for service through a variety of roles and tasks

Assuming that Christ-focused worship and Bible study opportunities are in place, there may be no better way for a new member to develop a sense of belonging and a sense of ownership in the congregation than to become involved in some ongoing role or short-term task. Keep in mind that a notice in the bulletin inviting people to help or volunteer does not work well. Person-to-person communication is the way to go. You will be surprised how many people, including new members, are willing to get involved in serving their Lord and others when they know specifically what

they are to do, how it fits in the big picture of the congregation's ministry, and how long it will take.

Provide opportunities for developing friendships with others in the congregation

Worship services and Bible studies are an ideal way to enhance mutual support and encouragement, but other congregational events and activities can provide an informal setting for the same purpose. A variety of events and activities planned throughout the year will not only offer ways for members to develop friendships but can also serve as "side-door" entry points for people who do not have a church home.

Establish a means of congregational two-way communication

No matter what the size of your congregation, assimilation of new members will be aided by consistent two-way communication, that is, not only information from the congregation's leaders and staff but input from all the members. Consider making use of open forums and questionnaires so that all members can feel that their input is valued. Many larger congregations have already implemented a system of "undershepherds" who care for a smaller group of members, providing an avenue of loving care and communication with all members.

Establish a "member care" structure

Mailing a form letter after three months of absence is impersonal and can do more harm than good. It is better to find a way to detect the early signs of inactivity

and to establish a process of member care that will ensure a personal expression of love and concern.

The big question that remains is "who's in charge?" If the answer is "the pastor," that may be a noble thought and a pious wish, but it will be impossible for the pastor personally to stay in touch with each new member every day. Perhaps the congregation needs to appoint a task force in charge of assimilation or a coordinator of assimilation, who will work with the Board of Elders to monitor the activity of each new member, to enlist the help of others in follow-up, and to ensure that all aspects of assimilation are up and running.

Granted, there is sin in our world, and it can worm its way into the hearts and lives of Christians, too, leading to spiritual apathy and inactivity. But that reality will not slow us down in our efforts to assimilate all new members so that they remain focused on Christ and growing in the grace and knowledge of the Savior.

Jim Huebner is pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



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 are Flexible



To those who stick with the whole truth of Scriptures,
God grants flexibility in matters not governed by the Word of God.

Wayne D. Mueller

Lutherans stand for something. We understand faithfulness to Jesus to be unswerving commitment to everything he says. Jesus equated love for him with devotion to his message: “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:23). Carrying Christ’s mission to the world means “teaching them to obey everything” (Matthew 28:20) he has commanded us.

Faithfulness to our Lord’s message commits us to the truth of the Scriptures. At confirmation we swear allegiance to the six Lutheran Confessions as faithful expressions of Scripture. As a church body, we publicize many other statements of belief. With loving firmness we witness to the world what God has said.

Dedicated—not rigid

Because of this, others may call us rigid, inflexible. We prefer to

be called dedicated. But although Lutherans hang on every word of their Savior, they are anything but rigid in demanding their personal viewpoints. As firmly as we swear to the inerrant truth of the Scriptures, we swear off the imposition of human opinion and man-made laws.

Flexibility in matters of human judgment is a heritage of our Christian liberty. Lutherans claim divine right to use our human judgment in matters not decided by the Bible.

In 1520, Martin Luther declared Christian liberty to be a biblical truth: “On behalf of this liberty of conscience I raise my voice and confidently cry: Upon Christians no laws may be imposed by any right, neither by men nor by angels, without their consent; for we are free from all things” (*What Luther Says* 2411).

Standing on his Christian liberty,

Luther set aside many of the human requirements of the Roman church. He threw off the hierarchical yoke of the papacy. He formulated new orders of worship. His own marriage testified against the man-made rule for priestly celibacy.

God-given freedom

Jesus said, “The truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Ironically, those who free themselves from the simple truth of the Bible end up enslaved to endless human rules. But to those who stick with the whole truth of Scripture, God grants flexibility in matters not governed by the Word of God. Inflexible adherence to the Bible offers the flexibility of Christian freedom.

Christian freedom entails many things. Most important, through the work of our Savior, we are free from sin, death, and the devil.

Guilt cannot bind us to punishment for sins that Jesus paid for and forgave (Romans 8:1,2). Death is no longer a prison, but an open door to heaven (1 Corinthians 15:56,57). And, in Christ, we have the power to be free of the influence of Satan (James 4:7).

Christ's completed work also freed us from Old Testament ceremony. We are no longer bound to ritual sacrifice, tithing, and the Saturday Sabbath (Colossians 2:16,17). Paul urged the Galatians to exercise this Christian freedom from circumcision: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Finally, Christian freedom ensures flexibility in all matters not decided by the Word of God. Unless God's Word calls for it, no believer can be conscience-bound by any human rule or regulation. Jesus chided the Pharisees and teachers of the law: "'They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:7,8).

Matters about which God has made no laws the Bible calls *adiaphora*, roughly translated, "indifferent matters." Most of our daily decisions are *adiaphora*. God does not tell us exactly what to wear, what to drive, or what to eat. The Bible does not pick out our tie or scarf for us.

But not only practical matters are free to us. Many decisions affecting our spiritual life are also free. No Bible law governs our forms of worship. God does not command certain prayer postures or specific approaches to Bible study.

The abuse of liberty

Our sinful flesh tries to wreck

every good thing God gives to us. Christian freedom is no exception.

The most common abuse is the failure to distinguish between what God has said and what he has not said. A pastor once confided to me that he could spew false doctrine from the pulpit without anyone protesting. "But," he said, "if I wear a different gown, the members will expel me!" Those who do not know their Bible well may get irate about things God deems unimportant, but forget the one thing needful.

Inflexible adherence to the Bible offers the flexibility of Christian freedom.

Another way we abuse Christian liberty is to claim freedom where God gives none. Paul warns, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:13). God's mercy does not free us to provide him more opportunity to forgive us. "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Romans 6:1,2).

We abuse our freedom, too, when we consciously offend others. Just because there's no divine law against something, does not mean it's advisable. "'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is constructive" (1 Corinthians 10:23). To insist on drinking in the presence of a recovering alcoholic is sin. To demand a church renovation plan that you know will divide the congregation abuses freedom. "Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

Abusing Christian freedom is especially harmful when it offends those

who are weak in faith. Longtime members can be insensitive to new members and the young when they push their strong opinions and insist on the way they've always done things. Paul's advice to veteran Christians is ageless: "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters" (Romans 14:1).

Where the heart is

Christian freedom rests on right motive. Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Even decisions that are technically free are not fruits of faith unless they come from a heart that is right with God.

By definition, Christian freedom is exercised on behalf of Christ. We make every free decision to glorify God and to serve our sisters and brothers in Christ. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. . . . I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:31,33; 11:1).

My former secretary placed a sign above her desk: "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not get bent out of shape." There is no leeway for Lutherans when it comes to what God says. But where God has not spoken we will defend our Christian freedom to the death. We lovingly exercise our freedom by making decisions that glorify God and help our neighbor. With equal love we refuse to get bent out of shape when others do not share our opinion. That's godly flexibility.



Wayne Mueller is first vice president of WELS.

Second-career pastors—

Second-career pastors may have once been carpenters or lawyers, farmers or dentists, commercial artists or laboratory technicians. The one thing they all have in common, though, is a desire to serve the Lord by doing something more and something different from what they had been doing.

Jeffrey L. Samelson

If you attended a district or synod convention, you wouldn't be able to pick them out. If you served lunch at a pastors' conference, you wouldn't know which ones they were. If you attended a new church and he led the service, you probably wouldn't see any difference.

About the only place you can hope to pick out the second-career pastors from among the first-career pastors is in seminary graduation photos. It's a little easier to spot them in those class pictures because they're older—which often means less hair or more gray, or maybe even wrinkles around the eyes.

Differences

Of course, it's not just their age when they finish seminary and go out to their first calls that makes them different—it's what they did in the years before they decided to study for the public ministry. You'll find some that weren't even always Christian, let alone Lutheran. Their résumés would include previous careers such as carpenters and lawyers, farmers and dentists, commercial artists and laboratory technicians, insurance salesmen and schoolteachers, painters, publishers, and principals.

Their salaries in their previous careers varied from "just getting by" to six-figure incomes. They may have lived their entire lives in the same town or spent years traveling overseas.

Whether first career or second career, pastors are pastors: God's servants and shepherds of his flock.

The one thing they all had in common was a desire to do something more and something different from what they were doing. Yes, they served God and their churches as laymen, but somehow that just didn't seem to be enough. Maybe a desire from their childhood resurfaced when their first career got frustrating, or maybe somebody—a pastor, friend, or church member—just wouldn't stop saying, "You know, you really ought to be a pastor."

Paul told Timothy, "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1). At some point, these men decided that their hearts wouldn't let them do anything else—it was time to



stop dreaming and start studying. The choice was never made easily. There were wives and families to consider, finances to struggle with, and the uncertainty that always accompanies committing six to eight years to an intense course of study—especially if it had been many years since one had last been in a classroom, or if one's education the first time around hadn't exactly been a time of self-discipline and high standards.

