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FORWARD IN CHRIST

November 2002

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Thanksgiving
follows
Thanksgiving

Update on the
Lutheran Church
of Indonesia

Feeding students'
bodies and souls

Blessed to be a blessing

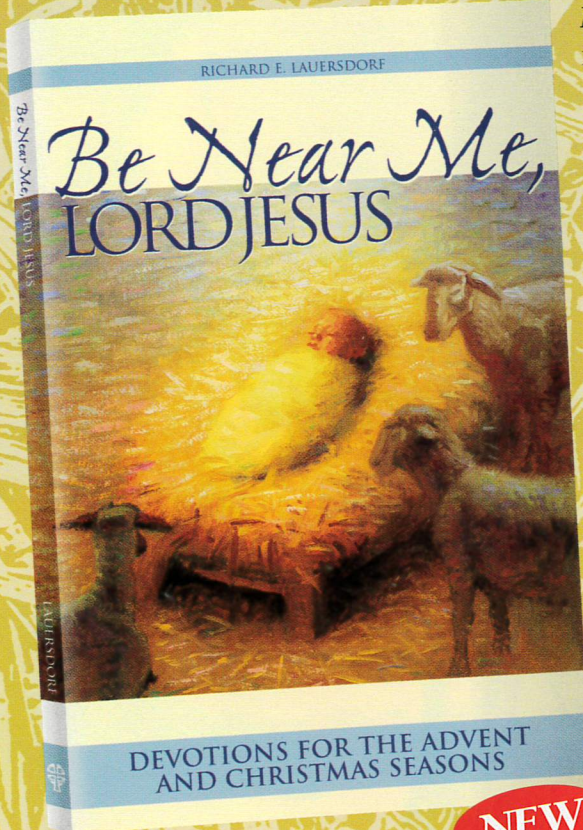


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Not so far away IN A MANGER...

Although Jesus' actual birthday seems far away in the span of history, *Be Near Me, Lord Jesus*, by seasoned writer Richard Lauersdorf, shows that we can be as close to Jesus as the shepherds were on that first Christmas. Through Jesus Christ the Savior, God has bridged the gap between sinful human beings and himself.



Be Near Me, Lord Jesus contains a devotion for each day from December 1 to January 6 to help the reader reflect and celebrate during the Advent and Christmas seasons. The book is divided into three themes: "Waiting and Watching" looks back at the Old Testament promise of a Savior, "Unwrapping and Wondering" builds up to Christmas Day, and "Worshiping and Witnessing" celebrates God's Christmas gift.

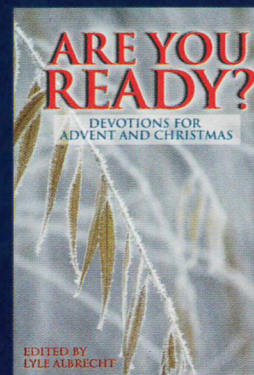
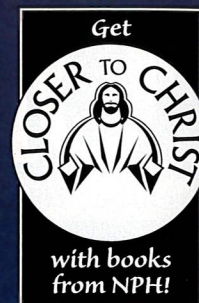
God's people of all ages can use these devotions to marvel at his love in sending Jesus and to look forward to the Last Day, when he will come again.

Be Near Me, LORD JESUS

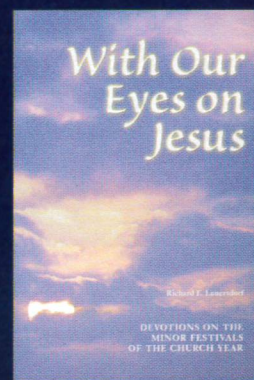
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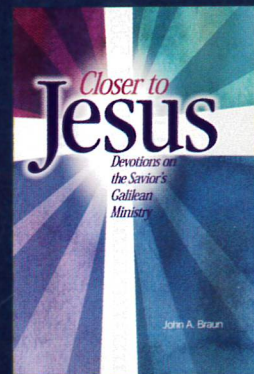
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A solid foundation

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Luke 21:33

Thomas A. Westra

He stood on trial before the emperor for protesting his church's teaching that God's forgiveness can be bought and sold like a sack of potatoes. When the emperor—hanging a death threat over him—demanded that he take back not only his protest but also everything he had ever written or taught, he replied, "I am bound by the texts of the Bible. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Unless I am convinced from the Bible, I cannot and I will not recant. God help me."

How could Martin Luther, a lone, little monk from Wittenberg, be so sure of himself, so utterly convinced that he was right and so many others were wrong?

To whom do you listen?

We're told that one characteristic of our postmodern world is that most people today don't believe in absolute truth. "You can't really be sure about anything," the thinking goes.

We used to rely on experts. But we found out that those experts were often wrong. "There is absolutely no way that you can get mad-cow disease from eating contaminated beef," they told us. Then someone got sick.

I read somewhere that the average life of a science textbook is 18 months. It's out of date because what we "know" is changing so rapidly.

Luther was convinced that he was right because he didn't listen to the experts. Well, actually, he listened to one: Jesus Christ. In a world where the



commonly accepted wisdom of the day often becomes tomorrow's discarded nonsense, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Luke 21:33). Over 80 times in the New Testament, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth . . ." Over 20 times he says, "Now you have heard it said . . . , but I say to you . . ."

"Your Word is truth"

Many people wonder if there is life after death, and—if there is—what it will be like. Many try to do enough good things or avoid the really bad things in a misguided attempt to earn heaven. Others vaguely hope that things will "be all right" for them when they die.

We have Jesus' promise, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19), and "in my Father's house are many

rooms" (John 14:2). We know that because Jesus was guilty of all our sins on the cross, we now are innocent of all sin. We can be sure we are right—even though we may be in the minority—because God has told us so in his Word.

"Continue in what you have learned"

The father of lies is constantly whispering in our ears: "Man is basically good; all beliefs are equally valid; pornography is innocent; greed is good; you should get out of your marriage if it doesn't make you happy; God forgives it all so don't worry about sin; God will never forgive you for what you did; worry about tomorrow because you don't have a father in heaven and if you do have a father in heaven, he doesn't care about you and if he does care about you, he can't help you anyway."

No wonder Paul urges Timothy and us: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14,15).

How can we be so sure? "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

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

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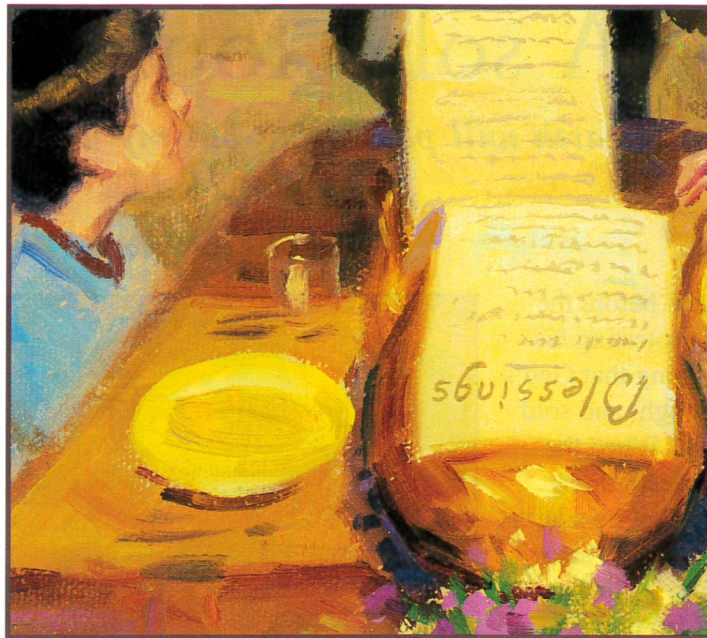
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Cover illustration by Frank Ordaz

Counting blessings with "thanks" is a good start for a Thanksgiving celebration, but there's more.

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bits & pieces



What does Thanksgiving mean to you? Is it a time to go to church in the morning to thank God for the past year's blessings and then run home to make sure the turkey didn't burn? Three writers this month think that it is much more than that.

- Doug Engelbrecht encourages us to follow our Thanksgiving celebration with "thanks-living." After we thank God, we should also live our thanks year-round by praising him and sharing his message. Read more in "Living our thanks" (p. 7).

- Besides living our thanks, we should be generous thank-givers—both physically and spiritually. How can we be anything less when we have such a generous God? Daron Lindemann tells us more in "God makes us thanksgivers" (p. 8).

- Family is important around the holidays. But one family we tend to forget to thank God for is our church family. Robyn Smith, a member of a WELS church in Utah, shares how important a church family is at all times (p. 36).



Marriage, like life, goes in stages. Although Christian couples strive to always make God the third strand in their marriages, different things seem to be important during different stages. Our new series, "Stages of marriage," features writers in these different stages and how they deal with the challenges and rejoice in the blessings of their marriages. Check out the first article, "A newlywed's prayer" (p. 10).



How did you remember 9/11, one year later? Staff writer Nicole Balza traveled to New York City with 26 WELS members to help WELS churches in the New York area advertise remembrance services. Read more about her experiences on p. 21.

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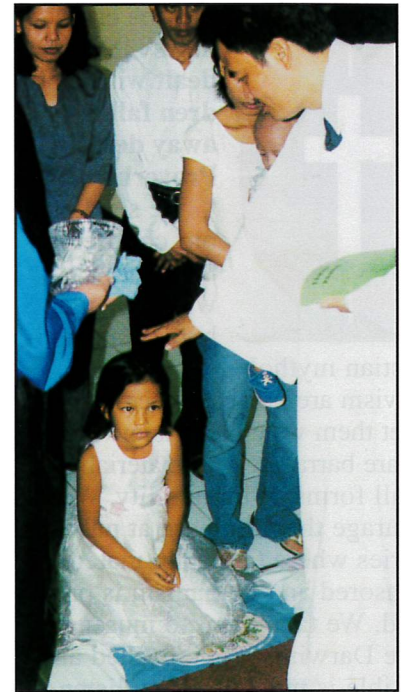
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THANKSGIVING

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Thanksgiving is a time for families, including our church family.

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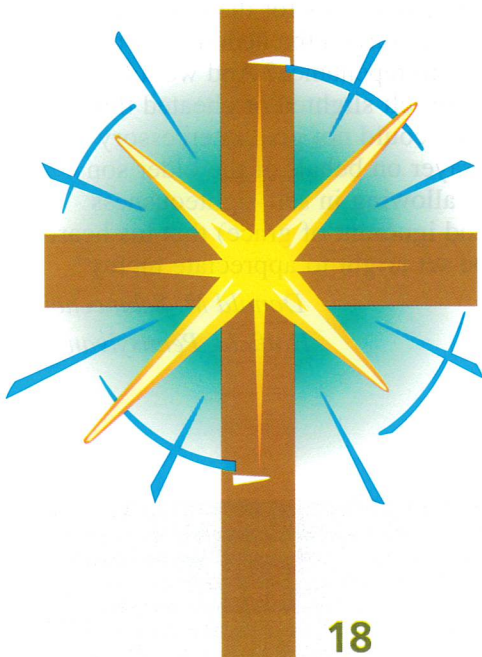
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“In the cross hairs” [Sept.] dealt with children falling away despite Proverbs 22:6.

We send our children to schools where secular humanism, anti-

Christian mythology, and moral relativism are preached incessantly. We let them watch television where they are barraged with materialism and all forms of immorality. We encourage them to learn at public libraries where Christian material is censored and humanism is promoted. We take them to museums where Darwinism is preached and the Bible is mocked. They listen to music that glorifies sin. We allow friendship with humanist peers who lead them away from God and into temptation. We subscribe to magazines and newspapers where false ideologies rule and biblical teachings are ignored or maligned. We let them surf the Internet and be misled by false worldviews and temptations of every sort. And maybe we manage to get them to church for an hour or two on Sunday. And Satan laughs, and says to himself, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

Eric Blievernicht

Terre Haute, Indiana

Re: “In the cross hairs” [Sept.]. **As I read and re-read this article, I realized that the author was using negatives and assumptions to try to make a point.** He uses quotes such as “Scripture nowhere guarantees . . .”; “the Spirit may have preserved . . .”; “verse six does not say . . .”; and so forth. The Bible was written without error. Therefore, if it says “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it,” that is what will happen,

without exception. If the child does turn from the way he should go, it is because he was not trained properly. Please, Professor, just teach what is written in the Bible without assumptions and observations of what is not written. (The reason some things are not written in the Bible is only known to God, for he inspired the writers of the Bible.)

Milton W. Ritter



Georgetown, Texas

Prof. Richard Gurgel explains: *Reverence for an inerrant and inspired Word requires that we neither add nor subtract from his Word (Revelation 22:18,19). In order to make sure we don't add to Scripture, it is often very important to note what a passage does not say. Doesn't it go beyond Scripture to say that Proverbs 22:6 must be understood as offering an absolute promise so that “without exception” any child who turns away must not have been “trained properly”?* *What is more, such reasoning lays an unbiblical burden on many an imperfect yet faithful Christian parent who is already mourning the present unfaithfulness of a son or daughter. Read Ezekiel 18 as Scripture presents the very real possibility of a faithful father with an unfaithful son. The son bears the guilt, not the father.*

I read with interest your column [“I pledge allegiance”] in the August issue of *Forward in Christ*.

Your thoughts are my thoughts. When I heard of the wacky court decision the first thing that came to my mind was, are we outraged so we feel good? Is “God” in the pledge correctly referring to the true Triune God? Or is the generic term “God” just referring to some monolithic being somewhere? I fear that many see God as something somewhere out there and they do not feel the peace and love that comes with knowing their personal Savior.

The “spirit that brought about the issue” is the true problem. As many want to quiet our beliefs and voices, what an opportunity to stand and shout “I believe! I am saved!”—not because of what I have done—but because of what he has done for me.

Jay S. White

Casselberry, Florida

Re: “Because God loves me” [June] and the September readers forum letters that criticized it.

. . . And what if the article is fictional? Shall we then delete from the Bible all the teaching by Jesus and others done in parables? (My dictionary defines “parable” as a usually fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle.)

In my opinion, all articles in *Forward in Christ* need not be about actual people encountering real experiences so that we can pray on their behalf. Although the story beginning at Luke 15:11 is not identified as being a parable, Jesus may have indicated it as such to his disciples. If he did, were the disciples then upset because they could not give thanks for the Holy Spirit having turned the hedonistic young son to repentance? And would they have felt slighted or cheated that they could not give intercessory prayer on behalf of the older son (wallowing in self-righteousness and ignorant of grace) that his heart be set aright to appreciate mercy?

Donald M. Schmechel

Hatfield, Pennsylvania

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3862; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ* magazine.



Living your thanks

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

Christmas does not follow Thanksgiving!

Sure it does. First comes New Year's, then Easter, then the Fourth of July, then Labor Day, then Thanksgiving, then Christmas. Ask any retailer downtown or shopper at the mall, ask any worker who knows his holidays off with pay, ask any kid who is waiting for presents under the tree, and they'll tell you that Christmas definitely follows Thanksgiving.

So am I missing something? Hopefully not. Hopefully, you and I are not among those who forget that what follows Thanksgiving is thanks-living. On Thanksgiving, churches will be filled with people who remember all the blessings that God has showered on them in the past year—people who remember to give thanks. But at the same time, churches will be filled with people who forget that being in church on Thanksgiving and singing "Now Thank We All Our God" is only half the deal. Thanksgiving must be followed by thanksgiving.

One way we live our thanks is by praising God at all times. The psalmist in Psalm 34 said, "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips" (v. 1). Whether we are in the money or in the unemployment line, whether we've experienced a gain in our stock portfolio or experienced a loss in the family, whether we're the picture of health or poster children for everything that ails us, we are experiencing God's mercy. Our financial, physical, or emotional condition does not change our spiritual condition. We are at all times the redeemed, restored, forgiven children of God by faith in Christ. We are at all times, whether good or bad, the heirs of heaven. We are at all times, whether we are cleaning up in the stock market or wiping up tears from our eyes, the most

blessed people in the world. Our every Sunday worship, our everyday language, and our everyday attitude ought to reflect that!

Responding to the invitation to "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," by being in God's house on the fourth Thursday of November—that's Thanksgiving. Praising the Lord at all times in your life, whether those times are good or bad—that's thanksgiving.

Another way we live our thanks is by sharing the message of salvation. Kermit Long once said, "With all our education, our fine buildings, our image of the church, we are doing less to win people to Christ than our unschooled forefathers did. We are no longer fishers of men, but merely keepers of the aquarium." Unfortunately, in too many instances, that is the case. Many times there's more concern for making sure the institution is saved than there is for sharing the wonderful message of Christ so that others might be saved. King David exclaimed in Psalm 34: "Let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together" (2,3). He was so thankful to God for his blessings that he wanted everyone to hear about it and rejoice with him.

It will be wonderful to see churches filled with people on the fourth Thursday of November. That's Thanksgiving. Sharing the message of salvation with our neighbors, co-workers, friends at school—that's thanksgiving.

Christmas doesn't follow Thanksgiving—thanksgiving does. May we go home living the thanks that we have given God by praising him at all times and sharing the message of Christ with others.

Doug Engelbrecht is pastor at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.

Praising the Lord at all times in your life, whether those times are good or bad—that's thanksgiving.

God makes us

**We can't "outgive" God's generosity.
He always makes sure we're plenty supplied.**

Daron J. Lindemann

"Projections are based on past performance and do not guarantee a high rate of future return," read the words in fine print. Aha! A disclaimer, releasing an investment company from being blamed for anyone's financial failure. What they really mean is, "You are taking a risk. You may win. You may lose. It just kind of depends." How's that for uncertainty?

What if you could direct your resources into an investment that makes the opposite promise? In big, bold print, it assures, "You will be made rich." This is no empty-promise Internet pop-up ad just to get your attention, or some manipulative marketing scheme set up with half truths.

The source of this statement is God's Word! The beneficiaries of this promise are all believers. The bankroll behind it all is the generosity of a gracious Father whose wealth exceeds more zeroes and dollar signs than all the bankers in the world can imagine. Furthermore, God's interest in sharing that wealth is more intent than the most generous philanthropists and foundations eager to give money to a good cause.

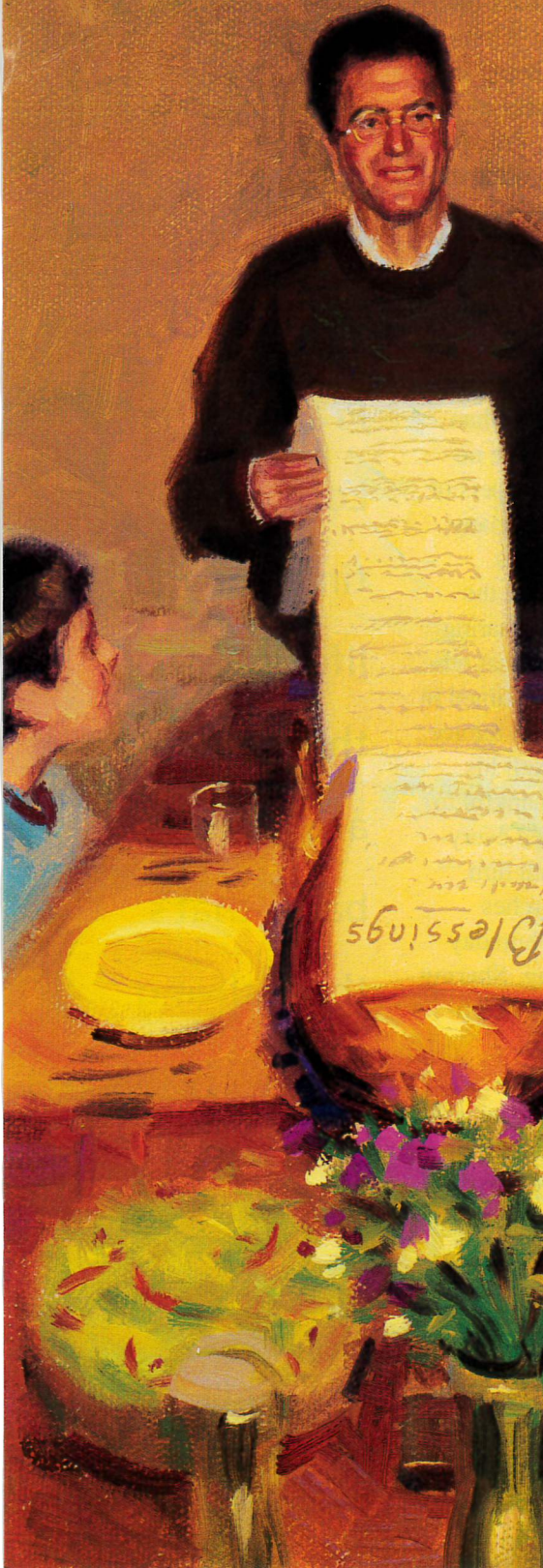
God's generous providing

"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion," the Bible promises (2 Corinthians 9:11), which is why taking the annual Thanksgiving inventory of blessings is a great place to start a Thanksgiving Day celebration.

Because it is difficult for the average human brain to comprehend such a vast amount, consider naming blessings alphabetically. Families can make a game of it and divide up into teams, stipulate a period of time that relates to the family (e.g. "while we lived in Colorado," or "when dad was in the hospital"), then take two minutes to alphabetically identify blessings God gave during that time. Score a point for each blessing your team writes down that is not repeated by another team. If you're traveling, recall blessings according to the letters on license plates of passing cars. Look through photo albums, slide shows, or memorabilia boxes hidden in the back of the closet, and specify a blessing that corresponds to each picture or item and the particular person featured.

Take a moment to think how God has provided in an extra abundant manner, when the plain and ordinary would have easily done the job. God has answered many prayers with bonus blessings over and above what we requested. Many future events that worried us for sleepless nights God orchestrated to turn out better than we expected. God has given us a rainbow world of color instead of just boring black and white, and a climate of seasons to satisfy our craving for something different.

God not only unlocks the treasure chest of this earth and provides all kinds of abundant resources to supply our needs and then some, but he also opens up the storehouse of heavenly



thanksgivers

paradise for us. God has spared nothing. He offered his own Son as a sacrifice for the sins of all people. The few sprinkles of water at our baptism are enough to cleanse us from sin's guilt, but God turns them into a mighty flood drowning our sinful desires so that they can't control us. God verbally inspired 66 written books of the Bible to tell us that he loves us, when a simple greeting card could have done the trick.

Does God overdo things a little? No. He overdoes things a lot! He's a God of excessive grace, extravagant generosity, and eloquent promises—all generously provided for us, so that we can "be generous on every occasion."

Counting blessings with "thanks" is a good start for a Thanksgiving celebration, but there's more. Let's not forget about the "giving." Our own giving. Here, too, the blessings of a gracious God make all the difference. A generous God makes us generous givers. Rich thanksgivers.

Our generous praise

After all, we don't want to be poor thanksgivers when God has generously made us so rich. We are poor thanksgivers when we determine that we'll only sin "just a little bit" from now on . . . against the God of excessive grace! We are poor thanksgivers when we offer leftovers . . . to the God of extravagant generosity! We are poor thanksgivers when we waste opportunities to share our faith . . . in the God of eloquent promises! To be satisfied only with what we can give makes us happy but poor thanksgivers. Instead, we turn our attention to what God has given us and what

God will give us—and then we will be happy and generous thanksgivers.

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness," the Bible explains (2 Corinthians 9:10). In other words, if we consider our God-given blessings not only as blossoms to be savored but also seeds to be sown, they will sprout and bear more blossoms, which will bring forth more seeds . . . and more blossoms . . . and more seeds . . . and so on. "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Counting blessings with "thanks" is a good start for a Thanksgiving celebration, but there's more.

God does not say that he will replenish the blessings we sow. He says that he will generously multiply them in return. Guaranteed, in writing:

• "Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely" (Psalm 112:5).

• "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9,10).

• "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:24,25).

• "A generous man will himself be blessed" (Proverbs 22:9).

How's that for certainty? We can't "outgive" God's generosity! He always makes sure we're plenty supplied. So be a thanksgiver this Thanksgiving and always—a generous thanksgiver who reaps blessings and sows blessings and reaps blessings and sows blessings, like the person who wrote:

I gave them to God, all the things I'd valued so

Until I stood there empty-handed; every item it did go.

I thought I would be living in rags and poverty, till I heard his voice entreating, "Lift your empty hands to me."

My empty hands I lifted and he filled them with much more

Of his own generous blessings, till my hands could hold no more.

And at last I comprehended with my mind so slow and dull,

That God could not pour his riches into hands already full.

Counting blessings doesn't make you afraid, so giving blessings away generously need not make you afraid, either. God's generosity comes with no disclaimers in fine print. You will always be rich.



Daron Lindemann is pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

A newlywed's

A newlywed reflects on the joys and challenges of marriage.

Jennifer N. Heins

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for my marriage. I always seem to come to you with some joyously triumphant news or in tears of the deepest sorrow. Why do I struggle to remember the everyday blessings? Today I want to take the time to thank you for something I take for granted far too often—the union I share with my husband. What a blessing this new marriage is to me!

It seems like only yesterday that you allowed me to meet my husband, Chad. College seemed so big and scary until I saw him sitting at the table taking tickets for the opening pig roast. Lord, I can still picture everything so clearly—where he was sitting, who I was with, even the thoughts running through my mind!

“Hi, I’m Chad Heins, student body president.”

I remember thinking, “Man, he is so friendly!”

The Lord provides

Thanks for leading us to find each other. After two years of friendship and two years of dating, we were married on that same college campus where we met. And now we have been married for two years. Time sure has flown by, Lord. Some days it feels like we were just walking down the aisle and flying off to Hawaii for our honeymoon. It feels like only yesterday that we were moving into our first apartment, which had two rooms, one of which was the bathroom!

Your blessings have been so amazing. Thank you for our second apartment, the one with three bedrooms and the space to get away from each other. Thanks for our furnishings, none of which we had to buy. Thank you for the family and friends who generously gave of their possessions and continue to pray for our marriage. What a multitude of gifts you have given to us, Lord!

Being a newlywed is a wonderful blessing. Please help us use this beginning stage in our marriage to your glory.

We have so many reasons to praise your name, Father. I am sure there are even ways you have not revealed to us yet. Thank you for giving us the same crazy spirit, Lord. I cannot imagine being married to anyone else in this huge, awesome world you made for us. Who else would read store signs in really bad Italian accents with me on long car trips? Who else would think camping out in the living room is as much fun as I do?

Thank you for the incredible blending of our personalities. I worried, Lord. I thought we would get

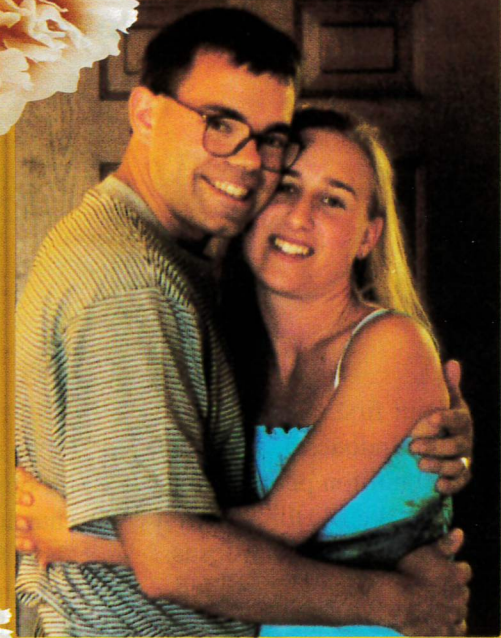
in arguments over petty things, especially when people warned me that the first year of marriage was the most difficult. Thank you for making the first year magical. I love the fact that I must dust, vacuum, and scrub the bathroom periodically but do not mind clothes lying around the bedroom or shoes in the living room. Chad takes care of that, though. He feels the need to pick up anything not in its proper place. Together we have the cleanest apartment ever.

Ask, and you shall receive

Heavenly Father, you can read all my thoughts, and you know that times have not always been easy. You were there when we moved to a new state. You were there when I had to settle for many different job options because no teaching jobs were available. You were there when the decision to marry did not always seem like the wisest choice for me.