My story

I have found that my story is similar to that of many other second-career pastors—not in the details, but in the difficulty of the decision. It had been less than a year since my wife had left behind her home in Singapore to marry me. Our lifestyle in the U.S. Foreign Service, though not extravagant, was quite comfortable. I was in a position of respect. We would be leaving much behind and setting our course for unknown territory. We filled more than a few



who are they?

fellow students and our professors. He supported me, financially and emotionally, through family, friends, strangers, congregations, and the synod as a whole. (Thank you all!) Through it all, the guiding hand of his providence made sure that nothing distracted me from my goal: graduation from the seminary and a call to serve the Lord as a pastor.

Advantages

Once a second-career pastor has that call, there's little to make him stand out among all the other pastors of our synod. And that's exactly as it should be—whether first career or second career, pastors are pastors: God's servants and shepherds of his flock.

Still, we're not all clones, and the past experiences of a second-career pastor often give unique advantages: both to that pastor as he ministers and to the congregation that he serves. A second-career pastor has spent time on both sides of the pulpit. He begins his ministry already understanding what it's like in the pews. Often he can identify from personal experience with the member who doesn't know when the next paycheck is coming or if he will have a job next year. He knows what it's like to spend 40 or more hours a week in a godless workplace, and sometimes he's personally acquainted with a godless lifestyle. It's hard to shock even a rookie second-career pastor with a problem or confession—he knows just how bad things can be.

The specifics of a previous career also provide advantages—maybe the people skills of a salesman or the administrative skills of a manager. A farmer may bring patience to

evangelism and discipline. A tradesman might bring expertise to a building project. Time spent overseas or working with other cultures may open doors to outreach that would otherwise stay closed. It may even be just the maturity of years and already having identified one's strengths and weaknesses that provide an advantage. What brand-new, second-career pastors often lack in youth and energy, they usually make up for with instinct and experience.

All God's servants

As time goes by, of course, the differences between first-career and second-career pastors diminish. Those who got into the ministry the "traditional" way learn from their members what the "non-traditional" men learned on their own, and both find new interests and strengths that benefit their ministries. They serve side-by-side and work together, usually not even remembering that they took different paths into God's service.

If you have a man in your family or congregation who you think has the gifts to be a pastor, put a bug in his ear about it. It doesn't matter if he's 25 or 55. Pray for him. Encourage him. Maybe that's all he needs. If you're that man, wondering if you could be a pastor, look into it. Don't delay any longer. I have never met a second-career pastor who wanted to go back to his previous career. It wouldn't make sense. As far as we're concerned, we have the best job in the world. ✨

Jeff Samelson is pastor at Christ, Columbia, Maryland.

nights with prayer, talk, and tears as we struggled to make a decision.

What finally settled it was a question my pastor, Carl W. Leyrer, asked me. "Jeff, as you look down the road, can you picture yourself being happy as anything but a pastor?"

I couldn't. I wasn't dissatisfied with my job then because it was a bad job—I was unhappy because I didn't want it anymore. I wanted to be a pastor instead.

The two years of the Seminary Certification Program and four years of seminary are a bit of a blur to me now. They passed quickly—and without enough sleep. My wife and I had two children in those years and moved five times. I attended three schools and worked seven different part-time jobs, and I had it easier than some of my fellow students.

It was all worth it, but I couldn't have done it without God's loving care. He encouraged me through

Coollest thing to do on Easter Sunday

“Eating candy and watching the tube” may be a great temptation, but it won’t do much for your life beyond the grave.

Carl R. Henkel

It’s not an official poll—just a place to express your opinion on a Web site—but I was shocked at the results. I still thought that a substantial number of Americans regarded Easter Sunday as one of the two times that they would go to church. If this unofficial poll on the coolest thing to do on Easter Sunday (see above) is a true indication of what’s going on in the hearts of 21st-century people, then it appears that even Easter Sunday is no longer a time for church.

Not-even-once-a-year Christians

Remember the old joke? A minister greets some of his members on Easter Sunday with the words “Merry Christmas” because he knows he won’t see them again in church until Christmas Eve. This poll seems to indicate that he may not be seeing them on Easter Sunday, or Christmas Eve either. Are the “twice-a-year” Christians becoming “not-even-once-a-year” Christians? Is the tiny spark of faith going out on those who at one time had at least enough faith to drag themselves out of bed and into church on Easter?

In the survey, going to church on Easter ranks fewer than four percentage points above eating candy and watching the tube, and fewer than five

percentage points over collecting pink eggs. Conversely, spending time with the family was nearly twice as important as going to church.

Here’s a novel idea: how about doing both! Wouldn’t it be great if spending time with the family in church were the popular preference? Not only on Easter Sunday, but every Sunday!

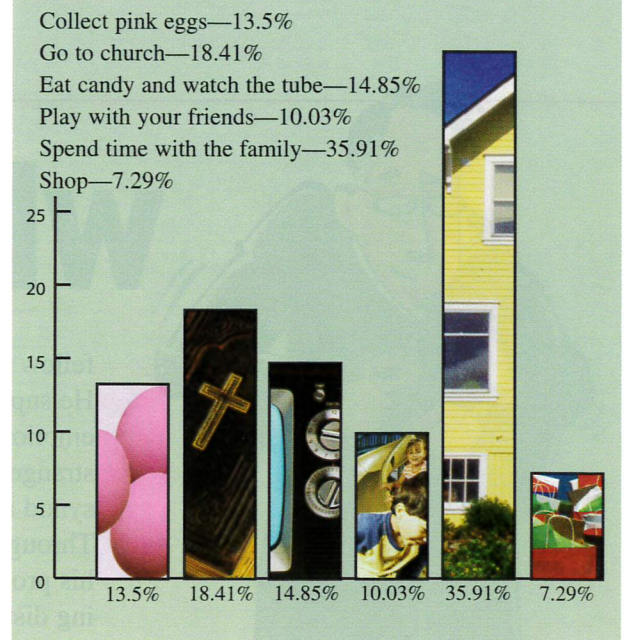
Of course, going to church doesn’t make anyone a Christian any more than going into a garage makes one a car. But where there is true love for Jesus, there will also be a burning desire to worship him. And worship happens at church.

Weekly recharging needed

I’ve heard lots of excuses for not going to church:

- There are too many hypocrites there.
- The people aren’t friendly—or they are too friendly.
- The music is drab, and the sermons are boring.
- The kids are too noisy.
- I’ve heard all that stuff before.

No one will deny that there is some truth to these excuses, but there is so much more to church than the external. If you go to church expecting nothing, that’s no doubt what you’ll get.



The opposite is also true. If you come to church expecting to talk with the Lord and to hear him speak to you in his Word; if you come to say you’re sorry and that you love your Savior and need him by your side; if you come to hear him say, “I love you, I forgive you, I’m always with you”; and if you come to find strength and courage to face the next seven days, then that is what you’ll get.

It is said that seven days without Christ makes one weak. We’ve all experienced that weakness. Like batteries, we quickly wear down and need to be recharged. The writer to the Hebrews (chapter 10) reminds us that such recharging is one of the benefits of regularly gathering in God’s house. Every time of worship is a “mini-Easter,” for it is Jesus’ resurrection that gives us hope, peace, and new life.

I urge you not to forsake coming together for worship. You need it! And if you think that you don’t, then you need it more than ever. “Eating candy and watching the tube” may be a great temptation, but it won’t do much for your life beyond the grave. In the long run, only Jesus can satisfy. Only Jesus can save.



Carl Henkel is pastor at Mt. Olive, St. Paul, Minnesota.



Jesus' miracles: PORTRAITS OF REDEMPTION

Mark J. Lenz

INTRODUCTION

- Jesus regularly used the familiar to explain the unfamiliar. Think of a parable of Jesus that illustrates this.
- Jesus' miracles also used the familiar to teach the unfamiliar. The people in the text below knew something about boats, the sea, nets, and catching fish. What kind of miracle might Jesus have performed if they had been shepherds or traders or soldiers?

TEXT—LUKE 5:1-11

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the Word of God, ²he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

⁵Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

⁶When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." ¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jesus borrow Simon's boat? What was the content of Jesus' teaching?
2. Jesus invited Simon to let down the nets for a catch. What is the significance of Simon's response?
3. How did Simon Peter react to the miracle? Why do you suppose he reacted this way (Isaiah 6:5)?

QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

4. The disciples were astonished by their catch of fish, but they were also afraid. On what other occasion were they afraid (Matthew 14:27)? Compare how Jesus calmed the disciples' fears on these two occasions.
5. Jesus told the disciples that from now on they would catch men. What does this suggest as to the purpose of Jesus' miracle? How did the disciples respond?

APPLICATIONS

1. It has been said that some Christians are in the business of exchanging fish, and that others are merely keepers of the aquarium. How does this square with Jesus' words in our text?
2. Good fishermen don't splash around noisily, and they keep their lines untangled. What application does this have for fishers of men?
3. A good fisherman knows what kind of bait to use, and he also knows something about the fish he's trying to catch. What might fishers of men learn from this?
4. When fishing for men, our Lord used a line more often than a net. He spoke to the woman at the well, to Zacchaeus, to the rich young ruler, to the dying thief, etc.—and he was not always outwardly successful. What lessons are there here for us?
5. A good fisherman knows when to set the hook, when to pull in the line, how to be patient, and when to pack up his gear and go home. What applications are there for fishers of men?
6. Jesus' miracle of the overwhelming catch of fish is a beautiful portrait of redemption. What does it reveal about Jesus? What does it say about our purpose on earth?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I want to be a fisherman for you. Give me opportunities, give me abilities, and give me patience that I might be your instrument in bringing in a huge catch. Hear me for the sake of your boundless love. Amen.

A mission in the streets

Look! The gospel's comin' down the road!

You've heard of missions based in a church. Perhaps the words "mission work" even conjure up pictures of huts or tents in a foreign land. But have you ever heard of a mission truck?

Pastor Curt Backhaus and the members of Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M., seized the opportunity to buy a bookmobile from a public library to start a whole new kind of mission work. They received donations of money and books from many WELS members. "The bookmobile is a 'go, reach, and teach' effort," says Backhaus. "We're confident it will lead to the kind of 'come and learn' opportunities that will bring new members into our congregation."

The bookmobile makes its rounds twice a month, stopping at senior centers, lower-income apartments, a city recreation center, a gas station a block from the church, two post offices, and a member's house. "We're putting good, Christ-centered materials into the hands and hearts of people we might never reach in any other way," explains Backhaus.

With materials in Spanish, English, and other languages, the bookmobile reaches out to the congregation's Latino neighbors, who make up half the town population.

One Spanish-speaking woman who didn't own a Bible took home a free Spanish New Testament and borrowed



This young visitor to the bookmobile looks quite curious about Veggie Tales. Those cartoon vegetables and children's books may be just the way to reach out to new households.

a few *Oyeme Leer* (Hear Me Read) books that have simple Bible stories designed for the beginning reader. She came back two weeks later, borrowed some more things for her children, and also took home *La Promesa*, a gospel witness booklet.

A worker for the local gas company borrowed the New Testament on CD. He's listening to God's Word as he works.

"[The bookmobile] has given our church members practical ways to be involved in outreach," Backhaus reflects. "It's establishing a good community identity for our congregation because we're seen all around town, and we're parked right next to church. Most importantly it's been a tool for sharing God's Word with more new people in a month than we usually meet in a year of conducting regular worship services."

To learn more or to donate books, visit www.zianet.com/bookmobile.

Laura Warmuth

Obituaries

Herbert R. Filter 1939-2001

Herbert Filter was born Oct. 29, 1939, in Adrian, Mich. He died Nov. 28, 2001, in Traverse City, Mich.

A 1966 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. John, Stillwater, Minn.; St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn.; Redeemer, Edna, Tex.; St. John, Sterling, Mich.; and St. Martin, Roscommon, Mich.

He is survived by his wife, Eileen; two brothers; one sister; cousins; and nieces and nephews.

Gale Maas 1921-2002

Gale Maas was born Sept. 1, 1921, in Milwaukee. He died Feb. 7, 2002, in Mapleton, Minn.

A 1946 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Zion, Van Dyne, Wis.; Immanuel, DePere, Wis.; St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis.; and Zion, Morton, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Lillian; two sons; one sister; three grandsons; and one step-grandson.

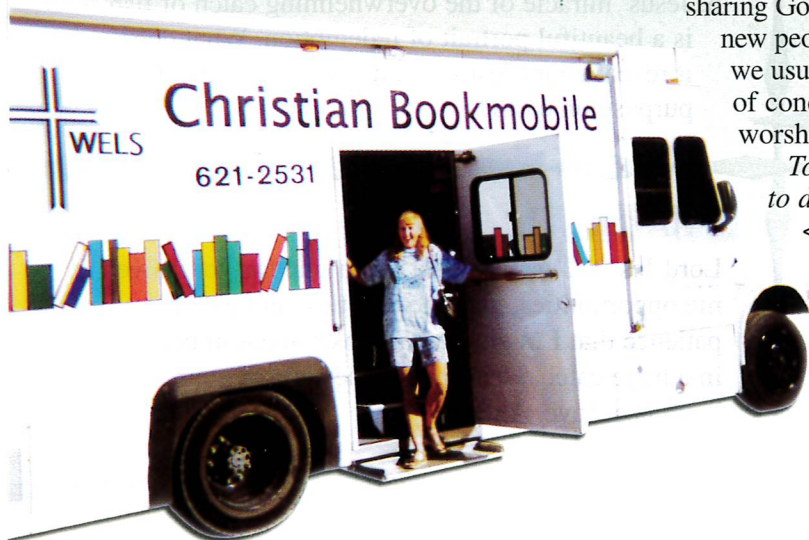
Esther Wiedenmeyer

Esther Wiedenmeyer (nee Heimann) died Jan. 28, 2002.

A 1934 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served at St. John, St. Johns, Antigua.

She is survived by her husband, Wilhelm.

Correction: In Sylvester Quam's obituary [Feb. 2002], we incorrectly stated that Quam taught at St. Peter, North Freedom, Wis. Quam actually taught at St. Peter, Town Freedom, Wis.



District conventions

Arizona/California

June 10-12
Arizona Golf Resort & Conference Center,
Phoenix, Ariz.
Contact: Pastor Kenneth Pasch, 480/986-0466

Dakota/Montana

June 11-13
Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Contact: Pastor Stephen Geiger, 605/665-4793

Michigan

June 11-13
TBA
Contact: Pastor James Seelow, 517/781-0980

Minnesota

June 18-20
Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Contact: Pastor Michael Hatzung, 651/777-5771

Nebraska

June 10-12
Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.
Contact: Pastor Michael Helwig, 308/382-1988

North Atlantic

June 8-9
Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Penn.
Contact: Pastor Jeffrey Wegner, 508/761-5051

Northern Wisconsin

June 9-11
Paper Valley Hotel & Conference Center, Appleton, Wis.
Contact: Pastor Ronald Szep, 920/788-4408

Pacific Northwest

June 14-15
Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des Moines, Wash.
Contact: Pastor Jon Buchholz, 253/839-0731

South Atlantic

June 10-12
Holiday Inn, Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.
Contact: Pastor Robert Krueger, 865/966-3112

South Central

June 3-4
Holy Word, Austin, Tex.
Contact: Pastor Christopher Goelzer, 210/682-6898

Southeastern Wisconsin

June 11-12
Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Contact: Pastor Robert Pasbrig, 414/259-8122

Western Wisconsin

June 9-11
Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Contact: Pastor Mark Johnston, 715/635-7672

Upcoming conferences

Starting to make summer plans? Don't miss out on these inspirational and informational conferences:



2002 WELS School Leadership Conference

What: At this conference, improve your skills and search for better ways of leading your school with a heart filled with Jesus' love.

When: June 25-27

Where: Country Inn Hotel and Conference Center, Waukesha, Wis.

Sponsored by: Commission on Parish Schools

For more information: Peg Raabe, 414/256-3278; <pegr@sab.wels.net>

Web site: <www.wels.net/sab/cps/cps-postcard.html>



Special Ministries In Lutheran Education Conference (SMILE)

What: This conference will promote and strengthen the partnership of those involved in the spiritual training of people with developmental disabilities.

When: June 28-30

Where: Ramada Inn-Airport, Bloomington, Minn.

Sponsored by: Jesus Cares Ministries, a ministry of The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn., and the Commissions on Special Ministries, Youth Discipleship, and Parish Schools.

For more information: Michelle Voss, 1-877-505-3675; <voss@wlimjcm.wels.net>

Web site: <www.jcministries.org/resources/resourcesOnline.html>



National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts

What: This conference is designed for pastors, teachers, worship committee members and elders, organists, choir directors, and artists to come together to enhance their skills, gain new perspectives, and worship our Lord. For congregations of all sizes, including portions focusing on worship in the small parish.

When: July 21-24

Where: Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.

Sponsored by: Commission on Worship

For more information: Commission on Worship office, 414/256-3226; <worship@sab.wels.net>

Web site: <www.wels.net/worship/events>

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:

A ministry of mountaintop experiences

Growing up in Iron River, Mich., Gary Baumler wanted to be a (mad?) scientist. His fascination with chemistry and electricity did not, however, hold enough sway to direct his career path. Rather, he was guided by the Creator of chemistry and all things to serve in the public ministry.

Baumler speaks of his walk through different areas of the ministry as “a series of mountaintop experiences” charted by God. He holds masters’ degrees from Indiana University and from the University of Wisconsin. Upon graduation from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1965, Baumler helped start Our Savior’s, East Brunswick, N.J. He switched directions a bit 10 years later when he began teaching Greek at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., where he later worked in re-

cruiting and taught English composition and speech. In 1989 he became vice president of editorial services at Northwestern Publishing House.

Currently, Baumler is director of communications for WELS and editor of *Forward in Christ* magazine. His duties are to edit, write, coordinate, troubleshoot, and “stay out of the way of good people doing a good job.”

Baumler also says, “I get to do the ‘fun’ things like balancing the communications budget, responding to criticisms, and setting priorities.”

Baumler met his wife, Kathleen, during her senior year at Wisconsin Lutheran High School and his senior year at Northwestern College. They were married on Aug. 8, 1964. Their two sons, Daniel and Brent, are both married, and the Baumlers are further blessed with three grandchildren.