Thanks for putting up with my sinful thoughts. I try so hard to be patient, Lord. You know how I struggle, especially with that fruit of the Spirit. Please give me an extra measure of tolerance when I become tempted to think my marriage is too tough. Put kind words in my mouth when Chad continually delays his graduation date in pursuing his master’s degree. Grant me wisdom to encourage when Satan wants me to ridicule and complain.

prayer



Chad and Jenni Heins on their Hawaiian honeymoon.

Remember when I stormed out of the apartment the other day, Lord? Forgive me for my evil thoughts. I love Chad so much, but sometimes I struggle to put up with him. Help me to remember that we are in this together for life and that I am not so easy to put up with either. Give me humility and love, which you demonstrate so perfectly for us.

Help us to put you first in our lives. We try so hard not to let money become a quarreling ground in our marriage. Give us discipline to use the worldly wealth you have given us to your glory. Please continue to remind us that material possessions do not matter. Let us

find joy in learning more about you and each other, not in superficial items of this world.

Being a newlywed is a wonderful blessing. Please help us use this beginning stage in our marriage to your glory. We have struggled at times, Lord, to put you first in our marriage. Forgive us for neglecting you when it is you we need the most. Help us to remember that the strength of our marriage comes from you.

Help us to shape our new family in you. Help us to encourage each other to read your Word. Let the Holy Spirit work in our hearts as we study

the Bible together and on our own. Help us to support one another, as we sometimes forget to go to you. We love talking to you, Lord. Aid us in remembering that the awesome gift of prayer is available to us every second of every day.

I know I have been talking for some time, Lord. I want to keep our marriage built on trust, honesty, and devotion with each other, but most important, with you, through your Son, Jesus. Be with us and support us in this earthly relationship until we can enjoy our heavenly relationship with you! Amen.

Jenni Heins, married on July 1, 2000, is a member at St. Paul, North Mankato, Minnesota.

The work goes on

Can a foreign mission survive without a missionary living on the field? Absolutely! Our mission in Indonesia is proof.

Pieter Reid



In 1979 our first missionaries arrived in Indonesia, a country with 210 million people, 90 percent of whom are Muslim. Then it was still legal to talk about Jesus, and the missionaries planted and watered the seed of the gospel on the island of Java.

At the end of 1993 the seminary in Indonesia was forced to suspend operation. The following spring all three missionary families, including my family, left the field because our work permits only allowed us in Indonesia as theological instructors at the seminary. The Lord opened the door for my family to return that fall as the only WELS family on the field. In May 1998 my family was evacuated during the riots that led to the downfall of President Suharto but then returned when it was safe.

In September 2001, we were again pulled from the field when radical Islamic groups threatened to take Americans hostage.

Since then, I have continued to work with the national church, *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia* (the Lutheran Church of Indonesia, GLI), from Sun Prairie, Wis. But can a foreign mission survive without a missionary living on the field?

Preparing to stand on its own

Since 1993, I have been pursuing the objective of helping the national church stand on its own. Comparing “how things were” with “how things are” shows how the church has worked toward that goal.

- In the past, church leaders were on “rubber time,” with meetings sometimes starting three-and-a-half hours late. Now meetings start on time.

- Previously, if a second point of view was raised at a meeting, the discussion would stop because one person would “lose face” if his viewpoint wasn’t followed. Church leaders now realize that God wants us to plan things. This involves discussions with different opinions, yet leaders can now select one proposal and work together to carry it out.

- In 1993 missionaries taught 10 students at the seminary. Six became pastors, and four became evangelists. Now, these men, in addition to serving active and growing congregations, are instructors at two seminaries, one in Jakarta and one in central Java. They are teaching the next generation of pastors and evangelists.

- The first church workers only had a handful of books to use in their ministry. Now a number of

seminary courses have been printed for them, and key volumes of the People’s Bible commentary—as well as sermon helps and Bible class materials—have been translated.

- In the past, missionaries told church leaders what they needed and how much it would cost. Now leaders set their goals, figure the costs, draw up their budget, and manage funds that they receive from WELS to assist in mission outreach.

- Before, missionaries decided where a new post would be established. Now the national church does the exploratory work, opens new posts, and monitors the posts.

Facing persecution

We can rattle off passages about how “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12) and how Jesus said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). Our brothers and sisters in Indonesia actually experience this persecution. They live in a country that forbids the spreading and preaching of Christianity to those of a different faith.

One Jakarta congregation has been forbidden from worshipping on Sunday



The three most recent graduates of the seminary in Jakarta, Indonesia, receive their diplomas. In two years, *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia* has grown from 10 to 24 called workers.



Another child becomes God's child in baptism. In this service, three adults and three children were baptized.

"because it would be offensive" to some neighbors. The members have Bible study during the week and on Sunday travel an additional 20 minutes to worship in a sister congregation.

Just after Christmas 2001, fanatical Muslims from the Middle East leveled a GLI church building in Jakarta. That congregation has been worshipping in a different home each week and is trying to get approval to rebuild. The mem-

bers are not afraid of what man can do to them and cling to God's promises, knowing that even this will be used for their good and the good of the church.

In these difficult times young men and second-career men are coming forward, willing to become

church workers. In May 2001 five men completed their seminary studies. This spring nine men became full-time church workers, raising the number of church workers to 24.

Growing through adversity

God is using these challenging times to strengthen GLI members and increase their desire to share Jesus. Since it is illegal to initiate a conversation about Jesus, members practice friendship evangelism. They look for ways to be a friend and show Christian love to their neighbors. It takes years to break down the negative image about Christians that has been instilled in most Muslims. It takes love in action for others to realize that Christianity is a religion of love—that God loved us and sent Jesus to be our Savior and now we as Christians will show love to others. After about three to five years of being a Christian friend to their Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist friends, GLI members share Jesus and invite their friends to come and learn more.

And they are coming. In 2001, GLI began nine new exploratory posts, increasing the number of congregations from 11 to 20. From January 2000 to December 2001, GLI grew from 305 to 491 members. Now there are 24 congregations,

with a total membership of 562. Currently over 140 adults are in Bible information classes. For their joint Easter service in central Java, 1,200 people attended, coming in 20 buses from various congregations.

Helping from the States

I continue to help the national church, but from a distance. I serve as coordinator for the field, answer questions, advise boards and committees, work closely with the translation team, write leader's guides, preach for mission festivals, and conduct presentations. I make personal visits to Indonesia for three to four weeks about every three months.

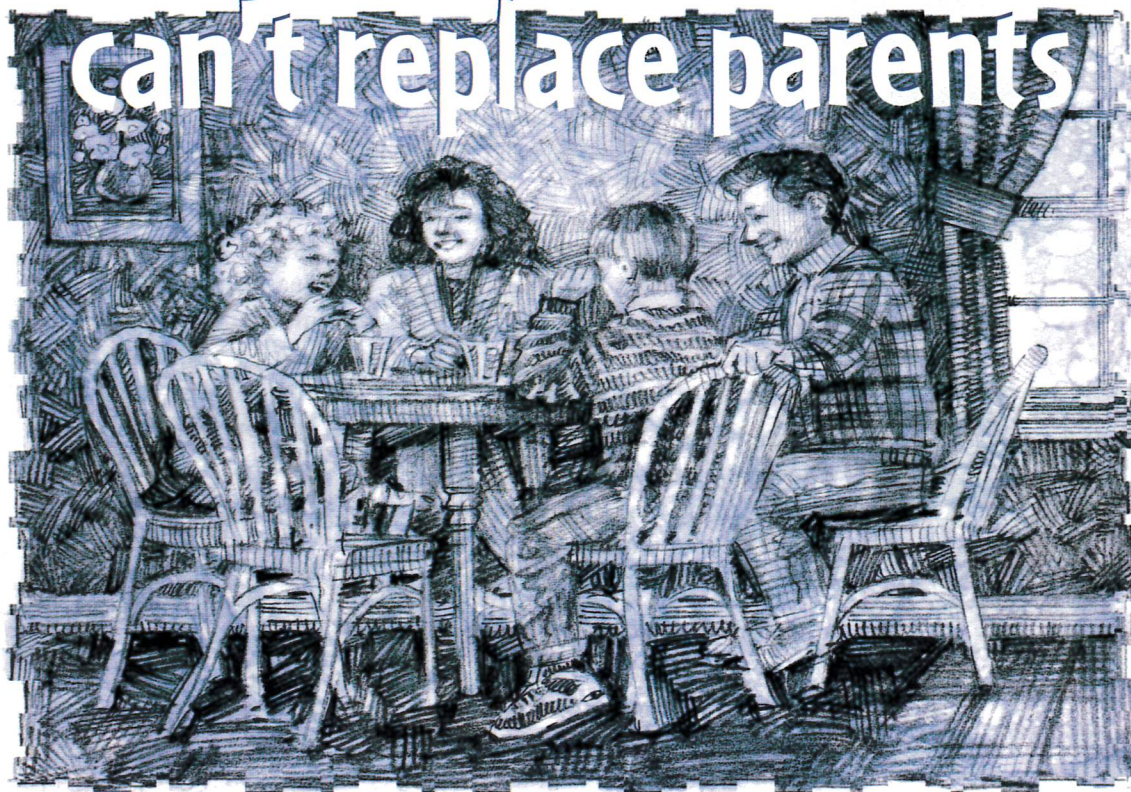
In July, my wife and I conducted an eyeglass clinic in central Java and taught national workers how to continue these clinics. Free glasses are given to people who could never afford eyeglasses, thereby improving neighborhood relations. The glasses are a constant reminder of the love shown by the Indonesian Christians to all people.

Surviving without a missionary

Can a foreign mission survive without a missionary living on the field? Absolutely! Our mission in Indonesia is proof. GLI leaders are spiritually strong, thankful for the foundation they have in Christ, thankful for all WELS has done, and want to share Jesus with others. The Holy Spirit is active in touching hearts, creating and strengthening faith. God has promised: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Our all-powerful God is certainly watching over our brothers and sisters in Indonesia and throughout the world.

Pieter Reid, currently living in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, is a missionary to Indonesia.

Church and school can't replace parents



The ministries of church and school should assist in the spiritual nurture of the home, not replace it.

Richard L. Gurgel

Several generations ago sharing the Word in the home seems to have been a more common practice. Our churches and schools assisted in supporting and reinforcing the spiritual truths that were taught at home. For those nurtured in the Word at home, catechism instruction wasn't so much covering new material but reinforcing what children had heard and seen from their parents.

But in recent generations, the regular sharing of the Word at home seems to have become less of a norm.

Replacing the spiritual nurture of the home

As church and school leaders noticed these changes, their first reaction was to make up for what was

not happening at home by focusing on improving formal spiritual nurture at church and school. But in the process, they have often forgotten that the ministries at church and school should assist in the spiritual nurture of the home, not replace it.

Yes, the Holy Spirit has often used the gospel shared by a church or school to rescue a soul from a home that cared little or nothing for Christ. But doesn't Scripture's plan for the spiritual nurture of the next generation suggest that that is not the norm, but a glorious exception to the rule?

Whenever church and school become the primary source for spiritual nurture, there are some unintended side effects. Church and school leaders may even give this impression:

"This sharing of the Word stuff is best left to the professionals. Don't try this at home!"

A Lutheran called worker, who was convinced that he had given just such an impression, says:

"I worked very hard at developing a church-centered youth and children's ministry. I said to families, 'Bring your kids to me. Let me teach them the faith, and I'll involve you in the process. Help me develop good Sunday schools, a great vacation Bible school, a midweek program, servant events, retreats, evangelism trips, youth-oriented worship,' and on and on. The message I was communicating to families was that the church should be the focal point for nur-

turing faith in their kids. I wanted families to invest their energy in what the church was about rather than the church investing its energy in what families are about. I was sucking the life out of families for the sake of the church's mission" (*The Family Friendly Church*, Ben Freudenburg, p. 28).

Dangers of that replacement

What happens to the God-given role of parents when all the attention is on what happens at church and school? Parents are in danger of missing their pivotal importance in the spiritual nurture of their children. They are in danger of being reduced to cheerleaders who applaud from the sidelines while pastors, teachers, and staff ministers carry out the "real" work of disciplining their children.

This snowballs into an additional, unintended problem—a potential canyon between learning and life that hinders children from seeing that the gospel is life, and life is all about the gospel. If our children don't hear Mom and Dad talk much about Jesus, but they do hear Mom and Dad discuss making money, playing sports, or pursuing the latest entertainment craze, should we be surprised if they conclude that that is what life is all about? What is talked about at home will seem to be real life, while what is heard at church and school will seem to be nothing but nice stories with little practical connection to life.

That apparent gap between religious education and the life of the home often explains what happens by the time our children reach confirmation age. Those little ones who so eagerly gobbled up every morsel of God's truth in first grade have noticed that what they are learning at church and school doesn't seem to matter much outside of those walls. Their

sinful nature is all too willing to draw the conclusion that this "Jesus" stuff isn't important, while making money, excelling at sports, or living for the next entertainment craze is. We are in danger of raising a generation of super-Marthas who are worried about "many things" but who have lost sight of the one thing needful (Luke 10:41).

What happens to the God-given role of parents when all the attention is on what happens at church and school?

This problem does not begin at confirmation. That is merely when we get alarmed because we see how many of our youth seem to leave their faith behind. The problem really begins when parents hear, "It's a girl!" "It's a boy!" and fail to recognize that they are the most influential pastor or teacher that their child will ever have.

Facing the challenge

The best answer for retaining our youth is not an excellent youth ministry at church. The best answer is training and equipping Christian homes to be spiritually strong youth groups that surround children in the protective armor of the gospel from cradle through college.

I must confess that in my ministry, I often acted as if what happened at church and school was more important than what happened at home. I much too easily allowed the role of confirmation students' parents to be little more than buying the flower and paying for the picture. My actions, if not my words, reduced them to humble assistants.

But even worse is when I wore my other "hats" as husband to my wife

and father to my five sons. I soothed my conscience by telling myself that the time and attention I often should have devoted to their spiritual welfare was a gift devoted to the public ministry. But all my shortsightedness accomplished was to shortchange my family's spiritual growth as well as fail to set a clear example for my flock.