In his rare spare time, Baumler enjoys playing trombone with a brass choir at church, following Wisconsin’s sports teams, and



At home, Gary Baumler and his wife, Kathleen, look over a map.

working with word puzzles. He and Kathleen appreciate any time they can take for a walk in scenic areas. He also welcomes the opportunity to teach Bible classes at his and other congregations.

“I say only a bit facetiously that my greatest accomplishment in life has been not to have messed up too badly in the tasks God has given me to do,” Baumler says. “My accomplishments truly have not been all that important. My focus is that expressed by John the Baptist of Jesus, ‘He must become greater; I must become less’ ” (John 3:30).

Laura Warmuth

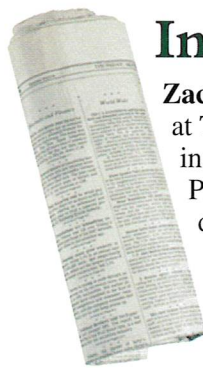


WHATEVER'S on your mind

You may have noticed that there is not a “whatever” article included in this issue of *Forward in Christ* magazine. Beginning in April 2001, the “whatever” feature has been written by teens for teens. However, we need more teens to write and submit articles so that this feature can continue.

Encourage the teens you know to write an article. It can be on any topic that they think is relevant, as long as it comes from a Christian perspective.

Articles should be about 500 words long and should be sent to *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>. The author should include his name, address, phone number, e-mail address, church, and high school. Call 414/256-3232 if you have any questions.



In the news

Zachary Pochop, an 11-year-old member at Trinity, McCook, Neb., won \$100 twice in a contest run by M&M’s candy. “When President Bush pleaded for America’s children to donate a dollar to the Children of Afghanistan Fund, Zack decided to donate \$100 of his winnings,” reports his local newspaper, the *Gazette*.

In a story titled “Pennies for fire-trucks,” the *La Crosse Tribune* reports that the **eighth-grade class at St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.**, spearheaded a fundraising campaign for replacement fire trucks for the New York City Fire Department. Principal Robert Wiegman is quoted saying, “[These children] can’t give blood. They can’t give large amounts of money, but they all have piggy banks. And so they could dig in and give of themselves.” The assistant fire chief of the Onalaska Fire Department accepted the \$750.25 check on behalf of the New York City Fire Department.

An opportunity for service

From Dec. 27-30, 2001, 95 students attended the first ever Campus Ministry Travel Canvass Witness/Service Rally, hosted by Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz. At the rally, students showed their Christian love through service projects such as doing clean-up in Tempe; helping out at a nursing home; volunteering at the Phoenix Rescue Mission; doing maintenance work at Emmanuel, Tempe; and painting the kitchen at Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix.

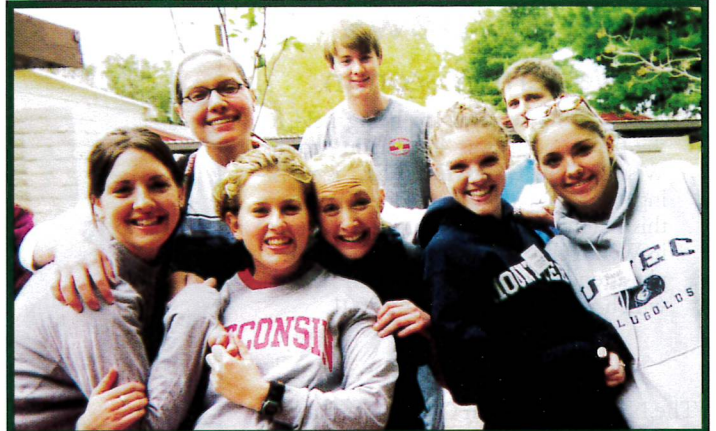
Students attending the rally had lots to say. Ann Meiers, a senior at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., writes: "As a senior in high school, I am quickly approaching the time at which I will enter a largely secular world. The realization that I am not alone is quite encouraging. Due to my experience in Arizona, I don't only receive that encouragement from the Word of God, but from people who are my age and in my place.

Kami Jo Radsek, a junior at Lawrence University, Appleton, Wis., writes: "I had just returned

from my study abroad in London, England, spent two weeks at home with my family, and then flew to Arizona to be a part of this rally. I went hoping to be refreshed and renewed with zeal to serve the Lord when I went back to campus in January.

"I later realized that I was entering the rally with a *selfish* attitude, when it was there to foster in me a *giving* attitude. I wanted to find out what the rally could offer me spiritually, and how it could make me stronger.

"Now, there is nothing wrong with wanting to grow and be encouraged in your faith life, but I forgot the focus of the week. The focus was on Serving others with our time and



A group of students ham it up for the camera. Fellowship is important at the campus ministry rallies. Paul Nemcek, a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, writes: "We have such a dedicated group of students, dedicated to their faith, their Lord, and to each other. I see the same close friends at the same events, and I always remember to thank the Lord for such a gift."

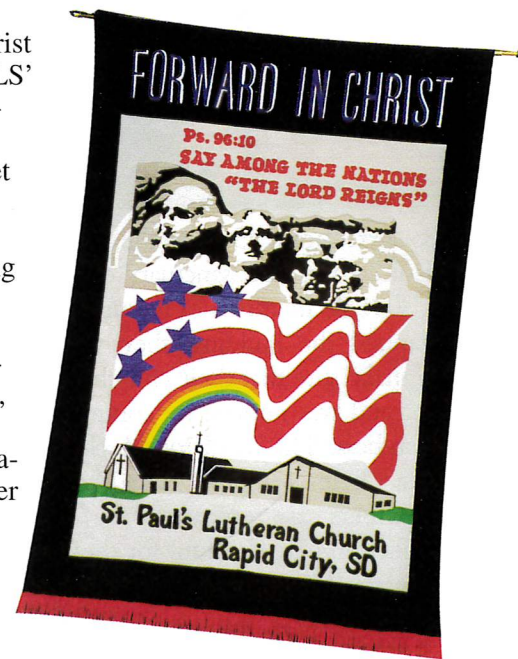
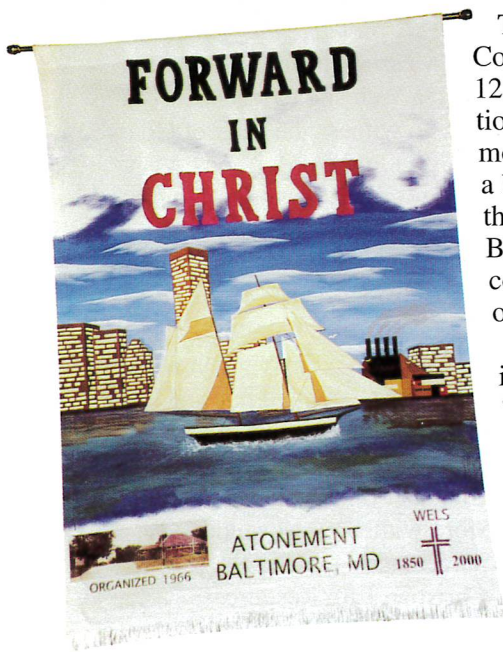
talents. The focus was about encouraging others in their walk towards God. In doing so, we all became strengthened and renewed.

"I thank God that he encouraged a change of perspective in me. He opened my eyes to the opportunity to give rather than to receive. In giving I received more than I could have hoped for."

Forward in Christ banner exchange

The Dakota-Montana District Forward in Christ Committee asked one church from each of WELS' 12 districts to create a banner. Eleven congregations followed through on this idea. Then, each month, a church that created a banner would get a banner from another district and would send the banner it had to the next church on the list. By the end of the celebration, each participating congregation had displayed a banner from the other districts of the synod.

The banners, which depicted the geographical region or church location in artistic form, "brought the churches closer together," says Pastor Douglas Free, who chaired the Dakota-Montana District FIC Committee. The banner exchange visually displayed how diverse our synod is, while also showing our unity through Christ.





District news

Western Wisconsin

WELS worship services are being held for the first time in over 40 years in Arcadia, Wis. **Bethel, Galesville, Wis.**, is working to start a daughter congregation in this neighboring community that closed its WELS church in 1959. Forty-five people attended the first service in Arcadia, which was held on Dec. 22, 2001.

Minnesota

The National Fastpitch Coaches Association honored the **2001 women's softball team at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.**, for its outstanding academic performance during the 2000-01 academic year. The team ranked first in NCAA Division III with a combined grade point average of 3.436.

Pacific Northwest

On Reformation Day 2001, over 250 upper-grade students gathered for a children's mission festival at Parkland, Parkland, Wash. The children were from three Evangelical Lutheran Synod schools (**Parkland, Parkland, Wash.; Bethany, Port Orchard, Wash.; and**



On Aug. 27, 2001, Cross of Glory, Washington, Mich., opened for its first day of school. Thirty children are enrolled in grades K-8, with another 25 children in the preschool program.