Thank God that our hope and confidence is in Christ and not ourselves. Thank God that his forgiveness covers our stumblings as God's gospel messengers in our homes. Thank God that the record of perfection in which we trust is not our own as gospel messengers, but our perfection is the gospel's message to us. Our joy is found at a cross where our Savior bled and died also for our failings as Christian parents.

But the gospel doesn't end there. Besides looking back to yesterday's sins to comfort us, it looks ahead to today's opportunities to empower us. As we face the challenge of being our children's most important pastors and teachers, we still have the promise that "it is God who works in [us] to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

In our personal ministry to those in our homes we can claim the same promise that comforts those whose calling is public ministry: "Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:4,5). God has called you to your role as Christian father or mother. God never fails to equip and empower for the roles to which he calls us.



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

Filling the void

God's Word is being spread in two countries where it had been virtually silenced for over half a century.

Gary P. Baumler

Under Communism, atheism permeated the very fabric of Czech society for decades, and the people fell into line. Hardened hearts didn't miss the gospel. By contrast, under the same atheistic influence, the people of Ukraine largely kept yearning for the Word that was denied them.

The void Communism left

After Communism collapsed a dozen years ago, Thoughts of Faith, a mission society associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, entered both countries with the gospel.

In Ukraine, where the people experienced widespread poverty and suffered for want of medical services, humanitarian aid became a vehicle to reach the people and share the gospel along with health services (see October FIC, p. 25). Many yearned to know more about God's Word. The Word blossomed in fertile hearts. The Ukrainian Lutheran Church now has 3,000 baptized members and 17 national pastors serving 21 registered congregations.

In the Czech Republic, where over 80 percent of the people called themselves atheists, few adults showed any interest in hearing the Word. So the Lord led the way to the children through Christian education. In 1992 the mission opened Martin Luther School in Plzen with a handful of children. Ten years later 185 children attend grades K-9.

Although most Czech parents have more interest in their children learning English than religion, the daily lessons from the Word of God bring the love of Jesus to the hearts of the children, and they become witnesses to the home. As a result, the Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church now has 160 members and is expanding its outreach.

The fields look different, and one has produced more fruit than the other. The Ukrainian Lutheran Church, in fact, has become the largest Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference member church in Europe. Nonetheless, God's Word works in the same way in each case, as the following accounts illustrate.

Looking for the Word

In Ternopil, Ukraine, Ludmyla Voichunas and her family were looking for "the exact teaching of the living Word of God, so that they would have effective protection in their lives through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."*

She enrolled her son and daughter in Bible study at the Ternopil congregation of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. "My husband, Anatoli, and I rejoiced," she reports, "when we realized that God had led us to his church, for which our hearts were striving."

In 1998 Ludmyla was confirmed and for the first time in her life received the Lord's Supper. Can you imagine the joy she expresses: "We

were so eager to come to church to listen and to learn the living Word of God. Our merciful Lord granted us a great gift of faith and, thus, spiritually restored us to eternal life"? She had dreamed of a church like that since, as a child, she learned of Martin Luther and the Reformation.

What Ludmyla discovered, she needed to share: "During the process of becoming a Lutheran, I had a great desire to spread the good news about salvation. God has preserved in my heart that invisible desire and joy to share it with others. At that time I tried to use every chance to tell my friends, relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances about my church, for 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16)."

Today Ludmyla is a deaconess in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church and an evangelist-consultant for children at Gift of Life's Medical Clinic on Wheels. About her church, she has this to say: "I stress that the ULC is a Christian church in Ukraine that preaches the truth about salvation and is faithful to the Word of God. I tell people that this medical humanitarian aid shows our Christian love and is given free of charge."

Looking for a good education

In the Czech Republic, God's Word has worked in similarly miraculous



Teacher Mary Grubbs leads students at Martin Luther School in Plzen, Czech Republic, in singing during morning chapel.

Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church

Members: 160
 Established congregations: 1
 Mission congregations: 2
 National pastors/evangelists: 2
 Expatriate missionaries: 2 from the ELS

fashion. Missionary Mark Grubbs tells this story:

“Three years ago a doctor living near our school enrolled her daughter, Romanka, in our kindergarten. Romanka; her divorced mother, Gabriela; and her older brother, David, had never had contact with God’s Word before. Like most Czechs, they had no Christians among their family members or friends.

“Romanka learned about Jesus at our school, in her daily Bible classes and at chapel services on Wednesdays. She brought home to her mother Czech copies of the Bible stories she studied each week. Soon her mother began to attend our Sunday services. She wanted to learn more. The pastor instructed Gabriela in the basic teachings of Scripture, and all three family members were baptized.

“Romanka’s mother began to share her faith with other family members, friends, even the patients she saw as part of her medical practice. God used her witness to touch the heart of one of her friends, a man named Petr. Gabriela told Petr about the wonderful love of Christ for sinners. Together they read and studied the Bible. Petr, who had never had any contact before with God’s Word, was also baptized.

“Petr is a scientist and a mathematician. But as soon as he came to faith, he began to ask himself how he could serve his Savior. God

led him to decide to study for the holy ministry, so that he could reach his countrymen with the gospel. In recent months, Petr has been studying doctrine, Greek, and sermon preparation with the pastors in our mission. He is also gaining practical experience by conducting services, making sick calls, and teaching Bible classes. God willing, he will someday serve as a national pastor in our Czech Lutheran Church.

“That’s not the end of the story. Petr and Gabriela were married in our church almost two years ago. And the Lord blessed them with a son in April 2002.

“This story began with a little girl sharing her faith with her mother. Her mother shared her faith with a friend. That friend is now preparing to become a pastor, so he can spend his life sharing the good news of Jesus.

“Romanka, Gabriela, and Petr know firsthand how powerful witnessing—simply telling others about Jesus—can be. Through their witnessing God has done great things among us here in the Czech Republic.”

The stories of Ludmyla and Romanka and the people they have



Ludmyla Voichunas, a deaconess in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, tells children about Jesus outside the Medical Clinic on Wheels. At this clinic, thousands of children, some of whom have never seen a doctor or dentist, receive free medical and dental care along with the Word of God.

Ukrainian Lutheran Church

Members: 3,000 baptized
 Established congregations: 21
 Mission congregations: 9
 National pastors: 17
 Evangelists and preseminary students: 12
 Expatriate missionaries: 3 from the ELS

reached with the gospel might be told with different casts of people all over the world. But their stories came true in two countries where God’s Word had been virtually silenced for over half a century, and they have joined our brothers and sisters in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. Praise God!

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

*Information for this account from *Banner*, a newsletter of Thoughts of Faith.

Hope Christian School is working hard to shine the light of the gospel into its community.



A light for future generations

Julie K. Wietzke

It's 7 AM.

All is quiet, except for the occasional clink of a spoon or the sound of cereal pouring into a bowl. Kids munch hungrily, waiting.

The noise starts to pick up as more kids come in. They get their breakfast, meet each other, and immediately start chattering. Some still sit in silence, nervous as to what the day will bring.

It's the first day of school at Hope Christian School. You can already tell that this isn't a normal WELS elementary school. Set in a commercial complex of an impoverished area of Milwaukee, Hope is working to feed both body and soul of its students. Started independently from a WELS church, this urban school is shining its light across one of many sin-darkened communities.

Three years ago, this school was just a dream of Jim Rahn, a Wisconsin Lutheran College professor who was in a group exploring ways to support WELS urban schools in Milwaukee.

Rahn was concerned with the decrease in the number of children in WELS schools, while other schools were flourishing. This fact hit home when he saw a private school leasing a closed-down WELS school because the private school had run out of space.

"I called Dan Schmeling [then Commission on Parish Schools administrator]," says Rahn, chairman of Hope Lutheran School, Inc. "I told him maybe some of the paradigm changes and new ways of looking at ministry can't be done at the congregational level right away. But what if we started a school totally based on outreach and evangelism and try some things that a congregation wouldn't risk."

Things moved quickly after that, with much hard work. Research, fundraising, communicating, canvassing—all to set up a school to serve the gospel not only to its students but also to its community.

Finding an affordable location proved difficult. In September 2001, Tim McNeill, principal at Hope, inquired about renting space in a commercial complex in Metcalfe Park on Milwaukee's northside. The answer was no because of zoning regulations and other possible renters. On a whim, McNeill called back in February 2002. This time the answer was yes.

"We were fumbling around in the dark," says McNeill. "Then God threw open the door and let in the light."

Six months later, Hope opened its doors to over 40 first- to fourth-graders.

During those six months, McNeill and the board were busy. Much had to be done to transform their rented space into a school. McNeill hit the streets, telling everyone about this new school. He writes: "I distinctly recall one home that I skipped over. Its disrepair and degradation were significant. Surely, no one would inhabit such a dwelling! That afternoon I received a call from a mother who desired a spiritual environment for her three children. . . . I was astonished to find that the address she had given me was the very same home I had dismissed as uninhabitable. . . . I sat and talked with the family for over an hour. I was impressed at how deeply they loved their children. . . ."

McNeill describes the people in the area as living in "a culture of poverty." In Metcalfe Park, there is a 32 percent unemployment rate, and 67 percent of the children live at poverty level. Some single moms work two to three jobs to provide for their children.

"The people are overwhelmed by life," says McNeill.

Part of Hope's ministry is to alleviate some of that stress. McNeill likens it to Jesus feeding the 5,000, providing for both spiritual and physical needs.

Hope does this by having a longer school day (doors open at 6:45 AM

and close at 5 PM) so parents don't have to worry about afterschool care. Hope also provides breakfast and lunch. McNeill picks up five students for school and drives seven back home. On registration day, parents could take clothing, utensils, and other items home, for free. Hope has also helped families deal with housing needs and has provided job counseling.

"While you're doing all these things for people, you have all that time to witness," says McNeill. "Over time the Holy Spirit works."

And from there the Word gets spread further—from child to parent to community.

"Then we'll have a community of believers that will change the neighborhood," says McNeill.

Both physically and spiritually.

At 7:30 each morning, McNeill addresses the students, setting the stage for the day. On opening day, he reminded the students that Hope "is a Christian school. It's all about knowing more about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Later, he said, "This makes Hope special and makes you very special

because you are all children of God in Christ."

These children, all mission prospects, need to hear these messages. Says McNeill, "In their lives, the gospel many times is not the focus. Here we want to introduce why we live our lives the way we do and then have Christians modeling that every day. Parents see that and say, 'There's something different about this school.' Well, yeah, that's because the love of Christ abounds in all of us."

Although showing that love by helping families physically is important, it's not the school's main purpose.

"We want to nurture the children's faith at a quick pace," says McNeill. "Then we want to give them lots of opportunities to act out their faith."

WELS' Northside Lutheran Ministries, located across the street from Hope, now is holding church services at Hope. Two school families are attending. Hope's goal is to "grow" a church from their ministry to children.

Hope is growing. On the first day of school, families wandered into the building, looking for information. Just a month after opening, Hope has already grown to 54 students.

By Christmas, teachers will be packing up their classrooms and moving to a larger area in a connected building. McNeill already is talking about taking more space in that same building in 2003. Next school year, fifth- and sixth-grade will be added.

"We'll grow as fast as God gives us kids," says McNeill.

That growth isn't confined to that one school. The board of Hope Lutheran School, Inc., is looking at opening another school in Milwaukee next fall.

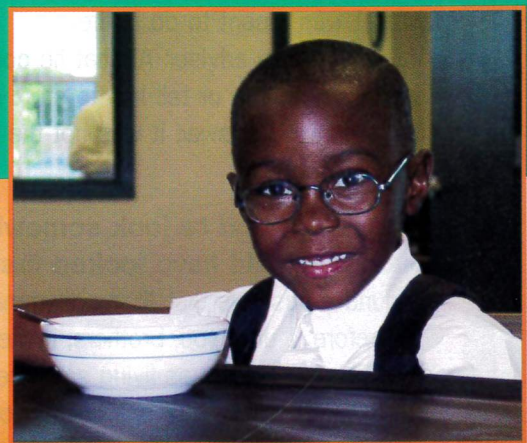
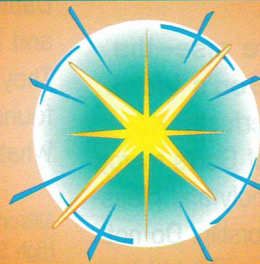
Everything comes back to Hope's motto—for its teachers and its students: "So I won't bend and I won't break, I won't water down my faith. I won't compromise, in a world of desperation. What has been I cannot change. For tomorrow and today, I must be a light, for future generations."

A light to bring more people to the saving Word of the gospel.

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

"For Future Generations," 4HIM

A student at Hope Christian School in Milwaukee enjoys breakfast before school starts. Hope works to provide for the physical and the spiritual needs of its students. In this poor neighborhood, parents can afford to send their kids to Hope because it is part of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, in which the government gives low-income families vouchers to send their children to private schools.



Amy Jungemann, Hope's first-grade teacher, teaches the children about numbers. The desks in this room were donated by Atonement, WELS church in Milwaukee. Area WELS churches have been supportive of Hope, sending donations and help whenever possible. Hope also works closely with Metcalfe Park community organizations.

WHATEVER

Peer pressure

A teenager learns to go to **God first** when she is feeling pressured.

Allison Ramsey

I have always thought that peer pressure was ridiculous. No one really cares about what other people think. However, my views changed one day when I was upset by something someone said.

It was my sophomore year. I had been having a rough time. My grandpa had tried committing suicide, my 17-year-old brother got arrested for drinking, and in a few days I was going to meet my boyfriend's dad. It did not help that I had a major presentation due for my world history class. I finished my speech, and, though it did not go as well as I had hoped, I was relieved that it was over.

As I sat down, one of my friends whispered that I did a good job. That made me feel much better until after class when a boy started telling me that my presentation was bad. He called me "professor," which is not a bad nickname, but he made it sound as if I would be a terrible teacher. What he didn't realize was that I had always wanted to be a teacher. His remarks made me begin to reconsider the profession I had desired since fifth grade. Maybe it was not what I was meant to do in life.

I went to my advisor. All that he could tell me was to ignore the boy or tell him to stop. Although I was expecting this answer, it was not the answer I was hoping to get.

So, I decided to look somewhere else—the place I should have looked first—God's Word.

I found a passage that fit my dilemma perfectly: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will

be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Romans 12:1,2).

I realized that God knew what I was going to grow up to be—and so did I! For years I knew what I wanted, but I almost let one person drive me away. Then I understood the reality of peer pressure. If this had been about something other than my future career, like drugs or sex, I could have really messed up my life. God was showing me how bad peer pressure is.

That same night I had an e-mail message that I had seen before, but now it had new meaning. The story was about a boy carrying his books home. When some bullies knocked him down, another boy stopped to help him. These two boys became best friends. Later the first boy told the other one that the day they met he had planned on killing himself. One kind deed saved a life. I know that I did not get that e-mail that day by coincidence. God was showing me that peer pressure can be a bad influence.

I learned lessons about peer pressure that day, and among them was one my parents have always told me, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." I also learned to go to God first when I am feeling pressured.

At the end of the day I remembered Daniel's words: "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight" (Daniel 6:22). What a good reminder to trust God!

Allison Ramsey, a junior at Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, South Dakota, is a member of St. Martin, Watertown.



A powerful whisper

In a city of more than eight million people, the sound of 40 people singing may not ring very loudly. Yet, in a world where each soul is precious to our heavenly Father, 40 people singing about his grace may ring loudly in someone's life. That is the hope that I cling to as I look back upon the work that I participated in with 26 other WELS Kingdom Workers volunteers on Sept. 9-10 in New York City.

This volunteer group traveled to New York City to distribute flyers inviting people to the 9/11 services of area WELS churches. Eighteen of the 27 volunteers were musicians from various WELS groups that use their musical talents to praise God. As the musicians would play their instruments and sing, the other volunteers would hand out the invitations, along with the devotional book *God Our Refuge*.

While standing in subway stations and parks, we handed out 5,000 copies of *God Our Refuge* and about twice as many flyers. Some people asked for another copy of the devotion book for a family member or friend. Most groups could not hand the books out fast enough to keep up with the amount of people who wanted them. Perhaps most gratifying was when, on our second day of handing the books out, one person asked, "Oh, is that the book that everyone is reading on the subway?"

On the afternoon of Sept. 10, all the WELS Kingdom Workers volunteers and about 15 volunteers from area WELS churches gathered together to bring comfort to the citizens of New York City. Carrying a memorial banner created by members from Apostles, San Jose, Calif., we sang uplifting spiritual songs on the sidewalk in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, which became the headquarters for the 9/11 relief workers. In the months following 9/11, many people hung memorials to those who died and patriotic messages of encouragement



More than 40 WELS members sang "God Bless America" near Ground Zero in New York City on Sept. 10.



Jonathon Roberts, a member at St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., handed out *God Our Refuge* books to people in Central Park on Sept. 9. *God Our Refuge*, originally produced in 1951 as a military devotional book, contains Bible readings, hymns, and prayers.

on the fence surrounding the cathedral. As we sang, we noticed more people leaving items and notes. Some joined in singing with us, especially as we sang "God Bless America." When we sang on the perimeter of Ground Zero, a crowd gathered and encouraged us to keep singing.

In reality, only a couple hundred people probably heard us singing that day, but the power behind whom we were singing about seemed to carry a long way. And, even though the number of visitors who attended the 9/11 WELS worship services in the New York area was few, I know that our time in New York City was well spent. Five thousand people have God's Word in their hands, and a couple hundred people heard us singing about God's grace and power. In a place the size of New York City, we barely made a whisper among the noise that is created there each day. Yet, it is a powerful whisper, because it has God's power behind it.

This trip was funded with the remainder of the money donated by WELS members for the Committee on Relief's Attack on America fund. For more details about this trip, go to <www.wels.net/sab/bhm>.

Nicole R. Balza

Did you know . . .

. . . that more than 85 WELS churches reported on the WELS Web site that they held services of remembrance on Sept. 11? From California to Connecticut, WELS members gathered around God's Word to find true comfort on the first anniversary of this sad day.

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:

Pastor Philip Kieselhorst, our new Bible study writer, has served WELS members living in Europe since his graduation from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1995. He had "congregations" in Germany, England, Switzerland, and Italy. He recently took a call back to the States to serve Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.

What made you decide to become a pastor?

It was that or an FBI agent. Since I've never fired a gun in my life and since I look like I'm 12, I figured I might not make the best agent.

I greatly admired the pastors I had at David's Star, Jackson, Wis., and then at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School. They encouraged and motivated me to want to serve others in this way.

What was the biggest adjustment you had to make when going to Germany?

The ministry. Since it deals with so many different families living in

so many different countries, trying to serve them in a beneficial and efficient way makes it a constantly changing ministry. Driving at high speeds, driving on the opposite side of the road, and driving in places where I couldn't read the signs would also have to rank high.

When returning to the United States?

The ministry. Now serving the same families in the same area week after week is a new experience I am enjoying. Driving at really slow speeds, surrounded by big cars/trucks, where the signs don't make much sense also ranks pretty high.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Spend time with my family, tour new places, read international thrillers, play trumpet and sports.

What was the most embarrassing experience of your life?

Leaving my passport on a train in Switzerland and having to chase down the train in a car was embarrassing. My first year in Germany, I wanted to ask a German lady in our village if she had any children. Instead I think



Phil and Kathy Kieselhorst with their two children, Ben and Julia, at Piccadilly Circus, London. Kieselhorst writes that his most memorable experiences in life were adopting his two children.

I asked her if she was pregnant.

If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would that word be?

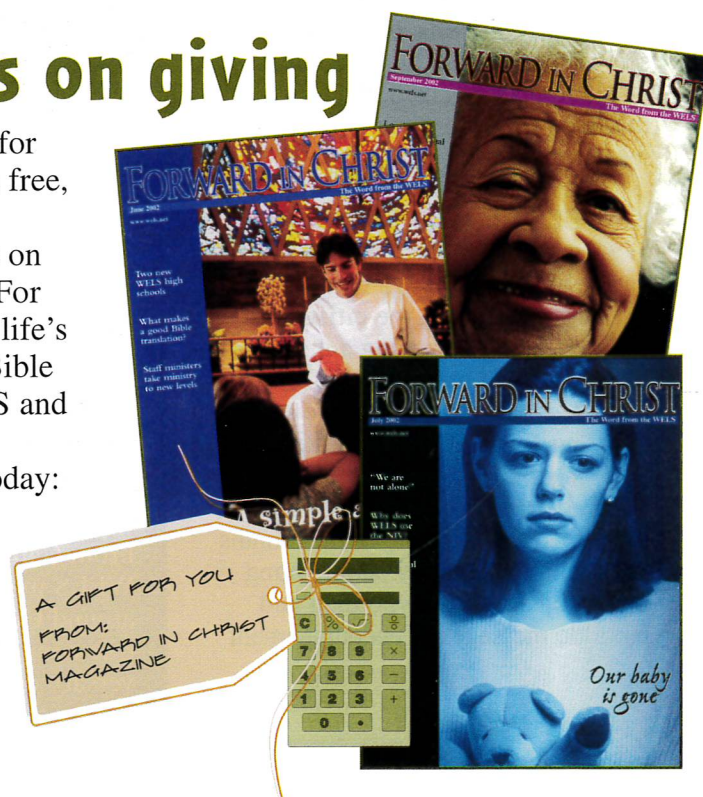
Adaptable. I've been in the country, the inner-city, European countries, and military bases. I've also had the opportunity to serve people with the means of grace in many unique settings.

Give the gift that keeps on giving

Order a new subscription of *Forward in Christ* magazine for someone on your gift list this year, and you will receive a free, solar-powered pocket calculator.

Forward in Christ magazine really is the gift that keeps on giving because it equips readers to grow in their faith. For only \$12/year help your loved one's discover answer's to life's questions, read stories of faith, participate in interactive Bible studies, and keep in touch with what is going on in WELS and other religions around the world.

Call Northwestern Publishing House or order on-line today: 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8. Milwaukee, 414/615-5785. <www.nph.net/html/periodicals.html>. Charge it—Discover, MasterCard, or Visa—or bill it. Make sure to mention this ad to receive your free calculator.



WELS news briefs

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

Vice President for Mission and Ministry

414/256-3204

The Synodical Council had a planning retreat in August to set strategy for new approaches and alternate ways of doing ministry. Area administrators are working hard on a "Key Thrust" document that lays out current ministry as well as plans for expansion over the next five years. This will help set a direction for February's synodical budget meeting.

Four new members replaced outgoing members of the Synodical Council. District President Herbert Prael replaced the former Conference of Presidents' representative, Pastor Warren Widmann. Three lay representatives changed: Mr. Roger Anderson replaced Mr. Don Richards (North Atlantic District); Mr. Mark Bannon replaced Mr. David Toepel (Michigan District); and Mr. Tom Schlittenhart replaced Mr. Keith Moore (Arizona-California District).

Telecommunications/Technology Task Force II

262/650-1592

Advancing technology at the local level moved ahead this past summer:

- **Beta-testing of a new low-cost school administration software designed for WELS schools is underway.** Developed by principals and lay leaders in the South Central District, sKool-Aid was introduced at the School Leadership Conference held in June. Training on the final product will be available at WELS Tech 2003, a technology conference being held June 22-25, 2003.

- **Nearly 50 WELS educators attended a conference at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, in July, on how to use technology in**

supporting curriculum. Participants were challenged to hold mini workshops in their areas during the next year.

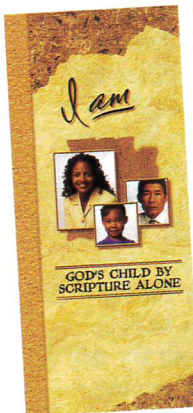
- **A technology "boot camp" was held at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., in July.** This hands-on, week-long workshop offered intensive training with special emphasis on networking in the local setting.

Board for World Missions

414/256-3233

Representatives from over 20 foreign fields and five national churches attended the World Seminary Conference at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, in August. Attendees discussed the curricula of existing training programs and numerous ideas about the possibilities for further course development.

Six students graduated from the seminary in Guntur, India, in July. Forty-one new students have enrolled in the preseminary class beginning this fall.



Commission on Evangelism

414/256-3287

A new "I Am" series of brochures, produced by the Commission on Evangelism and Northwestern Publishing House, is now available.

These brochures introduce different aspects of Christianity and Lutheranism to the unchurched. Topics include: I am a Christian, I am a Lutheran, I am Going to Heaven, I am Loved by Jesus, I am Touched by God, I am God's Child by Faith Alone, I am God's Child by Scripture Alone, I am God's Child by Grace Alone. Order brochures from NPH, 800/662-6022.

Twelve Schools of Outreach were conducted this year, and

another 12 are scheduled for 2003.

In these schools, participants learn the components of a congregational evangelism program and strategically plan for outreach in their congregations. For more information, contact your district evangelism coordinator or call the evangelism office.

Commission on Parish Schools

414/256-3220

The commission has developed a video and paper resource to make the keynote address and emphases of the 2002 WELS School Leadership Conference available to every school and congregation. Schools and congregations can use this resource to establish the contexts for planning for the future of their schools. To order this resource, call the Commission on Parish Schools, 414/256-3223; <cps@sab.wels.net>.

Commission on Special Ministries

414/256-3240



Michael Schroeder was commissioned as the new WELS chaplain in Europe in late July. Pictured are (from left): Pastor Bruce Becker, Board for Parish Services administrator; Chaplain Michael Schroeder; Monica Schroeder; Teacher Alfons Woldt, former Commission on Special Ministries administrator; and Pastor Carl Ziemer, Commission on Special Ministries administrator. Now that the Schroeders have arrived in Germany, Pastor Robert Hartman, the vacancy chaplain, will focus his efforts on establishing mission congregations among English-speaking people in Europe.

The Word of Life comes to life

The most important thing that Lutheran elementary school teachers and Sunday school teachers do is teach God's Word to children.

To help teachers with this important task, the Commissions on Youth Discipleship and Parish Schools have teamed up to produce a video-assisted teacher training course that explores how to make Bible and *Christ-Light* lessons come to life in the classroom.

Called *The Word of Life Comes to Life*, this course focuses on how children learn and how different teaching strategies can enhance the impact of God's Word on their minds and hearts.

"The spiritual message we are trying to impart to children is frequently not getting through in a life-changing way," says Joel Nelson, administrator of youth discipleship and coordinator of the project. "They're not interested

in it because lessons are not presented in ways that connect with students emotionally. God's Word is something that's in their heads, but not in their hearts."

He continues: "Unless teachers become better at presenting the truths of God's Word in ways that are fun, that tap into a child's prior knowledge, that have a more immediate application, and that include something that resonates with children emotionally, we will continue to have children who do not find the study of God's Word that important."

The Word of Life Comes to Life explores five different areas:

- An introduction to the importance of these concepts.
- A focus on why we want to teach God's Word well.
- A look at the different learning styles children have.
- A look at environmental factors

that affect learning.

- Interviews with experts on the connection between learning and the brain.

Besides a video, the course includes a leader's guide and participant's lessons that give teachers the opportunity to practice these concepts. Nelson sees the primary use of this course as a school and Sunday school staff development tool.

This course was made possible in part by a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans (now Thrivent).

For more information, contact the Commission on Youth Discipleship, 414/256-3274. To order The Word of Life Comes to Life (#38-3086), check out <www.shopWELS.net>, or call 1-800-662-6022. This product will be available in late October.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. If you have an example to share, send it to us at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <fic@sab.wels.net>.

I worked for 32 years as an insurance agent and found that helping others when storms and accidents came their way was rewarding. But when I retired, questions about retirement came my way. What am I going to do with my time now that I don't work eight hours a day? Should I travel? Is it time to reassess my spiritual life and my relationship with God? Now what?

I asked the Lord to help me answer my questions, and he directed me to serve him and others in a way I never would have thought of.

Since I was six years old, I have been interested in musical instruments. I took accordion lessons from age six to age 13. After that I taught myself the guitar. Next came the banjo and then the mandolin. One of my dreams was to play in church. After I retired, I called our school at St. Paul, Franklin, Wis., and asked if they needed help with their music programs. I was asked to help with their music program for the three- to five-year-old daycare.