Our Redeemer, Yelm, Wash.) and five WELS schools (**Grace, Portland, Ore.; Faith, Tacoma, Wash.; Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash.; Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.; and Calvary, Bellevue, Wash.**). Students from each of the schools prepared mission displays and heard the message that they, too, can do mission work.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Kevin Schultz; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Mark Haefner; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

North Atlantic

St. John, Newark, Del., continues to see its school blessed with increasing numbers of Asian Indian people, including half the preschool class and several other elementary-school children. Many of these children's families are Hindu, which presents opportunities for spreading the gospel.

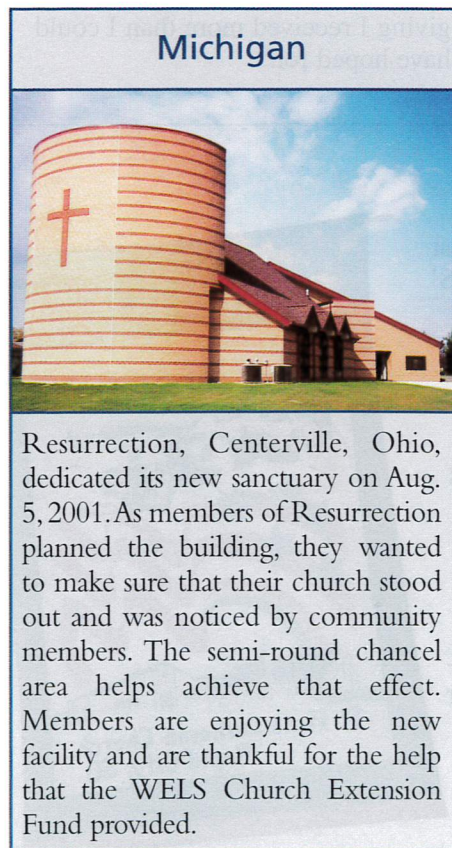
Jon Metzger, a member at Grace, Falls Church, Va., was drafted by the Kansas City Royals in the spring of 2001. Metzger, a left-handed pitcher, is currently in the Royals' minor league system.

Southeastern Wisconsin

The stewardship board of **Faith, Antioch, Ill.**, conducted an aggressive promotion and follow-through effort entitled "Each one reach one" that enlisted the participation of the entire congregation. Six Christian responsibilities were emphasized—praying for one another, worshipping regularly, serving the Lord, enjoying fellowship with other Christians, engaging in Bible study, and reaching out.

Happy Anniversary!

SA—On Mar. 3, **Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla.**, held a 25th anniversary celebration.



Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio, dedicated its new sanctuary on Aug. 5, 2001. As members of Resurrection planned the building, they wanted to make sure that their church stood out and was noticed by community members. The semi-round chancel area helps achieve that effect. Members are enjoying the new facility and are thankful for the help that the WELS Church Extension Fund provided.



The Internet has become a vast maze of information. Knowing where to look for strong Christian content can make the journey easier.

- **Messiah, Nampa, Idaho**, developed a Web site to teach Christians how to witness the truth of God's Word in love to Mormons. Visit www.truthinlovetomormons.com.

- Need help spreading God's Word? Go to www.wels.net/evangelism to check out this new site that is filled with tools to help you and your congregation witness.

- Want to shop on-line and support the pro-life movement at the same time? Browse at www.kahootz.tv, Christian Life Resource's on-line store with over 40 vendors. A percentage of each sale goes to Christian Life Resources.

The day is here for WELS

I came thinking we would be talking about money. We focused on mission. I knew something about budget shortfall. We saw outreach opportunity. I wondered about motivation. We marveled at the Messiah. I heard about compensation for called workers. We left determined to “work while it is day.”

Others like me came with apprehensions to the Work While It Is Day Conference in Chicago, Feb. 8-10. But we came—over 300 of us in all. Some that couldn’t make it volunteered to help with the work that would follow.

All of us knew that our church body is at a critical crossroads, facing significant challenges:

- How will we maintain and strengthen the ministry God has allowed us to begin? The costs are higher than present income seems to allow.
- How will we respond to significant new opportunities to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- How will we compensate our called workers in keeping with scriptural principles?

We shared gospel support and practical approaches to respond to the challenges:

- “We must do the work.” That’s not an imperative of law. It’s the Savior pointing to the inner compulsion of faith, the kind of compulsion that led him to save us. (cf. John 9:4)
- Now is the day in which we must work.
- Stewardship of our money means identifying God’s mission for us and making it our mission to the world.
- Stewardship is an attitude—our response to God’s grace.
- Evangelism and stewardship are two sides of the same coin. Both are giving for the Lord.
- We can either groan under obligations or prosper in responding to opportunities.
- We praise God as one in spirit and receive the assurance of his forgiveness in Christ.

As we left the conference, we left determined with God’s help to do the work. We are beginning a process, a process that includes every one of us being what God has made us and doing what God has given us to do. The next step is to bring this message in greater detail to each congregation of the synod. Welcome the messengers, make the message your own, and pray for God’s blessings on the eventual outcome.

Gary P. Baumler



Participants at the Work While It Is Day Conference take a little break. Circuit pastors, Commission for Communication on Financial Support district and synod commission members, and district officers attended this stewardship seminar. The next step for these attendees will be taking the message and materials to every congregation.

DEFINING RELIGION

Stigmata: wounds or marks resembling those received by Jesus from the nails, spear, and crown of thorns during his passion and crucifixion. Some have claimed that these have miraculously appeared on various people, statues, and paintings.



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!

It’s easy to get caught up in the world’s impatient attitude. People don’t just want things. They want them now. God places a higher value on patience, though.

- Proverbs 14:29: “A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.”
- Proverbs 19:11: “Man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”
- Ecclesiastes 7:8: “The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.”
- Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

On your own

Learn more about the patience God expects from us by studying these verses:
 Romans 12:12
 1 Corinthians 13:4
 Hebrews 6:9-12
 James 5:7-11

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2001

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received				Annld Ave Per Commun
	Communicants 12/31/00	2001	Year to Date Projected	December Offerings	Twelve Months Offerings	Percent of Sbscrpnt	
Arizona-California	17,998	\$1,097,663	\$1,097,663	\$180,022	\$1,171,588	106.7%	\$65.10
Dakota-Montana	9,051	458,255	458,255	92,427	457,593	99.9	50.56
Michigan	36,294	2,224,331	2,224,331	384,816	2,186,593	98.3	60.25
Minnesota	43,362	2,502,475	2,502,475	474,389	2,415,306	96.5	55.70
Nebraska	10,429	642,715	642,715	126,144	653,610	101.7	62.67
North Atlantic	4,305	370,944	370,944	86,534	431,007	116.2	100.12
Northern Wisconsin	60,962	2,709,300	2,709,300	482,080	2,516,263	92.9	41.28
Pacific Northwest	5,178	310,331	310,331	53,589	317,734	102.4	61.36
South Atlantic	7,322	589,766	589,766	117,868	609,529	103.4	83.25
South Central	4,835	518,829	518,829	74,609	561,542	108.2	116.14
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,156	3,516,785	3,516,785	677,531	3,306,713	94.0	57.85
Western Wisconsin	59,494	3,241,371	3,241,371	530,454	3,262,355	100.6	54.84
Total—This Year	316,386	18,182,765	18,182,765	3,280,463	17,889,833	98.4%	56.54
Total—Last Year	315,637	17,810,601	17,810,601	3,164,377	17,489,753	98.2	55.41

CURRENT OPERATING FUND

Statement of activities
Six months ended December 31

	2001 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$8,716,787	\$8,283,033	\$8,515,799
Gifts and memorials	4,109,412	2,314,019	4,026,177
Bequest/planned giving	78,895	347,111	1,003,584
Tuition and fees	5,548,895	6,739,239	3,965,625
Other	(56,963)	38,425	78,000
Transfers—endowment earnings	-	169,201	177,500
Transfers—gift funds	2,292,650	6,123,111	2,292,650
Transfers—continuing programs	-	1,827,140	1,690,300
Transfers—other	-	3,362	-
Total revenues	20,689,676	25,844,641	21,749,635
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	4,342,834	5,206,655	4,454,209
Ministerial Education	13,019,761	13,019,839	10,994,062
Parish Services	1,002,689	916,043	1,152,850
Administrative Services	2,345,215	2,712,045	2,333,715
World Missions	3,944,430	4,712,099	4,507,638
System Wide	74,611	192,801	164,192
Total expenditures	24,729,540	26,751,482	23,606,666
Changes in unrestricted net assets	(4,039,864)	(906,841)	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	-	-
Bequest/planned giving	(2,000)	-	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-
Change in temp restricted net assets	(2,000)	-	-
Net assets - beginning of year	3,682,500	4,350,503	
Net assets - end of period	(359,364)	3,443,662	

Statement of financial position

	Dec 31, 2001	Dec 31, 2000
Assets:		
Due from other funds	(3,625,827)	(898,278)
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	123,500	124,250
Cash advances-schools	-	501,325
Other accounts receivable	290,048	266,306
Contributions receivable	3,680,500	3,648,200
Mortgage note receivable	9,499	9,499
Allowance for doubtful accts	(45,100)	(45,100)
Prepaid expenses	131,403	42,883
Total assets	564,023	3,649,085
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	854,809	-
Accounts payable	68,578	205,423
Total liabilities	923,387	205,423
Unrestricted	(4,039,864)	(204,538)
Temp restricted	3,680,500	3,648,200
Total net assets	(359,364)	3,443,662
Total liabilities and net assets	564,023	3,649,085

Mark Meissner, director of finance

World news



Aid Association for Lutherans/Lutheran Brotherhood announces new name—In February, Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL)/Lutheran Brotherhood (LB) announced a new name for its combined organization—Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

“In short, the name says ‘we care about helping Lutherans, and the entire Lutheran community, thrive,’” says President and CEO Bruce Nicholson.