It has been one of my most rewarding experiences. Once a month I bring a guitar, banjo, or mandolin to school and teach the children new songs. We sing and play old childhood favorites such as "I am Jesus Little Lamb," "Jesus Loves Me This I Know," "He's got the Whole World in his Hands," and "God Loves Me Dearly." The children play maracas, the tamborine,

bongo drums, shakers, and pounding sticks. We have great fun, and the children, teachers, and I learn more about Jesus and childlike ways in which to praise him. The students may also get interested in music and someday play an instrument and find the joy that music can bring.

When the class graduated from daycare, they asked me to accompany them on the guitar to the song, "Heaven is a Wonderful Place." We performed it in front of parents, grandparents, and friends. It was great.

Since then the talent God has given me with music has brought me to play in church for different services. A dream fulfilled. I thank and praise God for the way he has directed me in my retirement.

Richard W. Miller

Lost and found

During this “information age,” churches commonly promote themselves through newspapers, phone-books, Internet, and television. Of course, the Holy Spirit ultimately draws people into a church, but a friendly face or a personal invitation can be wonderful tools to bring people to church for the first time. Good Shepherd, Beloit, Wis., uses an interesting approach to greet people in the community.

Good Shepherd saw an opportunity for outreach in the 60,000 to 80,000 people who gather in Beloit each July for Riverfest, a secular music festival and carnival. Recognizing the concern parents have for losing their children in the large crowds, Good Shepherd set up a free child identification system called “Child I.D.”

As people with kids come into the festival, they sign I.D. cards for the children, including information concerning the child’s physical features and phone number. Adult and child are given wristbands with matching

numbers so that security can easily see if children are with the right adults. Children and adults are told to come to one of Good Shepherd’s booths if they lose each other.

As parents and kids exit the festival, they come back to the booth to have their bands removed and receive a “goody bag” containing candy for the kids and something a little sweeter—a pamphlet speaking of God’s great exchange. The bands, candy, bags, and other items are donated to the church via local businesses. This year Good Shepherd gave out 900 bags and banded about 2,500 kids. Visitors can also sign up to receive more information about Good Shepherd.

Good Shepherd boasts of 12 “saves.” A “save” is when an adult and a lost child reunite. Child I.D. shows the Beloit-area communities that Good Shepherd cares about its children, and that God cares about them.

William C. Pfund



Good Shepherd, Beloit, Wis., operates this free Child I.D. booth at Riverfest each July so that adults and children have a way of reuniting if they lose each other at the crowded festival.

Obituaries

Ruth E. Manthe 1951-2002

Ruth Manthe (nee Koeller) was born Dec. 3, 1951, in Milwaukee, Wis. She died Aug. 8, 2002, in Manitowoc, Wis.

A 1973 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served St. John, Lake City, Minn.; St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.; St. Peter, Helenville, Wis.; and Jesus’ Lambs Preschool of Grace, Manitowoc, Wis.

She was preceded in death by two sisters and one brother. She is survived by her husband, Matthew; her four children; and one sister.

Eleanor Olsen 1911-2002

Eleanor Olsen (nee Griesser) was born Sept. 13, 1911, in Medford, Wis. She died Aug. 19, 2002.

Olsen served at Immanuel Lutheran School, Medford, Wis.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Richard. She is survived by two children, three sisters, and five grandchildren.

Debra Sue Kohn 1962-2002

Debra Kohn (nee Swanson) was born July 14, 1962, in Moline, Ill. She died July 17, 2002.

A 1985 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served at Wisconsin Lutheran School, Racine, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Harvey; two sons; one daughter; her parents; and two sisters.



REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

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

From Cathy Meier, wife of Bill Meier, a WELS Kingdom Worker volunteer in Zomba, Malawi:

About two weeks ago I went to Lilongwe for the annual Lutheran Union Woman's Organization conference, a gathering of some of the Lutheran women in Malawi who belong to the LCCA (Lutheran Church of Central Africa). There were about 150 women there from all areas of Malawi.

It was amazing to hear them praising the Lord, and they sang constantly. They sang until 2 AM one night. By the third day they were all exhausted and had lost their voices. It was encouraging to me to see them so joyous and happy to be Christians. One could see by watching them that their faith was genuine. Most of them were not raised Christian and were thankful that they had heard the Word of God and knew that they were saved. It encouraged me to continue to be supportive of Bill because there are people being reached through his work, and they are so thankful that missionaries are here spreading the Word. It was a very moving experience.



Some of the 150 women who gathered in Lilongwe, Malawi, at the Lutheran Bible Institute Camp on Aug. 2-5, for the third annual convention of the Lutheran Union Woman's Organization. Cathy Meier and her daughter, Elise, are pictured on the far right side of the middle row.

District news

Western Wisconsin



Patricia Schlosser presents a check from St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis., to (from left) Staff Minister Indelethio Nebeker, Pastor Aaron Robinson, and Pastor Steve Gabb, all from Sure Foundation, New York City. Sure Foundation was the mission project at St. Paul this year, and members at St. Paul donated extra vacation Bible school supplies to Sure Foundation. A pen pal letter exchange has also been arranged between children from St. Paul and children from Sure Foundation. Schlosser flew to New York City to present the money and supplies in person and to help with Sure Foundation's vacation Bible school.

Western Wisconsin

A tornado struck Ladysmith, Wis., at 4:15 PM on Sept. 2 (Labor Day). About 40 non-threatening injuries resulted. **Our Redeemer, the WELS church in Ladysmith**, is unharmed. No members' homes were destroyed.

This summer two WELS teens were chosen to the Rock County 4H Fair's Court of Honor. **Jonathan Reise**, a member at St. Peter, Brodhead, Wis., and **Charlotte Edwards**, a member at Peace, Loves Park, Ill., were chosen for their involvement in 4H and other activities as well as for their leadership and character.

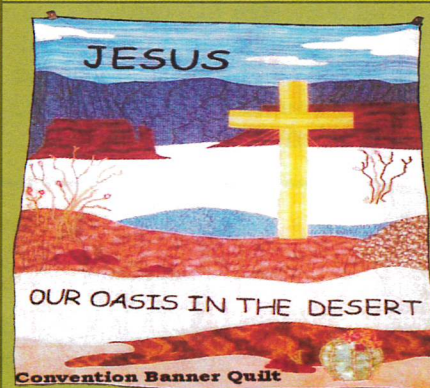
Northern Wisconsin

On May 10, **Ruth Manthe**, a member at Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis., was recognized on *LIVE with Regis and Kelly* for being an outstanding mother. Four of Manthe's friends from Bethany nominated her for this award because she and her husband adopted four children from India and she was struggling with a brain tumor. The TV show flew the whole family to New York City and also presented them with a Disney cruise. Manthe died after an eight-month struggle with brain cancer on Aug. 8 (see "Obituaries," p. 25).

Minnesota

The more than 300 people who attended the **Minnesota District Youth Rally** in St. Louis on Aug. 4-7 led the national anthem at a St. Louis Cardinal's baseball game.

Arizona-California



The 2002 Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) Convention was held in Las Vegas from June 27-30. The convention featured the theme "Jesus, our oasis in the desert," and it is pictured here on the convention banner, which is a queen-sized quilt made by Rita Villa, a member of St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif. Angela Sabrowsky, a 15-year-old-member at Zion, Torrance, Calif., writes, "Through the LWMS convention, I have come to realize how important and special the faith we have is to us and to the people around us."

Witness in a bread box

The scent of baking bread calls to mind fond memories and warm feelings for me. Not even chocolate chip cookies or a slow-cooked roast could smell as inviting and make me feel so at home. Similar thoughts belonged to Gary Conley as he sat at his kitchen table in September 1996 preparing for an evangelism meeting while his wife prepared a loaf of bread in their new bread machine. Conley already had a strong desire to start a small ministry business, and the idea for *Thy Daily Bread* came in an instant.

Thy Daily Bread is an evangelism tool that uses a simple packaged bread mix to spread the Bread of Life, God's Word. The beautifully decorated box

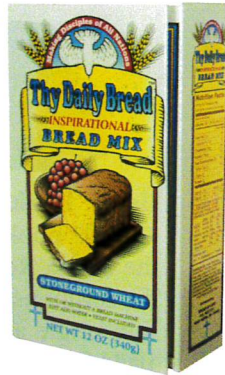
displays not only the nutrition information and hearty ingredients of the stoneground wheat bread, but also the heartfelt message of the gospel. Along with baking instructions for conventional oven and bread machine are the words "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest and let this bread to us be blessed."

Over 300 WELS churches have used *Thy Daily Bread* as part of their outreach efforts. A box can be presented as a gift to prospective church members on a home visit, or church members can give them to friends, family members, or neighbors to help open the subject of Jesus with them.

The box opens like the cover of a book to simple passages that explain

sin, death, and salvation through Christ. Inside you will also find a card that can be personalized to invite someone to your church.

The Conley family, members of Shepherd of the Hills, West Bend, Wis., assembles each box of *Thy Daily Bread* by hand at their home. If you are interested in using this unique outreach tool, check out <www.thydailybread.com> or call 262/338-8963.



Laura Warmuth

Western Wisconsin



St. Peter, Tomah, Wis., honored Lovilla Schlenker on May 5. Schlenker recently retired as organist at St. Peter after playing for worship services there for 60 years.

California

About 700 people attended the dedication service for the new building of **California Lutheran High School, Wildomar**, on Sept. 1. The 25-year-old school opened on Sept. 3 with 119 students, the school's largest enrollment ever.

Dakota-Montana

From July 29-Aug. 3, **Redeemer, Pierre, S.D.**, hosted a WELS Kingdom Worker's Faith in Action team. The team, which included six teenage girls and two chaperones from Onalaska, Wis., canvassed approximately 1,700 homes.

Happy Anniversary!

CA—**St. John, Tarzana, Calif.**, celebrated its 50th anniversary on Feb. 10. St. John was the second WELS congregation in California.

Members of **Star of Bethlehem, Santa Maria, Calif.**, hosted a special service and a Santa-Maria-style barbecue for their 25th anniversary.

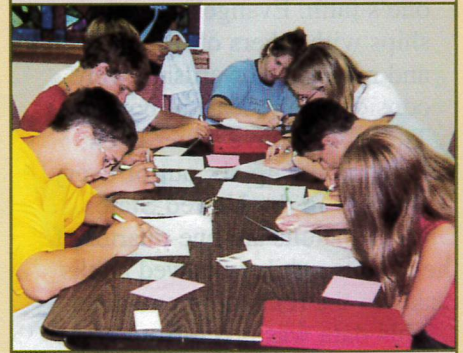
South Atlantic



Mark Boehme, principal of Bay Pines Lutheran School, Seminole, Fla., has taken a group of 15 to 30 Bay Pines members on the Appalachian Trail annually since 1974. Families often use the 40-mile hike as a time to reconnect. Pictured here are three generations on the trail: (from left) Paul, Rachel, Paul Jr., and Joshua Brown.

MN—On Aug. 25, members of **Mt. Olive, Shakopee, Minn.**, celebrated their congregation's 50th anniversary.

Southeastern Wisconsin



Eleven teens and two adults from St. John, Lomira, Wis., went on a five-day mission trip to Kentucky. They helped Victory, Lexington, and Hope, Louisville, by distributing vacation Bible school flyers and canvassing. Here the group writes thank-you notes to people who expressed interest in attending Victory.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: CA—Hermann John; DM—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Kevin Schultz; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.



Book: Looking at single adults—
A 2002 book by George Barna of the Barna Research Group explored the religious practices of the 82 million single adults (four out of every 10 U.S. adults) in the United States. Some of the things discovered include:

- About four out of five single adults think of themselves as Christian, although their commitment to that faith varies.
- During a typical week, a majority of singles engages in prayer. But only one-third attends church or reads the Bible other than at church. Fewer singles volunteer at church, attend Sunday school, or do small group activities during the week.
- Worship was perceived to be the most significant spiritual undertaking, followed by learning about one's faith. Evangelism, relationships with others of the same faith, and material stewardship were considered the least important.

Those who have never been married make up six out of every 10 singles in the United States. Divorced adults are one-quarter of the singles, while widowed adults make up the remaining one-sixth.

This data was taken from eight different telephone surveys. The average sample was approximately 1,000. The average sample of singles was 477. Sampling error is plus or minus three percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

[From "A revealing look at three unique single adult populations," Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, Calif. <www.barna.org>; Mar. 11, 2002]

LCMS task force to study non-certified teachers—A new task force appointed by LCMS president

Gerald Kieschnick will examine the issue of non-certified teachers in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

This 20-member task force will address reasons for the growing number of non-certified teachers and will discuss what can be done about it.

The task force is expected to present its findings and recommendations to the 2004 LCMS convention. [LCMSNews, Aug. 12, 2002]

Martin Luther film rereleased—
The classic film *Martin Luther*, first released in 1953, was rereleased in video and released for the first time in DVD in a special 50th anniversary edition in September. This edition includes the complete, uncut, digitally remastered original feature film as well as a biography of the film itself. [ASSIST News Service, Aug. 8, 2002]

Number of Lutherans increases—
Membership of Lutheran churches worldwide has grown to 65.4 million in 2001, up 1.4 million from the year 2000, according to the Lutheran World Federation.

With 13.6 million Lutherans, Germany remains by far the country with the most Lutherans, even though its number decreased by 222,226 members this year. The United States (8.2 million), Sweden (7.4 million), Finland (4.6 million), and Denmark (4.5 million) round out the five countries with the most Lutherans.

The five Lutheran church bodies with the most members are

- Church of Sweden, 7.4 million
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 5.1 million
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, 4.6 million
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, 4.5 million
- Church of Norway, 3.8 million

Membership grew the most in Africa, reaching almost 12 million members. The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria had the most

growth, up 62 percent.

North American churches lost almost 24,000 members.

WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod are not members of the Lutheran World Federation.

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.



**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!

God's people have always been motivated to give thanks, but few have expressed their thanks as well as David.

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever. . .