The new name still must be approved by a vote of the adult benefit members and by state insurance departments. A ballot on the new name was included in a special combined issue of *Correspondent* and *Bond* magazines, which was mailed to about 2.2 million adult benefit members in March.

The earliest AAL/LB could officially become Thrivent Financial for Lutherans would be in June.

AAL and LB announced their plans to merge in June 2001. As of Jan. 1, the two fraternal benefit societies became one corporation. The organization continues to provide financial products and services to Lutherans, including insurance, mutual funds, and banking services.

What’s your favorite hymn—“Amazing Grace” ranked as the favorite hymn and praise song of readers of *Christian Reader* magazine.

The September/October 2001 issue cited the top 10 choices, pulled from the more than 500 people who responded to the survey. “How Great Thou Art” and “Because He Lives” came in second and third.

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

- Bittorf, Kenneth M.**, to Emmanuel, Hartford/Zion, Theresa, Wis.
Henselin, Philip J., to New Life, Rockford, Ill.
Kannenberg, Delmer F., to retirement
Ott, Randall R., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
Schnose, Johnathan C., to Immanuel, Sault Sainte Marie/Our Savior, Cedarville, Mich.
Smith, Melvin, to retirement
Smith, Robert S., to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
Wessel, Keith C., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Ziemer, Paul C., to Living Water, Richmond, Va.

Teachers

- Blakely, Paul F.**, to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.
Brendedick, Daniel P., to St. Paul First, North Hollywood, Calif.
Burmeister, Joel R., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Detjen, Julie L., to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Heyer, Kurt A., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Jacobs, Paul S., to Abiding Love, Cape Coral, Fla.
Jaspersen, Jason J., to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Lehman, Lauren B., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Marowsky, Gerald R., to First, Racine, Wis.
Melott, Tamara R., to Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.
Mielke, David L., to St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Detroit, Mich.**—Mt. Olive (75). Apr. 14. Service, 10:45 AM. Dinner to follow. Area service, 3:30 PM. Supper to follow.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Mt. Lebanon (75). Apr. 14. Reunion of former teachers and vicars. Service, 9:30 AM. Dinner, 11:30 AM. May 29. Graduates' service, 7 PM. Dinner, 6 PM. Dave Hein, 414/461-1563.
Green Lake, Wis.—Peace (100). Apr. 28. Service, 9 AM.
Centerville, Ohio—Resurrection (25). May 19. Service, 4 PM. Dinner to follow.
Kaukauna, Wis.—Trinity (125). June 9. Services, 7:45 AM & 9:30 AM. Dinner to follow late service. RSVP, 920/766-3929.

COMING EVENTS

- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chorus tour and spring concerts**—
- Mar. 28—Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash., 7 PM
 - Mar. 29—St. Paul, Tacoma, Wash., 1:30 PM; Faith, South Hill, Wash., 7 PM
 - Mar. 31—Grace, Kenai, Alaska, 11 AM; Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, 7 PM
 - Apr. 1—Christ, Juneau, Alaska, 7 PM
 - Apr. 2—Calvary, Bellevue, Wash., 8 PM
 - Apr. 3—Redeemer, Yakima, Wash., 7 PM
 - Apr. 4—Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho, 7:30 PM
 - Apr. 5—Grace, Portland, Ore., 7:30 PM
 - Apr. 6—Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash., 7 PM
 - Apr. 20—St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., 7 PM
 - Apr. 21—St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., 10:30 AM; St. John, New Ulm, Minn., 2 PM
- 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. 21, 2 PM. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

Lutheran Chorale concert—Apr. 28, 3 & 7 PM. Grace, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

Cascade Lutheran Chorale concert—Apr. 28, 4 PM. Grace, Portland, Ore. 503/254-8034.

Women's Day 2002—May 4-5. Mighty Fortress, Red Deer, Alberta. Carol, 403/346-4140.

Mortgage burning service—Our Savior's, East Brunswick, N.J. May 18, 3 PM. Meal to follow. 732/254-3910.

Graduation dates—

- Martin Luther College commencement concert, May 17, 7:30 PM
- Martin Luther College graduation, May 18, 10 AM
- Martin Luther College call service, May 18, 2:30 PM
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary call service, May 21, 10 AM
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary commencement concert, May 21, 7:30 PM
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation, May 22, 10 AM
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary commencement concert, May 24, 7 PM
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary graduation, May 25, 10:30 AM
- Luther Preparatory School commencement concert, May 24, 7 PM
- Luther Preparatory School graduation, May 25, 10 AM

LWMS National Convention—June 27-30. Las Vegas, Nev. LWMS central office, 414/321-6212.

National OWLS Convention—July 9-11. Ramada Convention Center, Wausau, Wis. Lester Ring, 507/354-4403.

Camps—Good Shepherd Bible Camp, Angelus Oaks, Calif. July 7-13 and July 14-20. Campers fourth through tenth grade. Families welcomed. Charles Found, 805/492-8943.

Ukraine tour—sponsored by Thoughts of Faith, an Evangelical Lutheran Synod humanitarian aid organization working in Ukraine. Sept. 24-Oct. 8. Tour starts in Warsaw, Krakow, and Poland. Sightseeing in historic Ukrainian cities of L'viv, Ternopil, Odessa, Yalta, Kharkiv, and Kyiv. Fellowship with Ukrainian Lutheran congregations. Inclusive tour includes air, hotel, daily breakfasts and dinners, and motor coach. 1-800-521-1322 or 1-877-892-4718.

Fifth annual Run for the Prize 5K run & walk—Oct. 19, 10 AM. Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. David Braun, 800/688-8151 ext. 210.

AVAILABLE

Church furnishings—altar, pulpit, lectern, and baptismal font. Free. Pick up required from St. John, St. Paul, Minn. 651/771-6406.

Desks & chairs—seven desks with attached chairs (fifth- and sixth-grade size); 23 adjustable, table-style desks with pull-up lids; 11 plastic, medium-sized chairs. Available free for pick up from Our Savior, Grafton, Wis. Linda Kis, 262/377-7780.

Church pews—thirty-five 15-foot light oak pews. Free for the cost of shipping. Scott Oelhafen, 262/547-6450.

Paraments—brocade and in great condition. Free for the cost of shipping. Sharon Naumann, 262/786-0337.

Collection plates and folding chairs—four plates approximately 18" x 3" with red material on bottom. Forty child-sized metal chairs. Free for the cost of shipping. Robert Johannas, 920/755-2595.

NEEDED

Preacher(s)—to conduct services at Faith, Anchorage, Alaska. June 23, 30, and July 7. Stay in parsonage and enjoy the sights. Jim Oldfield, 907/562-4946.

Volunteer health care staff—RNs, doctors, or EMTs to work as health-care directors for one week or half-week summer camp sessions at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

Actors/actresses—for the pilot episode of a WELS-produced television series titled "Fifth Pew from the Front." All ages welcome to audition. Send a headshot, resume, and if possible, a video of a performance to Steven Zambo, WELS Media Communications Director, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222. <stevez@sab.wels.net>. Photos and videos will not be returned.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Summer paid staff—Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. May 28-Aug. 14. Counselors, head life-guard, adventure coordinator, Bible study leader, and junior staff director. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

SERVICE TIMES

Arcadia, Wis.—Bethel, 401 W Main St (driver's licensing building). Saturday worship, 6 PM. Bible class and Sunday school, 7 PM. Nathan Strutz, 608/526-2285.

NAMES WANTED

Artists—for the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts. July 21-24. Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis. Display works of art. Assist in the development of art for conference worship. Send contact information with description of artwork or portfolio to Worship Arts Subcommittee, c/o Peter Schaeewe, 1014 S Main St, Jefferson WI 53549; 920/675-0219.

Arcadia/Independence/Whitehall, Wis.—Nathan Strutz, 608/526-2285.

Lakewood Ranch/Ellenton/Parrish/East Manatee County, Fla.—Daniel Witte, 941/747-5564.

YEARBOOK ADDITIONS

Pastors-Retired—Mark F. Bartling (64), 3432 East Ave S, La Crosse WI 54601-7209; 608/788-4323; office, 608/784-5324; <BartTravel@aol.com>.

Pastors-Retired—Gerald E. Free (55), 954 Solar Pkwy, Neenah WI 54956-1354; 920/727-2102; <FICWICKS@tcccom.net>.

To place an announcement, call

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

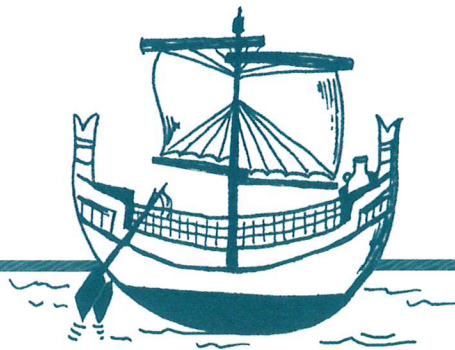
<BulletinBoard@sab.wels.net>. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

We see this all the time

The LORD repeatedly turns the guilty back to his grace by his Word.