To him who alone does great wonders,

His love endures forever.

who by his understanding made the heavens,

His love endures forever.

who spread out the earth upon the waters,

His love endures forever.

who made the great lights—

His love endures forever.

the sun to govern the day,

His love endures forever.

the moon and stars to govern the night;

His love endures forever. . .

to the One who remembered us in our lowly estate

His love endures forever.

and freed us from our enemies,

His love endures forever.

and who gives food to every creature.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love endures forever."

(Psalm 136:1,4-17,23-26)

On your own

Read David's "Psalm of Thanks" in 1 Chronicles 16:7-36.

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY****Pastors**

Falck, Daniel R., to Trinity, Hartford, Wis.
Flunker, Timothy M., to First, Green Bay, Wis.
Pagel, David F., to Immanuel, Oshkosh, Wis.
Skorzewski, James R., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Treptow, Earle D., to Zion, Denver, Colo.

Teachers

Bauer, Aaron J., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee
Eggert, Sandra L., to Mt. Olive, Tulsa, Okla.
Grobe, Jane M., to St. Paul/Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Herlich, Elizabeth K., to St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn.
Mindock, Kristen L., to St. Paul First, North Hollywood, Calif.
Neumann, David S., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
Paus, Charlene, to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
Roeske, Carol L., to Gloria Dei, Grand Blanc, Mich.
Schultz, Carla S., to St. Luke, Vassar, Mich.

The synod administration building will be closed: Nov. 28-29, Thanksgiving. Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Synod Nominating Committee will meet at 7 PM, Jan. 8, 2003, at the synod administration building. The committee will propose three candidates for each of the following positions:

- Synodical Council member (pastor at-large)
- Board for Home Missions: chairman (pastor)
- Board for World Missions: chairman (pastor)
- Board for World Missions administrative committee members: Latin America (layman); Native American (pastor, teacher); Africa (layman); Japan Europe Asia (pastor, layman); Southeast Asia (teacher, layman)
- Board for Ministerial Education: three board members (pastor, teacher, layman)
- Martin Luther College Governing Board: chairman (pastor)
- Northwestern Publishing House Board: three board members (WLS professor, two laymen)
- Board for Parish Services: layman
- Commission on Youth Discipleship: chairman (pastor)
- Commission on Adult Discipleship: chairman (pastor)

The list of candidates nominated will be published in spring 2003. The delegates will elect one candidate for each position at the synod convention on July 28-Aug. 1, 2003. Any synod voting member is invited to send names with pertinent information by Dec. 15, 2002, to Steven Lemke, 1108 Ontario Ave, Sheboygan WI 53081; <SecWELS@sab.wels.net>.

ANNIVERSARIES

Lake Zurich, Ill.—New Life (15). Nov. 3. Service, 9:30 AM. Brunch & program, 10:45 AM.
Eau Claire, Wis.—St. Mark (35). Nov. 3. Morning services, 8 and 10:30 AM. Special service, 4 PM. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 715/834-2595.
Chandler, Ariz.—Calvary (25). Nov. 17. Service, 4 PM. Dinner to follow.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Redemption (50). Nov. 17. Service, 9 AM. Noon dinner. RSVP, 414/466-5100.
West Salem, Wis.—Christ (100). Nov. 17. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Potluck to follow.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Mt. Lebanon (75). Dec. 1. Service, 9:30 AM. Dinner to follow. 414/461-1563.

COMING EVENTS

WELS Regional Choral Festival—Nov. 8-10. Michigan LHS, St. Joseph, Mich. Pops concert, Nov. 8, 7 PM. Sacred concert, Nov. 10, 2 PM. Joel Ungemach, 269/429-7861.

National Men's Rally—Nov. 15-17, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. WELS Kingdom Workers, 414/771-6848 or 1-800-466-9357.

Christmas concerts—

- **Lutheran Chorale**, Dec. 1, 3 & 7 PM. Atonement, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105
- **Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale**, Dec. 7, 7:30 PM, St. John/St. James, Reedsville, Wis. Dec. 8, 3 & 6 PM, Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis. Matt Manthe, 920/684-7448 or Alan Ross, 920/684-5833.
- **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**—Dec. 8, 3 & 7 PM
- **Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.**—Dec. 15, 3 PM
- **Cascade Lutheran Chorale**—Dec. 15, 4 PM. Grace, Portland, Ore. Joy Williams, 503/493-0465. Rehearsal dates, Oct. 20, Nov. 10 & 24, Dec. 8.
- **Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.**—Dec. 15, 3 PM & Dec. 19, 10 AM.
- **Martin Luther College**—mid-year graduation. Dec. 18, 9:30 AM.

Advent Tea—Sun., Dec. 8, 4 PM. Hosted by "Women of Messiah," Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga. For reservations, call Alice Wood, 678/339-0447, or Pia Equels, 678/393-1738.

WELS National Campus Rally—Dec. 27-30. Michigan State University. 517/336-9293.

WELS/ELS Ladies Retreat—Jan. 10-12, 2003. Woodlands Lutheran Campground, Montverde, Fla. Cost, \$110. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.

National Sunday School Teachers Conference—Jan. 18-19, 2003. Antiqua Bay Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. 414/256-3274.

Today's Christian Women's Retreat—Mar. 21-23, 2003. Sheraton Lansing Hotel, Lansing, Mich. Laurie Starr, 248/391-1133.

WELS International Youth Rally—July 9-12, 2003. Estes Park, Colo.

AVAILABLE

Hammond Cougar organ—free for the cost of shipping or pick up. Corinne Bokelberg, 262/246-6672.

Altar paraments—in red, green, purple, and white. Free for the cost of shipping. Evelyn Becker, 815/465-6427.

Aluminum communion ware set—including two individual cup trays and cover along with the ciborium. Free for the cost of shipping. Leon Nevill, 662/328-7497.

Choir robes—free for the cost of shipping. Seventy dark brown and 57 medium brown with gold collars. Jim Hermanson or Ginny Look, 262/859-2595.

NEEDED

Pews—12-feet or longer desired. Zion, Colome, S.D., 605/842-1523.

NOTICE

The Native American Mission field, especially East Fork schools, appreciates all the various donations of clothing and household items it has received. However, at this time, due to lack of

storage areas, these clothing/household items can no longer be accepted. If you have a desire to support the Native American Mission field and have questions on how to do so, please contact Bob Franz, Resource Development Director or Pastor Roger Schultz, East Fork schools principal, 928/338-4455.

SERVICE TIMES

Clermont, Fla.—new ELS mission congregation. Adult information class, beginning Oct. 13, 6:30 PM on Sundays. Thanksgiving worship, Nov. 28, 10 AM. Sunday worship, beginning Dec. 1, 11 AM. Greg Sahlstrom, 352/243-8181.

Wausau, Wis.—Salem, 2822 6 St. Sunday school & Bible class, 7:45 AM. Worship, 9 AM. Tim Mandeik, 715/675-7521.

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

NAMES WANTED

Clermont, Fla.—Greg Sahlstrom (ELS), 352/243-8181.

WELS-wide adoption group—Looking for support or friends with similar nationality for your children? Wish to attend an adoption group without worrying about fellowship issues? If you're interested in forming a WELS-wide adoption group, contact Matt Manthe, <mmanthe@lakefield.net>.

1953 eighth-grade class—of Jordan, West Allis, Wis. If you are interested in having a 50th class reunion, contact Paul Schoenike, 608/325-9491 or Al Rosenthal, 608/589-5036 by Dec. 15.

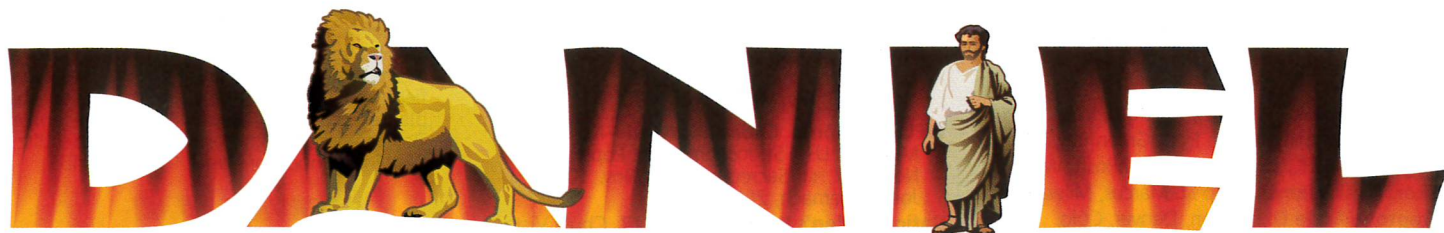
U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.—Don Tollefson, 908/876-5429.

Marion County, Fla. (Ocala area)—Paul Lemke, 352/694-1861.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Senior Vice-President—of the Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn. The Lutheran Home Association seeks mission-oriented individual to administer, plan, and coordinate activities in support of established policies, goals, objectives, and strategic initiatives. Qualifications include: 4 to 10 years related business experience and bachelor's degree; commitment to our Christian mission; demonstrated Christian values; proven leadership; human relations; communication and organizational skills; experience in strategic planning, budgeting, and policy making; and ability to meet scheduling requirements, including traveling 50 to 75 percent of time. Our diverse system spans two states and offers a variety of long-term care and rehabilitation services, assisted living, and community-based residential and support living services. Send resume to Therese Kaletka, director of human resources, The Lutheran Home Association, 337 S Meridian St, Belle Plaine MN 56011; <tkaletka@tlha.org>.

To place an announcement, call
 414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3862;
 <BulletinBoard@sab.wels.net>. Deadline
 is eight weeks before publication date.



A witness to mysteries revealed

Like Daniel, we have the privilege of sharing God's revelation with others and seeing its effect on them.

Philip L. Kieselhorst

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon could not escape the recurring dreams. He kept seeing the gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay statue smashed to dust by a rock that was cut by inhuman hands (Daniel 2:31-35). What could it mean?

The mystery

"There's not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!" (2:10). These words of King Nebuchadnezzar's wise men were desperate, but true. The king wanted them to know what was going through his mind when he slept. If they didn't reveal this mystery, they would be cut into pieces!

There's not a man on earth who can do what the King asks! These desperate words of God's subjects are so true. God wants us to know exactly what his will is and to follow that will perfectly. If we do not answer the mystery of godliness, we will die in hell!

King Nebuchadnezzar's "magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers" replied, "No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men" (2:11). In this they revealed the true error of their religion. They believed mankind was on its own.

But the true God does live among men. He reveals answers to deep mysteries. Imagine the king's astonishment when Daniel described the contents of his dream.

But mysteries remained. What kingdom will be created by divine intervention and "will never be destroyed" (2:44)? What kingdom will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but itself will endure forever (2:44)?

The mystery revealed

It would not be Babylon. God revealed that the statue represented present and future kingdoms. But they would all be inferior to one special kingdom.

"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever. . . . He reveals deep and hidden things" (2:20,22). "He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:9,10).

The dream revealed God's purpose in establishing Christ and Christ's kingdom. God planned to bring all things under one ruler so that grace and immortality might be freely

given to the ungodly: "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9,10).

It is in Christ, therefore, that the mystery of godliness is revealed. In him we have the answer that no mere human can provide. "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: [God] appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). By God's grace, Jesus' godliness now belongs to all who stand on the Rock of Christ.

Babylon, Persia, Greece, and ancient Rome (represented by the statue) were impressive, but they turned to dust. Christ's kingdom continues to grow.

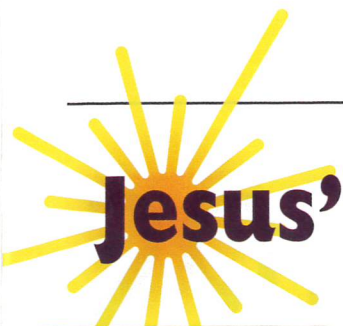
Like Daniel, we have the privilege of sharing God's revelation with others and seeing its effect on them. Many will confess: "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries" (2:47).

Philip Kieselhorst is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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Jesus' miracles: PORTRAITS OF REDEMPTION

Mark J. Lenz

INTRODUCTION

What is wrong with each of these scenarios?

- A door-to-door salesman sells signs that say, "No Peddlers Allowed."
- Shortly after sharing his faith with a classmate, a college student cheats on an exam.
- A husband is so busy preparing a Sunday school lesson on helpfulness that he doesn't have time to help his wife.
- A church worker can cite chapter and verse from the Bible but makes life miserable for his/her spouse.

TEXT—MARK 11:12-14,20-25

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

¹⁴Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it. . . .

²⁰In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. ²¹Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

²²"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

6. What was Peter's reaction?
7. What application does Jesus make from this incident?

APPLICATIONS

1. Old Testament prophets often vividly dramatized their messages to impenitent people. How might this help us understand Jesus' purpose in cursing the fig tree?
2. In Jesus' day the Sadducees and Pharisees were barren fig trees in God's sight. They aggravated their fruitlessness by a show of piety, and the focal point of their hypocrisy was the temple in Jerusalem. What does the cleansing of the temple incident (Mark 11:15-19) suggest as to the purpose of this miracle? What lessons are here for us?
3. "Why do I have to change the way I live? If God loves and accepts sinners, he has to accept me too." What's wrong with this attitude? How would you respond?
4. Jesus told a parable about a barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). How does God "cut down" unfruitful trees? How can people tell if they're in danger of that?
5. Is fruitfulness something we actively pursue or does it grow naturally out of our faith in Christ (2 Peter 1:5-9; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27)?
6. Explain how both prayer and forgiveness are fruits of faith.
7. God's people are expected to bear fruit. How do the scenarios in the introduction above illustrate this?

QUESTIONS

1. On what day of Holy Week did this incident take place (Mark 11:1-11)?
2. At whose home in Bethany did Jesus apparently stay that week (John 12:1-3)?
3. Why did Jesus check to see if the fig tree had any fruit? What did he discover when he reached the fig tree? What did Jesus say to the tree?
4. What incident is recorded in the intervening verses (Mark 11:15-19)?
5. What did the disciples discover as they passed the fig tree the next morning?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, if my hope of forgiveness and eternal life depended on anything in me, I would certainly face only your curse and condemnation. But you bore the curse of my sin for me on Calvary's cross. I am totally forgiven. I am righteous in your eyes. In this I rejoice. For this I thank you, Lord. Cause my life to reflect my gratitude to you in all I think, say, and do. Produce a rich bounty of fruit in my life every day. Hear me for your mercy's sake. Amen.

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: TESTIMONIES ON HOW GOD WORKS IN LIVES

Question: Christian radio and television are filled with testimonies on how God is personally working in lives and changing them. It's wonderful! How come these kinds of testimonies are few and far between in our church and in *Forward in Christ* magazine?

Answer: In one sense, our worship and *Forward in Christ* magazine are filled with personal "testimonies." Scripture is full of inspired "testimonies" from the lives of God's people. For example, in Hebrews 11 and 12 we find powerful encouragement to remember these "testimonies" so that we learn to "fix our eyes on Jesus" (12:2).

Contemporary testimonies could serve the same purpose of pointing us to Jesus. Especially in evangelism, sharing what God's grace means to us may gain an opportunity to share what his grace means to others. We move from sharing "our story" to sharing "God's story."

However, testimonies heard on Christian broadcasting aren't more common among us for several reasons. Some testimonies draw conclusions that disagree with the Spirit's testimony. For example, someone recovered from cancer testifies that if we believed strongly enough and prayed fervently enough, we too would be healed of any disease. However, Paul's inspired testimony (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) flatly contradicts such human testimony.

Another closely related flaw is that many testimonies give the distorted impression that Christians always visibly triumph this side of heaven. The testimonies offer "upbeat" examples of everyone "living happily ever after" in this life.

Certainly, God often causes outward situations to turn out well. Yet believers in the exact opposite situation also are held up for us to imitate. Listen to some of the outwardly discouraging situations Hebrews 11 lists: "Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated. . . . These were all commended

for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect" (11:36-40). Doesn't that sound different from many testimonies heard on Christian broadcasts? Scripture's inspired testimonies often show us what it means to live by faith and not by sight.

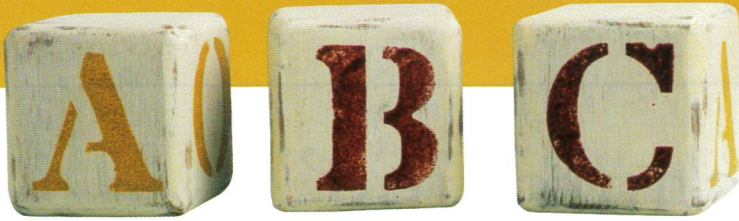
We believe that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). Yet repeatedly in Scripture we see people of faith also learning to grasp another truth: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). In the midst of hardships, believers learn to trust God's grace even when they wait until eternity to see how apparent evil served their good.

Many modern testimonies stumble because they forget Jesus' words: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [what shall we eat? drink? wear?] will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). In many testimonies the "first" things (forgiveness, peace, and eternal hope won by Jesus) fade into the background while more visible blessings of this life take center stage. How different from the testimonies in Hebrews, where the inspired purpose was that we might join those saints in fixing "our eyes on Jesus."

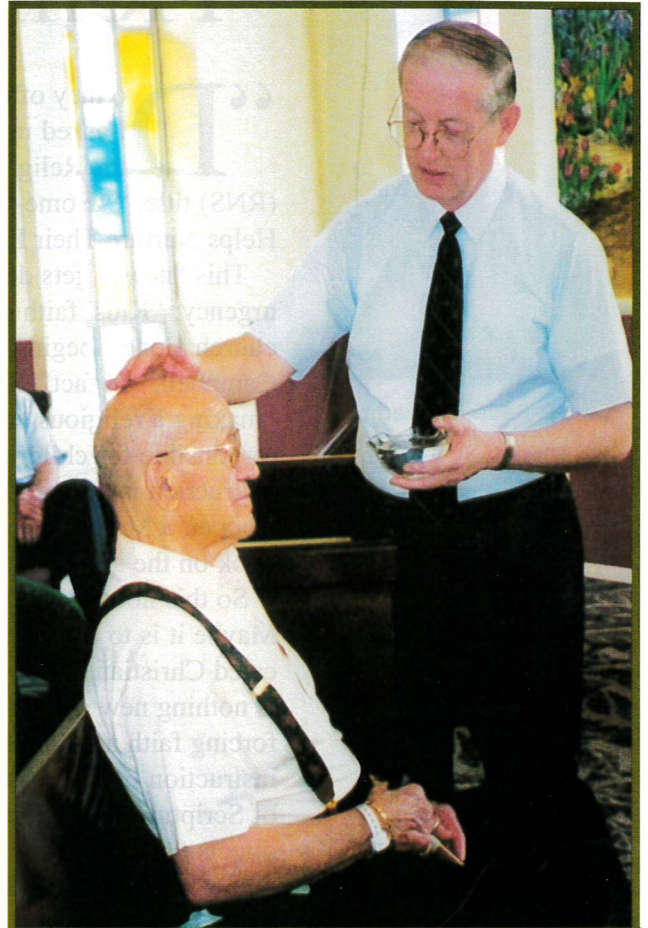
Could testimonies be used profitably if they are faithful to Scripture, accurately reflect the Christian's life under the cross, and focus on Jesus? Certainly. But the pitfalls of most popular testimonials explain why they are used more sparingly among us.

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>. Look on-line at <www.wels.net/sab/qa.html> for more questions and answers.



Picture this



Richard Cates was baptized Apr. 17, 2002, at the South Haven Healthcare Centre, South Haven, Mich. Says Pastor William Balza, "He is 95 years old, and the oldest person I have baptized in my 34-year ministry." Cates attends weekly Bible class at the nursing home.

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.

The ABC's of thanks

Dear God, this Thanksgiving I thank you for

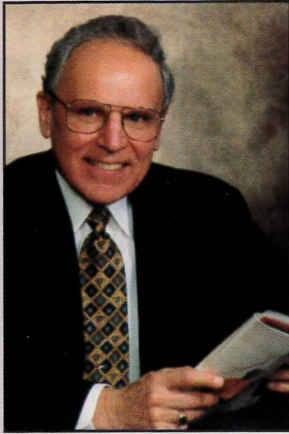
- A**ngels
- B**aptism, which washed away my sins
- C**orn on the cob
- D**ad and Mom
- E**ternal life in heaven
- F**amily and friends
- G**overnment to help bring order to our land
- H**ome, where I can relax
- I**ce cream
- J**esus, who saved me from my sins
- K**isses and hugs from loved ones
- L**ungs so I can breathe
- M**usic
- N**ew Testament messages about you
- O**ceans
- P**astors who share God's Word with me
- Q**uiet time to read the Bible
- R**ainbows
- S**pouses who love you in good times and bad
- T**rees
- U**nity, which we share with fellow believers
- V**acations so I can take time to appreciate the world you created
- W**ork so I can use my talents to your glory
- X**-rays
- Y**esterday, today, and tomorrows
- Z**oos

Take time today to make your own list of Thanksgiving blessings.

Ten things I learned from Israel crossing the Red Sea

1. Follow God's lead. He turns dead ends into detours.
2. God never leaves you. Never.
3. When you think you're wandering to nowhere, God is taking you somewhere.
4. God will not be robbed of his glory. Try to take it from him like Pharaoh, and you'll be in hot water. Lots of it.
5. God's plans and purposes for me are bigger than mine. And better.
6. Don't be afraid to say, "Don't be afraid!"
7. Sometimes it's preferable to stop praying and start doing.
8. God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary.
9. God's way isn't just the best way. It's the only way.
10. God's power means he can. God's promises mean he will. Trust him always.

Submitted by Daron Lindemann, Milwaukee, Wis.



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

The spiritual
nurturing
expected of
the church
needs to
begin and
be continued
at home.

“Home-churching”

“Do they offer this as news?” I asked myself when I read the Religion News Service (RNS) title, “‘Home-Churching’ Kids Helps Nurture Their Faith.”

This “news” gets delivered with great urgency: “Kids’ faith cannot grow by church alone,” begins reporter Kristen Campbell. “In fact,” Scott Cooper says, “making a religious community solely responsible for children’s religious instruction is downright dangerous.” Cooper, a Mormon, recently wrote a book on the subject.

So this home-churching idea is news. Maybe it is to the many. But to the dedicated Christian, isn’t it self-evident? There is nothing new about it. The idea of reinforcing faith at home through worship and instruction is as old as the earliest books of Scripture. In Deuteronomy 6:6,7, God directs us: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Luther’s Small Catechism was produced to help parents give such home guidance. Surely you know the saying: “The family that prays together stays together.”

At this point, the discerning reader might ask why, if this subject is so self-evident, are we running a four-part series in *Forward in Christ* on the same concept under the title “Schooling the home” (p. 14)?

I said it wasn’t news, but I didn’t say it wasn’t important. In writing this way, I get to underscore its importance and call your attention to our series of articles. Besides, much of what should be “self-evident” isn’t so to our sinful natures. The spiritual nurturing expected of the church needs to begin and be continued at home.

However, the news article reveals another side to the issue that begs our attention. Home-churching easily becomes home-baked religion and self-styled spirituality. Cooper, speaking of parenthood, seems to allow that merely setting a moral example is sufficient: “. . . simply loving our children and providing them with good examples and occasional firmness are much more critical to their positive development than any formal religious or moral training.”

Are you ready to downgrade the religious training in your church to that level? Do we establish our own agenda for home-churching? In Deuteronomy God says that parents are to teach his commandments. When the apostle Paul commended the early home training of Timothy, he pointed out that Timothy had learned the Holy Scriptures from his mother and grandmother. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of our children.

People of all religions will recognize the importance of the home in shaping the spiritual values of their children. People of the God before whom there shall be no other gods will recognize the importance of the home and church together teaching the everlasting Word of God. No moral training or example is complete without learning also of how God provided a cloak of perfect morality for us in Christ and won the forgiveness for our failures through Christ’s sacrifice. People of God will recognize, too, that where the example, training, and worship are missing in the home, the devil has a field day and the truth taught at church is easily lost in the void at home.

There is news here. Where Christ is present, it is “good news.”

Gary P. Baumler

I am

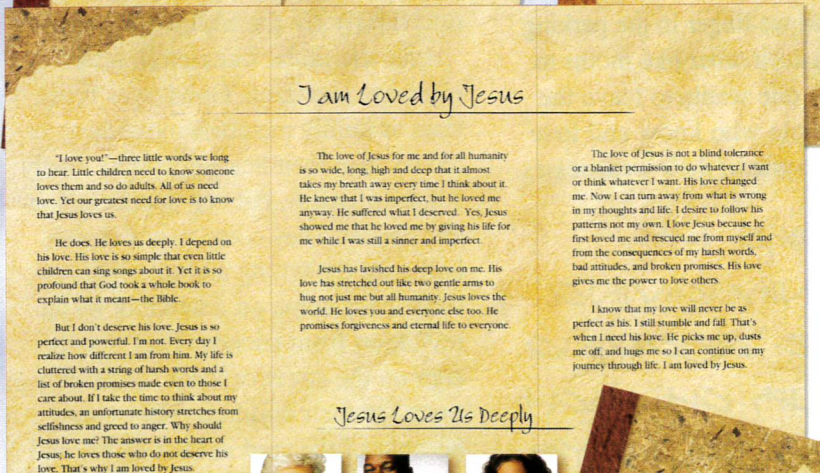
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FAMILY TIES

Thanksgiving is a time for families, including our church family. Although this family does not share a single strand of DNA, it is intimately woven together by the blood of Christ.

Robyn Smith

Thanksgiving and family—the two go hand in hand. The scene is familiar: the table is set with the good china and a turkey holds the place of honor. Grandparents, cousins, and relatives fill the chairs.

Searching for family

Or do they? Families that a few generations ago grew up, lived, and died in the same city now are separated by thousands of miles. In a world of corporate downsizing and automation, the score is technology 1, families 0.

Though pension plans and company loyalty seem to be casualties of our modern era, new innovations crop up promising to ease the pain created by the distance between families. Instant messaging, digital pictures, and e-mails keep us connected, but not in “touch.” Cell phones make us accessible but can’t replace the arms of a familiar hug or a trusted shoulder to lean on. We’re a mobile society, leaving many searching for family.

Finding our family in Christ

So who fills our thanksgiving tables? “Church family” is a term we use in Salt Lake City. Although it is a way to define people joined in a congregation, it can’t describe the bond forged between Christians far from the stability and security of family ties. Life in Utah is like everywhere else—busy, challenging, stressful. We have job losses, illness, and death, but our church family supports us.

It’s a family made up of couples and singles, young and old, lifelong Christians and many new to the faith. We struggle with relationships and finances. We are diverse in personalities and backgrounds but share two things—we’re all sinners, and we all desperately need a Savior.

Like wounded soldiers crawling through life’s battlefield, we depend on each other. Worship is over in an hour, but fellowship stretches into the afternoon. Bible classes or meetings come to a close, but we linger in the parking lot, pulled to each other like moths to the light. No one wants to leave the haven of people who know and love each other in spite of their weaknesses.

LIKE MY
THANKSGIVING
TABLE GROWING
UP, OUR CHURCH
FAMILY ALWAYS
HAS ROOM FOR
ONE MORE.

Just like a family, we disagree and hurt one another. We try to compromise and learn to forgive. We encourage each other with God’s Word, building each other up in a world that tears us down. We’re a patchwork collection of believers coming back again and again to hear the one thing needed to heal our wounds and unite us stronger than heredity or genealogies ever could. We do not share a single strand of DNA, but are intimately woven into one family by the blood of Christ.

Like the times, our church family is always changing. Good-byes bring tears as family members move away or are taken to their heavenly home. Sadly some drift away, but new faces continually appear. They come to our church home for the wrong and the right reasons. They come on a whim or by an invitation from friends. They see the sign on the street or want something more for their children. They come because of the void in their hearts and lives. But like my Thanksgiving table growing up, our church family always has room for one more—one more burdened soul longing for rest and a place to call home.

As another Thanksgiving season approaches and you reflect on your abundant blessings, don’t forget to include your church family in the list. It’s like having Thanksgiving all year round.

Robyn Smith is a member at Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah.