Paul E. Zell

A tearful addict admits his mistakes and begs for one more chance. A distraught cancer patient suddenly wants to change his ways and find religion. A storm-tossed sailor turns to his idols and pleads for rescue.



this because Jonah must have told them. The reluctant prophet shared God's truth, and the truth did a remarkable thing in their hearts.

We need to share the Word

Again and again we see the LORD turn the guilty back to his grace by his mighty Word. King David admits adultery and murder and trusts the prophet's assurance of the LORD's forgiveness. Zacchaeus repents of thievery and greed and becomes a generous philanthropist. Saul, sworn enemy of the Christian gospel, becomes Christ's apostle to the Gentiles.

We need never be shocked by the power of the Word. We rather should be shocked by our unwarranted reluctance to share it. We should repent of that reluctance and find the peace purchased by the blood of Christ.

Motivated by a desire to glorify our Savior, we will then reassure the tearful addict about the LORD who is repeatedly "forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin." We will tell the cancer patient what finding religion really means. We will speak up, putting our confidence in the Word. The mighty Word, after all, has turned many reluctant hearts to trust in the Lord during stormy times. ✨

Paul Zell is pastor at Messiah, Alpharetta, Georgia.

BIBLE READING

Jonah 1:8-14

⁸So they asked [Jonah], "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

⁹He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

¹⁰This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

¹¹The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

¹²"Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

¹³Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. ¹⁴Then they cried to the LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased."

The sailors recognize the LORD

We see this sort of thing all the time. Due to the natural knowledge of God, even pagans acknowledge a higher power. They fear that higher power's anger. They dread the consequences of their guilt. They search for ways to make things right. The sailors on Jonah's boat serve as prime examples.

But what of the sailors' unwillingness to toss Jonah into the sea even after he urged them to do so? What about their efforts to row back to land rather than take the life of a prophet of the LORD? At one time "each cried out to his own god" (v. 5). How can we explain their humble prayer seeking the LORD's mercy?

There is no reason to conclude that the sailors' hope in the LORD was a hoax. They rightly acknowledged his power over all things. They addressed him by his covenant name. He is "the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6,7). The sailors believed

Greater love has no one

The pictures are still vivid. Just close your eyes. Planes crashing into the World Trade Center. Police, firemen, ordinary citizens rushing around, risking death, seeking to save lives. Some, knowingly, gave up their lives, those brave souls on the doomed flight who boldly attacked the hijackers.

Thankfully, some more tragic loss of life was prevented. Some buried under the rubble were found alive. Grateful stories are still being told. Yet it was only a temporary reprieve. In the end, ultimately, they too will die.

That's why our Savior's words are so dear to us: "Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Here is no mere temporary reprieve. Laying down his life for us, he was not merely adding a year, or 10, to our earthly existence. He was not cheating temporal death of a victim. Here was eternal death's defeat forever, for all.

No ordinary laying down of a life could have that saving effect. For us all, death is the wages of sin. However, Jesus' innocent death results in God's gift of eternal life for all those joined in faith to his saving action.

Faith works by love. A love inspired by Jesus' sacrificial death for us wants to live for him, loving him. "If you love me," our Savior says, "you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). And here is his command. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

In the absolute sense, it was not a new commandment. After loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength (God's first commandment), to love others has always been God's summary of his other commandments. But Jesus' words refresh this directive with the motivation that his death and resurrection give us for this unending duty.

So it's no wonder Luther picked up on this as a summary of the Table of Duties: "Love your neighbor as yourself. This is the sum of all the commandments. And continue praying for everyone."

Jesus' perfect life, his innocent death, and his victorious Easter resurrection left nothing for us to do to complete the work of our salvation. Yet he left everything for us to do in response to his love. He showed us the way; and he gave us reason to walk it, giving our lives for others.

An elderly shut-in told me the story of her life. It was in three stages. Early in life, she used her hands to serve the Lord. The Lord materially blessed the labor of her hands, so when physical labor became impossible for her, she used her God-given wealth to further the cause of the gospel. But now, after many years in a nursing home, her worldly wealth depleted, all she could do was pray for me every day.

She understood. Even if we can't rush into collapsing buildings to rescue others, even if we don't wrestle terrorists to the ground to prevent a plane from crashing into a targeted building, we can give ourselves for others. As Jesus said, even if we only can give a cup of cold water to someone, even if we can only pray for others, we are giving of ourselves.

There never comes a time when, out of love for our Savior, we cannot show love for those around us, loving them as he first loved us. There's no greater love than that.



Karl R. Gurgel is the president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

A love
inspired
by Jesus'
sacrificial
death for us
wants to live
for him,
loving him.

The Table of Duties is a portion of Luther's Small Catechism that contains "certain passages of Scripture for various classes and stations of men, whereby these are to be admonished of their respective offices and duties" (p. 18, Gausewitz edition). As Luther said, "Let each his lesson learn with care, And all the household well shall fare" (Luther's Small Catechism, p. 21, Gausewitz edition).

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: SINNERS CONFRONTING SINNERS

Question: When I learned that my relative lives with her fiancé, I expressed my concern privately to her. Months later, at a family gathering, she mentioned in casual conversation with several other relatives that she kept her address at her parents' home because her pastor wouldn't marry them if he found out. I responded by saying, "Shouldn't that tell you something?"

Her response was tearful and angry. Several people accused me of "attacking" her. Others suggested that since my own past was far from perfect, I was in no position to say anything. One commented that most knew her situation and "couldn't care less."

Was I a hypocrite to say anything? Isn't it our responsibility to remind someone when they are straying from God's will even though we ourselves are also sinners? Was I wrong to respond when and where I did?

Answer: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). If only those with perfect records against temptation could follow Paul's advice, no one could seek to restore his brother. Sinners call other sinners to repentance.

That's why Paul wisely warns us to watch ourselves. The mirror is the first place to look for someone in need of repentance. I can't offer someone else assistance with a speck of sin in his eye when an I-beam of impenitence is protruding from mine (Matthew 7:3). What is more, if we fail to consider our daily need for forgiveness, our calls to repentance sound harsh and condescending.

When we remember our daily need for forgiveness, we have learned how to approach another with gentle humility. Urging others to join us in turning from sin to forgiveness is neither hypocritical nor unloving. The angry reaction you received means that you echoed the voice of conscience she was trying to silence.

Although you were right to speak privately at first, your more public rebuke wasn't wrong. You did not choose that time, your relative did, by publicly parading sin as wisdom. While humility and gentleness still apply, saying nothing gives quiet approval. Many people there may have needed a clear witness that any sin, no matter how socially acceptable, is still a grave danger to our souls.

Even the fact that your words caused a family division doesn't mean that you were wrong. It is not those who speak the truth who cause division (although they will often be blamed), but those who are living a deception (as all impenitence is—see Psalm 32:2).

Sharing Christ's Word divides those who speak it from those who won't hear it. Although Jesus has won for us the inward peace of forgiveness for repentant sinners, he told us that when his Word is rejected, it brings anything but outward peace. "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. . . . A man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matthew 10:34,36).

Pray that your relative realizes that though pastors can be mocked, God cannot be. Pray for the day when she will not consider fooling her pastor a victory to announce proudly, but a defeat to confess humbly.

After all, the whole goal of "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) is not winning an argument, but knowing the joy of kneeling together at Jesus' cross. That's why God seeks through us to "[win] our brother [or sister] over" (Matthew 18:15).

It is not those who speak the truth who cause division, but those who are living a deception.

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>.

CONSIDER THIS:

A “free offer” is often the most expensive kind.
A person isn’t judged by what he knows, but by what he does with what he knows.
It takes more than a Phi Beta Kappa key to open the door to a useful and happy life.
It’s useless to get into a spraying contest with a skunk.
The worst sins are often committed by indifference not by vice.
The person who just does as he pleases ends up being displeased with what he does.
There is no right way to do a wrong thing.
The person who is fighting sin is too busy to carry a chip on his shoulder.
It takes less courage to face death than to face life.
You show that you know love by how you love others.
Faith springs from knowledge, feeds on trust, and thrives on action—all founded in Jesus Christ.
“Joy” and “pleasure” are not synonyms, but may be as profoundly different as heaven and hell.
Jesus is the answer.

-selected-

 potluck

Forgive us our sins

“The law kills the sinner, not sin.
The gospel kills sin, not the sinner.”

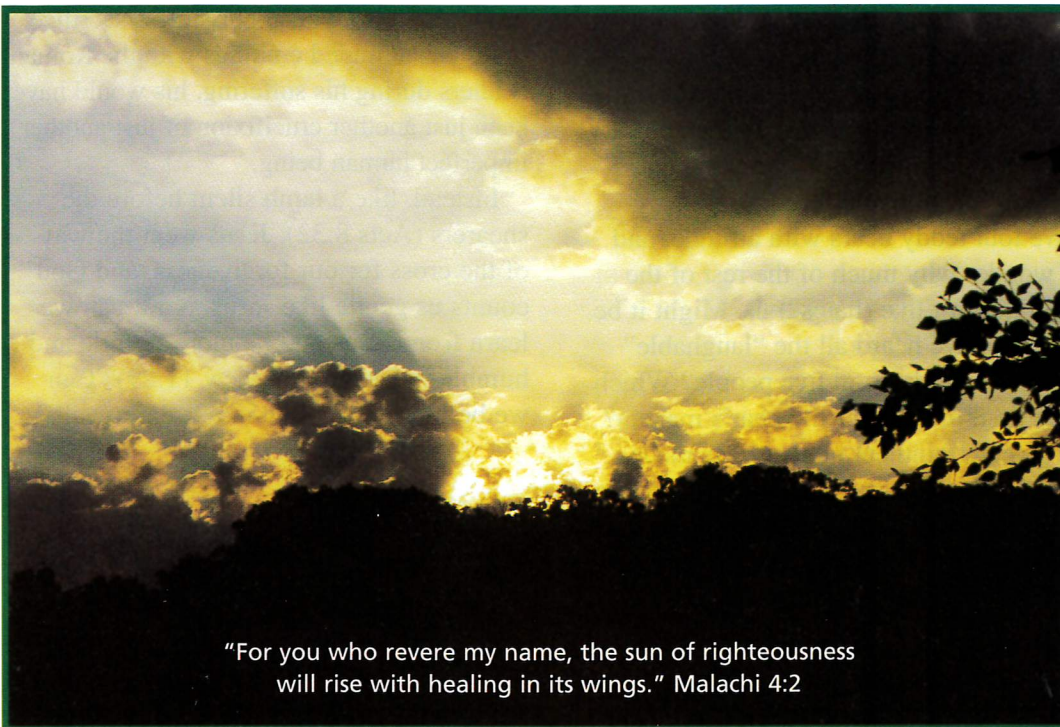
When you learn how you are forgiven,
then you can learn truly to forgive.

True forgiveness is total forgiveness.
It does not keep the sin in reserve
for possible later retribution.
Where would we be if God did that?

An inhuman slave master,
in the act of severely beating
his nearly-dead slave, sneered,
“What can Jesus do for you now?”
“He can teach me to forgive you,
Massa,” was his reply.

“Never, never pin your whole faith on any human being: not if he is the best and wisest in the whole world. There are lots of nice things you can do with sand; but do not try building a house on it.” C.S. Lewis, *The Quotable Lewis*, p. 209

Picture this

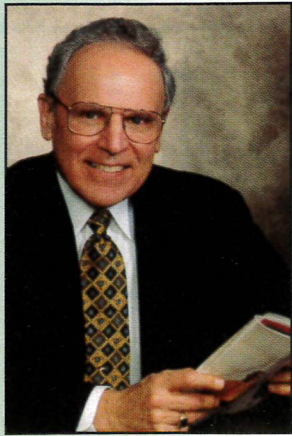


“For you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.” Malachi 4:2

**“In his heart
a man plans
his course,
but the Lord
determines
his steps.”
Proverbs 16:9**

**“Commit to the
Lord whatever
you do, and your
plans will succeed.”
Proverbs 16:3**

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.



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

If Jesus had used rude-bear tactics with Pilate, he wouldn't have been our sinless sacrifice.

Cultivating crudity

It surprised me when it suddenly popped up on my computer screen. I just clicked on the unwanted e-mail to delete it, and there it was, an Internet ad for a teddy bear.

If you have to get unwanted e-mails and ads, a teddy bear is about as harmless as they come. Or is it? If you look only at the pictures of the ad, you see Mr. Bear making an obscene gesture. Then you're told that this is "the WORLD'S RUDEST, CRUDEST TALKING TEDDY BEAR"—a bear "with an ATTITUDE."

Among the 20-some crude things he says (when you squeeze his tummy) are "I got your warm and fuzzy right here" and "God, you're a moron." The ad challenges: "You're an adult. Act like one. Get the teddy bear that reflects the real you!" Then it adds the disclaimer: "WARNING! This bear is NOT FOR KIDS."

Cigarettes are not for kids either, and R-rated movies, and alcohol, but . . .

Who is the bear for? For "anybody who loves a great laugh."

Color me humorless, then, because I think that this rude teddy bear is no laughing matter. It certainly does not reflect the way we want adults to act. To the contrary! But it is symptomatic of a society that increasingly cultivates crudity.

We tout teddy bears with attitude, and we wonder why much of the rest of the world doesn't like (hates?) us. Might it be that they have heard all the "laughable" crudities already from live people? Which came first, the bear or the bear's makers?

The entertainment industry has made capital for some time already with attitude. Do Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger bring any gentle images to mind? How about professional wrestling?

Yes, it's all in fun, until it becomes real and affects our lives directly. Have you been elbowed in a mall recently without so much as an "excuse me"? Are you more apt to back off or elbow back? How many children do you know who know what good manners are? Is there any norm for good manners any more? "In your face" and "get outta my face" have become social staples. Who needs a nasty teddy bear?

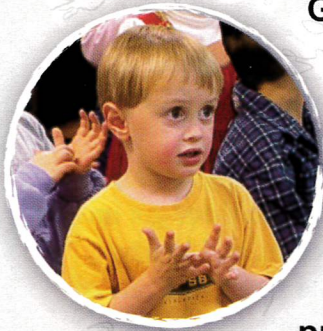
It's wrong, I know, to rail on everyone for the sins of some. But it concerns me how far we have gotten from the "gentle answer" of Proverbs 15:1, from the "meek" of Matthew 5:5, and from the "humble and gentle" of Ephesians 4:2. It concerns me how easily we, too, get drawn into the swampland of crudity and attitude: "I'm all right, but 'God, you're a moron.'"

Still, we're saved because someone was gentle at all the right times. Or does it strike you that if Jesus had flashed the bad-bear attitude in Gethsemane, there might not have been any sacrifice for our sins? If Jesus had used rude-bear tactics with Pilate, he wouldn't have been our sinless sacrifice. If Jesus had traded crudities with the Roman soldiers during his suffering, his would have been just another crucifixion of just another imperfect human being.

Instead, like a lamb silent before the shearers (Acts 8:32), Jesus went the way of the cross for our forgiveness, and God counts us gentle like Jesus. Now, can we learn from Jesus and be more "gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29)? Can we be more Jesus-like in our daily walk?

Gary P. Baumler

Seek & Keep and...



Grant programs are currently available to assist WELS congregations, schools, missions, and organizations to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

*...to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service all to the glory of God.
~from the WELS Mission Objectives and Vision Statement*

Seek and Keep grants for innovative outreach and nurturing programs are awarded in the spring and the fall of the year.

Applications will be considered that...



- † Mirror the intent of the Great Commission.
- † Actively include not only called workers, but also lay volunteers.
- † Are designed to have personal contact with targeted people, including follow-up.
- † Include Bible studies about outreach (seeking) and retention (keeping) ministries.
- † Are creative and innovative in their approach.

Remember, YOU are his witnesses!



...YOU!

A video describing the program and application information is available from your district Seek and Keep Coordinator, your district president, or e-mail us at seekandkeep@wels.net.

The treasure of an empty grave

On Easter morning we are presented with a treasure more valuable than anything we can imagine—marked by an empty tomb.

John L. Eich

In Utah, James and Jeanne Redd were accused of digging up an Anasazi Indian burial mound on state land in January 1996 and removing as many as 17 human bones from the prehistoric dwelling site, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Six years later the case is still in the courts.

In China, three men were executed in central Hubei for robbing gravesites and destroying ancient corpses. In Beijing, in a nationwide crackdown on crime, at least 16 people were executed for stealing ancient Buddha statues, robbing graves, and destroying ancient corpses.

Howard Carter is acclaimed for his discovery of the vast wealth of King Tutankhamen's tomb. Yet many feel he is nothing more than a grave robber, desecrating the final resting place of an ancient Pharaoh.

Easter is always a bad day for the grave robbers of the world, because nothing bothers a grave robber more than an empty tomb. On the day of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene and a group of women arrived at the grave, carrying spices and ointments and fully expecting to be greeted by the stench of death. But when they went in, they found no body.

Mary assumed that grave robbers had already been

there and done their dirty work, and she cried out to Peter, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him" (John 20:2). Then Peter got up and ran to the tomb, climbed in, and looked around. The only treasure he saw was a pile of linen cloths—hardly a valuable find in itself.

There was no treasure in this tomb. The great treasure of the tomb was already gone, because Christ had been raised. The most valuable of bodies was not wrapped in a shroud—it was out and about in a resurrection body, appearing to the disciples, and to others. Jesus Christ was not going to be found in a grave, by anyone.

"He is not here," proclaimed the men in dazzling clothes on that first Easter morning. "He is not here, he has risen" (Luke 24:6).

The point is that on Easter morning we are presented with a treasure more valuable than anything that's been unearthed from an Indian grave or taken from the tomb of King Tut.

Today we are given a gift of life, not death—a gift of the power and the presence of our risen Lord.

Because he lives, we live.

Treasures simply don't get any better than that.

The great treasure of the tomb was already gone, because Christ had been raised.

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